

# The Trumpet of The Swan



By

E.B. White

A Novel Study  
by Nat Reed

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**About the author:** Nat Reed was a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years. He was a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, visit [novelstudies.org](http://novelstudies.org).

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## Suggestions and Expectations

This curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses one or two chapters of **The Trumpet of the Swan** and is comprised of the following different activities:

- Before You Read
- Vocabulary Building
- Comprehension Questions
- Language and Extension Activities

A **portfolio cover** (p.7) as well as a **Checklist** (p.6) are included so that students may track of their completed work.

**Every activity need not be completed by all students.**

### Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)

Many of the activities included in this curriculum unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the *Reading Standards for Literature, Grade 5*, makes reference to

- a) determining the meaning of words and phrases. . . including figurative language;
- b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure;
- c) compare and contrast two characters;
- d) determine how characters ... respond to challenges;
- e) drawing inferences from the text;
- f) determining a theme of a story . . . **and many others.**

**Themes** which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include the Trumpeter Swan, American music of the early 1900s, honesty, the importance of family, overcoming obstacles in life, the importance of hard work, courage and sacrifice, perseverance when facing difficult circumstances.

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## List of Skills

### Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homophones
3. Identifying/creating *alliteration*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *foreshadowing*.
7. Identify *singular/plural*
8. Identify *anagrams*
9. Listing compound words
10. Identifying parts of speech
11. Determining alphabetical order
12. Identification of root words
13. Identify/create *similes*
14. Identify *personification*

### Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

### Plot Activities

1. Complete a *time line* of events
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Complete Five W's Chart
4. Identify *cliffhangers*
5. Identify the climax of the novel.
6. Complete a Story Pyramid

### Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Identify the protagonist/antagonist
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Compare characters

### Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Participate in a talk show
4. Conduct an interview
5. Write a description of personal feelings
6. Write a book review
7. Complete an Observation Chart
8. Complete a KWS Chart

### Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Create an Information Card
4. Design a cover for the novel
5. Create a comic strip
6. Design a brochure

# The Trumpet of the Swan

By *E.B. White*



## **Synopsis**

Like the rest of his family, Louis is a trumpeter swan. But unlike his four brothers and sisters, Louis can't trumpet joyfully. In fact, he can't even make a sound. And since he can't trumpet his love, the beautiful swan Serena pays absolutely no attention to him.

Louis tries everything he can think of to win Serena's affection – he even goes to school to learn to read and write. But nothing seems to work. Then his father steals him a real brass trumpet. Is a musical instrument the key to winning Louis his love? (The publisher)

A complete synopsis and other helpful reviews can be found online at such sites as the following: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Trumpet\\_of\\_the\\_Swan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Trumpet_of_the_Swan)

## **Author Biography**

*E. B. White*

E. B. White, the author of such beloved classics as *Charlotte's Web*, *Stuart Little*, and *The Trumpet of the Swan*, was born in Mount Vernon, New York. He graduated from Cornell University in 1921 and wrote for *The New Yorker* magazine, then in its infancy. He died on October 1, 1985, and was survived by his son and three grandchildren.

He won countless awards, including the 1971 National Medal for Literature and the Laura Ingalls Wilder Award, which commended him for making a "substantial and lasting contribution to literature for children."

During his lifetime, many young readers asked Mr. White if his stories were true. In a letter written to be sent to his fans, he answered, "No, they are imaginary tales . . . But real life is only one kind of life—there is also the life of the imagination." [The Publisher]





# The Trumpet of The Swan



*By E.B. White*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Trumpet of the Swan

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Chapters 1-2



## Before you read the chapter:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The protagonist of *The Trumpet of the Swan* (at least in Chapter One) is Sam Beaver, an eleven-year-old boy who is holidaying on a remote Canadian lake. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read or movies you’ve seen. What do you think makes for an especially interesting **protagonist**?




## Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

intention	cygnets	uppermost	investigated	cautiously
convenient	majestically	ideal	dignity	cob

1. The principal mustered up as much \_\_\_\_\_ as was possible for someone with rip in the seat of his pants.
2. The swan slipped \_\_\_\_\_ into the waters of the lake with one eye on the beaver swimming nearby.
3. Sam stepped into the brush and was astonished to see a nest of \_\_\_\_\_ at his feet.
4. I hope it is \_\_\_\_\_ for you to stop the taxi a block from my house.
5. The majestic \_\_\_\_\_ rose from the waters and spread its wing a full eight feet.
6. I know the circumstances aren't \_\_\_\_\_, but try your best.
7. The princess rose \_\_\_\_\_ from her throne and waved her wand over all before her.
8. Do you think the \_\_\_\_\_ of the intruder was for our good or harm?



# Questions



1. What is the **setting** of Chapter One and Two?


2. Why might many people regard the following sentence as quite **racist**: *Sam walked like an Indian ...?*


3. What did Sam see on the wild little pond not too far from where he and his father were camped?


4. Why was Sam reluctant to tell his dad what he saw? Do you think this was a smart idea? Why or why not?


## Good to Know - The Trumpeter Swan

The Trumpeter Swan is the largest extant species of waterfowl. The average weight of a male is about 12 kg (26 lb). The species has an upright posture and swims with a straight neck. Its bill measures about 12 cm (4.7 in), which is twice the length of the bill of a Canada Goose. They prefer to nest by large shallow ponds, with the largest number of breeding pairs found in Alaska. They feed primarily on aquatic plants while swimming.

5. A number of creatures from the Canadian wilderness are mentioned in these two chapters. Match each creature on the left with its proper description on the right.

Character
1 swan
2 red-winged blackbird
3 muskrat
4 fox
5 frog
6 chipmunk
7 raccoon
8 skunk
9 chickadee
10 Mallard duck

	Description
A	Has a reputation for being cunning.
B	Pepé Le Pew.
C	A striped rodent.
D	The heaviest bird native to North America
E	<i>Sweet Canada, Canada, Canada.</i>
F	Its name means "wild drake".
G	Bandit-like.
H	Most abundant and best studied bird in N. America.
I	An amphibian.
J	Medium-sized rodent.

6. Perspective (or point of view) is an important part of how a story is told. From whose general perspective is the story told in these chapters?

Chapter One	
Chapter Two	

7. Why was the sandy strip such an ideal spot for the swan to build her nest?


8. A male swan is called a \_\_\_\_\_ whereas baby swans are called \_\_\_\_\_.

9. How did the swans think their nest was superior to an eagle's nest?


## Language Activity



**A. Personification** is giving human qualities to something that is not human. Here's an example from Chapter Two: *Warm air, soft and kind, blew through the trees.*

Describe how the air is personified in this example.


Create your own example of personification.


**B.** Many authors enjoy using **alliteration** - a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. Here's one such example: from Chapter One "... their long white necks and **b**lack **b**ills. "

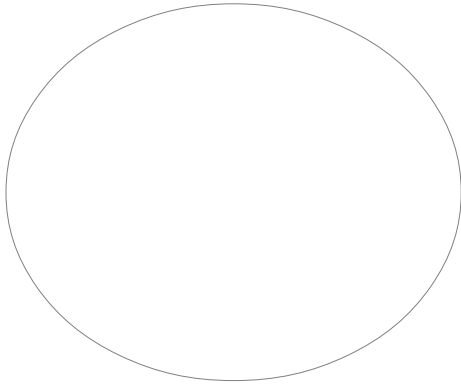


Using your imagination, create your own examples of **alliteration** from the following topics. Each example must contain a minimum of three words.

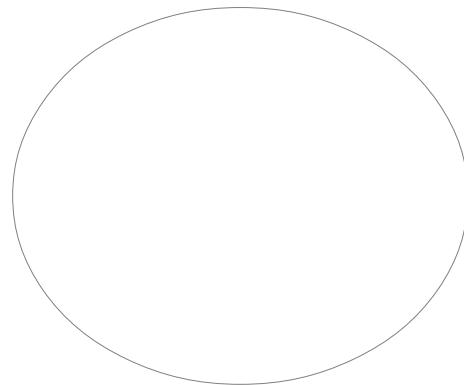
A frog leaping on to a lily pad.	
The call of a Canada Goose.	

### C. 5 Ws and an H.

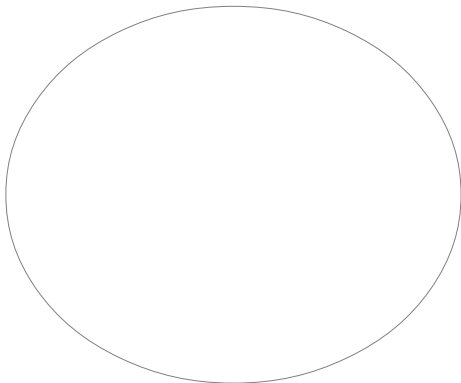
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



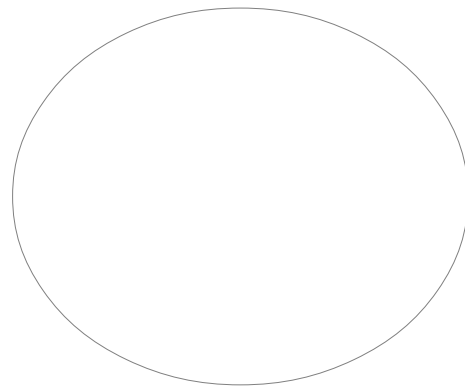
***WHO?***



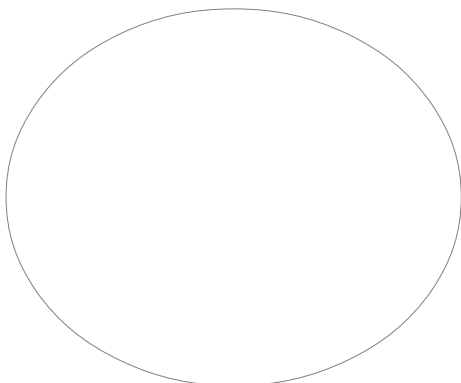
***WHAT?***



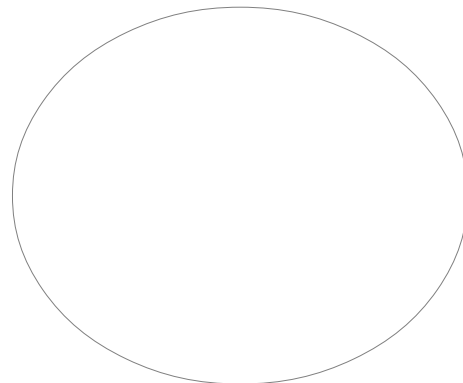
***WHEN?***



***WHERE?***



***WHY?***



***HOW?***

## D. An Acrostic Poem

There are many forms of poetry available to the aspiring poet other than the rhyming poem. An ACROSTIC poem is one example. In an acrostic poem the first letters of each line are aligned vertically to form a word. The word often is the subject of the poem. Here is an example written by the acclaimed poet, Atrocious Halitosis:

### The Firefly

Freaky-looking  
Itches me when I touch  
Restless at night  
Early or late  
Fearless  
Little  
Yellowfly



### The Acrostic Poem

Now create your own Acrostic Poem on a subject featured in this novel. Your poem must have at least four lines (and doesn't need to rhyme).

**Title:** .....


## Extension Activities



### Storyboard

A storyboard is a series of pictures that tell about an important event in a story. A storyboard can tell the story of only one scene – or the entire novel. Complete the storyboard below illustrating the events described in Chapters 1 and 2 of *The Trumpet of the Swan*. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.



1	2
3	4
5	6