

The Trumpet of the Swan
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Readability - 5th Grade

Introducing *The Trumpet of the Swan*

Spark:

Can you for a moment imagine having no voice? How would you feel? How would you communicate? Try communicating some things to each other. *I'm hungry. You hurt my feelings. I'm scared. What time is it?*

Summary

Louis is a trumpeter swan born in the beautiful wilderness of Canada. Unlike his siblings, Louis is born without a voice. For trumpeter swans, this is a serious problem in finding a lifelong mate.

His father is determined to not let this little handicap keep his son from a normal and fulfilling life. Against his better judgement, his father breaks into a music store and steals a trumpet for Louis. He hopes that if Louis learns to play the trumpet, he may woo Serena, the beautiful swan Louis had long admired.

Louis feels badly that his father resorted to breaking the law, so he does everything he can to earn the money to repay the debt. With the help of his human friend, Sam Beaver, Louis learns to read and write as well as learn to play the trumpet.

All ends happily when the money is returned and Louis and Serena are united.

Vocabulary

Find the word in its context. Reread the sentences before and after the word. Do you understand the meaning of the word? Now, look up the word in the dictionary and write a clear, simple definition, and use it in a sentence.

1. treacherous (pg. 3)
2. buoyant (pg. 39)
3. serenity (pg. 65)
4. extraordinary (pg. 81)
5. triumphant (pg. 184)

Complete the following sentences with the correct vocabulary word or write your own sentences using the vocabulary words.

1. The swans enjoyed the _____ of the beautiful lakes.
2. The swamps can be _____ if you step into a soggy place.
3. After making his fame and fortune, Louis made a _____ return.
4. A swan is graceful and _____ in the water.
5. The swan crashing through the store window was an _____ event.

1. dangerous
2. able to float
3. peace
4. remarkable; beyond ordinary
5. successful; victorious

1. serenity
2. treacherous
3. triumphant
4. buoyant
5. extraordinary

Discussion Questions

Chapters 1 - 6

1. Sam did not disturb the birds, but just watched them quietly from a distance. He also saw a fox creeping up towards the swan, and Sam threw a stick at him just in time.
 2. Louis had no voice. He felt like he was different than his siblings. He felt frightened. He felt life was unjust and cruel to not have given him a voice.
 3. Answers will vary. Make this an opportunity to focus on all the things your student can do.
 4. Catastrophe means a disaster. Allow students to give their own definitions.
 5. A good discussion should follow this question.
 6. Applegate was upset and decided to go out in a canoe. This was against the rules; he had not passed his swimming test or his canoe test. A strong wind came and Applegate tipped over. He struggled in the water. The counsellors tried to rescue him but there was not enough time. Louis flew out to Applegate and picked
1. The swans were cautious of Sam at first. How did he become their friend? (Chapter 3)
 2. What was Louis's problem and how did this make him feel? (Chapter 5)
 3. Although Louis could not speak, it did not stop him from learning to swim and fly. Is there something **you** can't do? Now, list **all** the things you **can** do. (Chapter 6)

Chapters 7 - 12

4. In class, Louis wrote the word "catastrophe" on the blackboard. Some of the students gave their definition of the word. Tell your teacher what you think "catastrophe" means. (Chapter 7)
5. Louis' father broke into a music store to steal a trumpet for his son. What do you think of his actions? (Chapter 9)
6. Tell me about the rescue of Applegate Skinner. (Chapter 12)

Chapters 13 - 18

7. At Camp Kookooskoos, Mr. Bicle added one more item for Louis to carry around his neck. Can you think of all the items which now hung around Louis' neck? (Chapter 13)
8. Why did Louis want Sam to cut his webbed foot? (Chapter 13)

Chapters 19 - 21

9. Louis and Serena had a problem. How did Sam help them? (Chapter 19)
10. Tell me what happened when Louis' father returned the stolen money to the music store. (Chapter 20)

him up on his back.
Applegate was saved
just in time.

7. Louis now had a trumpet, slate, chalk, medal, and moneybag around his neck.
8. With toes, Louis knew he would be able to play all kinds of music.
9. Sam convinced the Head Man at the zoo that it would be best not to clip Serena's wings.
10. A salesman in the music store saw Louis approaching and in fear, yelled to the storekeeper to grab his gun. The storekeeper fired some shots and Louis' father continued flying towards the storekeeper and gave him his money. Upon seeing a drop of his own blood, Louis's father fainted. After the policemen and ambulance arrive, everything is cleared up and the cob receives a band-aid on his "wound."

