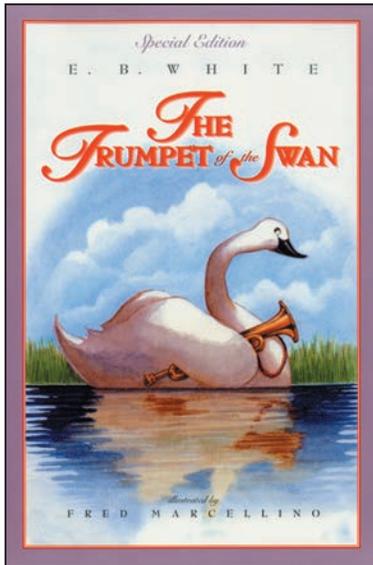


THE TRUMPET OF THE SWAN

by E. B. White



About the Book

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?

E. B. White's treasured story is now available to a new generation of readers as an ebook!



Discussion Questions

1. Read the first chapter. Where does Sam live? Where does he go camping? Are the two places similar or different? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-5.1, RL.4-5.3](#)
2. In chapter 3, the story is told from different points of view. Which characters' perspectives are included? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-5.1, 6](#)
3. What do you think about the cob's response to his son's inability to speak? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-5.1, 6; SL.3-5.1](#)
4. When the cob calls Louis "dumb," he means that Louis can't speak. He explains that a word can have two meanings. Ask students to think of words that have multiple meanings (e.g., break, jam, kind) and make a list. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-5.4; L.3-5.4](#)
5. How does Louis feel about being different from his siblings? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-5.1, 3](#)
6. In chapter 7, what unlikely events occur? (Louis is able to find Sam; Sam understands that Louis wants to read and write; the teacher guesses Louis's name, etc.) After Louis learns to read and write, he still can't communicate with his family. Why? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-5.1](#)
7. What problem arises for Louis in chapter 8? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-5.1](#)
8. How does the cob feel about getting the trumpet for Louis? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-5.1, 3](#)
9. Read Mr. Brickle's response to Applegate. What does he mean when he says, "Whether you like him or not, he must be treated with respect"? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-5.1, 4](#)
10. Describe how Sam is able to free the skunk. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-5.1](#)
11. What jobs does Louis take to pay for the trumpet? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-5.1](#)
12. What does Sam decide he wants to be when he grows up? Is this a good choice for him? Why or why not? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-5.1, 3](#)
13. The author includes an abundance of information about trumpeter swans in this book. What are some facts that you have learned? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-5.1](#)



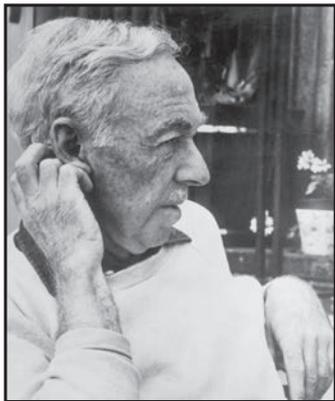
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Extension Activities

- I WONDER . . .** Keep a chart of the questions Sam asks throughout the story. After finishing the book, have students work in small groups to research these questions and find the answers. Students can use both print and digital resources. The questions include:
 - Why does a fox bark?
 - How does a bird know how to build a nest?
 - How does a bird know how to migrate?
 - Why does a dog always stretch when it wakes up?
 - What does *crepuscular* mean?[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3-5.7, 8](#)
- WRITE ALL ABOUT IT!** In *The Trumpet of the Swan*, Sam keeps a diary. Have students make their own diary or journal by stapling paper together and designing a cover, or have them use a composition book or notebook. Ask students to write narrative entries that convey their experiences, ideas, and feelings. Have students share entries with one another and provide feedback, asking questions and making suggestions to strengthen one another's narrative writing. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3-5.3, 5](#)
- THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE . . .** The cob speaks poetically about the pond where he lives. Sam writes a poem about the Philadelphia Zoo. Tell students that they will write a poem about a place that is special to them. Encourage them to use sensory details to describe what they see, feel, and hear in that setting.
[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3-5.4](#)
- WHO ARE YOU?** Have students make a list of character traits to describe each of the main characters (e.g., Sam is curious, helpful, and kind; the cob is vain, loquacious, and proud). Then pair students. Have one partner read aloud a list of character traits while the other partner guesses which character is being described. Then partners switch roles.
[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-5.3; SL.3-5.1](#)
- HOW DO YOU DO?** In *The Trumpet of the Swan*, Father teaches the cygnets how to fly, and Sam teaches Louis how to play the trumpet. Have students choose a skill or activity that they can teach to others. Have them write a "how-to" explanatory piece in which they describe the steps involved in this activity. Students should use transitional words (*first, next, then, last, etc.*) to convey the steps clearly.
[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3-5.2](#)



Donald E. Johnson

E. B. WHITE, the author of beloved classics such 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, five or six years later, joined the staff of *The New Yorker* magazine, then in its infancy. He died on October 1, 1985, and was survived by his son and three grandchildren.

Mr. White's essays have appeared in *Harper's* magazine, and some of his other books are: *One Man's Meat*, *The Second Tree from the Corner*, *Letters of E. B. White*, *Essays of E. B. White*, and *Poems and Sketches of E. B. White*. 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."

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Teaching Guide written by Sue Ornstein, a first-grade teacher in the Byram Hills School District in Armonk, New York.