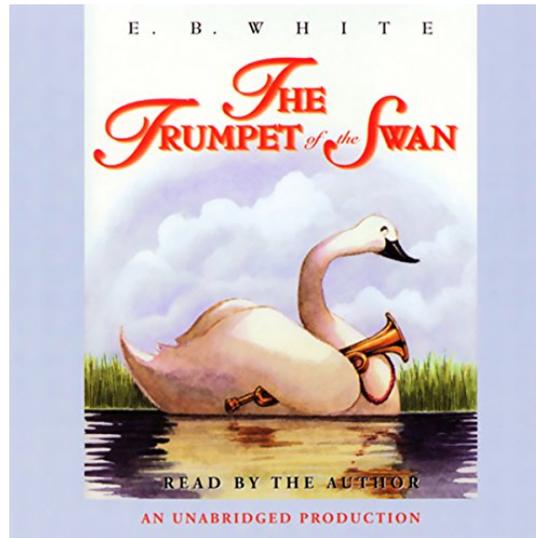


The Trumpet of the Swan Novel Study

A novel study in support of Grade 4 English Language Arts, Social Studies
(BC/Yukon Curriculum)



Summary

1. Subject(s): English Language Arts, Social Studies, Outdoor Education
2. Topic or Unit of Study: Trumpeter Swans, human behaviour, finding one's voice
3. Grade/Level: 4
4. Curriculum Connections:
 - English Language Arts 4: Big Ideas- Language and text can be a source of creativity and joy.
 - English Language Arts 4: Big Ideas- Exploring stories and other texts helps us understand ourselves and make connections to others and to the world
 - English Language Arts 4: Content- Story/text- forms, functions, and genres of text
 - English Language Arts 4: Curricular Competencies- Use personal experience and knowledge to connect to text and deepen understanding of self, community, and world
 - Social Studies 4- Big Ideas: The pursuit of valuable natural resources has played a key role in changing the land, people, and communities of Canada. *What happened with the swan population?

5. Objectives: Using the classic E.B. White novel, *The Trumpet of the Swan*, students will learn about the life of a fictional Trumpeter Swan that incorporates a respectable amount of biological information on swan life cycles, physical characteristics, and migration. The novel is a jumping off point for learning about real swans that visit the Yukon each Spring, including the population variations throughout the past century and how humans have played a role in those changes. This process will include using writing to discover and explore our relationships with nature, and taking our learning outside for immersive writing and listening moments in nature. Reading comprehension strategies and writing skill development will be supported.
6. Time Allotment: A novel study can occur over several weeks, depending on the needs of the learners and the class time available. The teacher may decide what would best suit their students in terms of reading the novel in class, at home, as a group, with an audio book or by the teacher, or any combination of these reading experiences.

Description

This lesson will enhance past and future visits to Swan Haven Interpretive Centre by giving students the experience of reading a novel featuring one of the main species they can observe there as a main character. As a classic of Children's Literature, this novel has much to offer for class discussion beyond the species characteristics described, and teachers can choose to support the students' inquiries as the story unfolds. From exploring themes of personhood and voice, to understanding the motivations of the characters, to questioning if the descriptions of Trumpeter Swans are accurate today, to looking over the population data of this species through history... There are many ways to use a study of this novel to explore both the themes within, and biological information pertaining to Trumpeter Swans and other migratory birds. This can lead into a unit on endangered species, habitat conservation, to an author study of E.B. White, or in entirely different directions. May the students' curiosity be your guide.

Implementation

Prior Knowledge: What do your students already know about Trumpeter Swans? Is this an opportunity to review elements of writing? Is this an opportunity to identify how differences in context, perspectives, and voice influence meaning in texts?

Procedure:

Anticipatory Set-up: You will need copies of this novel, either enough for each student, or if you are using this novel with a smaller group of readers who are at a similar reading level you may find that you only need copies for the size of that group.

Option 1: Study the novel as a class, having each student take part in the reading, analysis and discussion of the novel (classroom learning activity suggestions below).

Option 2: Use the novel with the whole class by choosing to listen to the audio book (classroom learning activity suggestions below)

Option 3: Use the novel in a smaller reading group, if you are doing three or four separate novels with as many groups based on reading level or student preference. In this instance, choose assignments that will allow the students to collect, verify, and share the swan facts within the novel if possible. This sharing can take the form of art projects, drama presentations, graphs, or written pieces.

Direct Instruction Recommendations: (For approaches to differentiated instruction, please see below.)

1. Begin with an introduction to the novel and explain the reason for choosing it (it is a classic and features an animal that visits the Yukon, it might help students to get more out of a trip to Swan Haven Interpretive Centre, it is full of information and heart, and more). Ask students to write at least three things that they already know about Trumpeter Swans before reading the novel. This can take the form of a journal entry and may be useful as a gauge, after reading the novel, as to how many new pieces of information they may have learned about Trumpeter Swans.
2. Students will need to choose a system or format in which to gather all of the biological information mentioned in the book, per chapter, about swans, which they will check for accuracy by researching as a group or by assigning a fact to each student to verify. This can be an online doc, a wall chart, a section of the board, or can be done individually in journals. Example: A wall chart on which each physical characteristic of swans mentioned in the book is logged could be useful, with a 'verified by' box next to each one for the initials of the student who researches the characteristic.
3. Next, the novel will offer students the opportunity to respond, interpret, and connect. Here are some suggestions for classroom assignments in support of this:

- a. Vocabulary Exploration: Locating descriptive words / phrases, finding compound words, synonyms and homonyms, alliteration, parts of speech, similes, personification and foreshadowing.
 - b. Plot Exploration: Completing a timeline of events, finding cliffhangers, describing conflict, describing what the climax could be, writing an alternative for plot scenarios.
 - c. Character Exploration: Identify and describe characters and their traits, relate events to personal experiences, describe the protagonist and antagonist, do a comparison chart of characters and traits.
 - d. Creative Exploration: Writing journal responses, writing book reviews, writing newspaper articles, performing scenes, creating poetry in response to the novel, redesign the cover, create a commercial or advertisement for the book, rewrite a scene as a page of a graphic novel.
4. Finally, armed with some new facts about Trumpeter Swans (perhaps), as a class, take time to consider the population of Trumpeter Swans over the past 100 years. Open up a discussion of how human behaviour can impact other species. Some possible questions to use in discussion:
- a. What defines a natural resource?
 - b. Who has a right to the natural resources of a place? Why do you think this is? Do other people share this feeling?
 - c. Over the course of a century, how have people considered Trumpeter Swans in North America? Were they used for anything? Were people and other animals affected by this? How have things changed?

To help with information as the students begin to research, here are some links:

https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Trumpeter_Swan/overview (go to the “Cool Facts” section)

<https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/trumpeter-swan>

<https://blog.nwf.org/2019/10/swan-song-5-fun-facts-about-these-majestic-creatures/>

https://www.birdweb.org/birdweb/bird/trumpeter_swan

<https://www.ducks.ca/species/trumpeter-swan/>

5. Bring the classroom outdoors with Sit-Spots: Having completed a novel study wherein a main character is a migratory bird, this is an opportunity to bring the

students into nature for observation and listening. As a class, choose a time to go outdoors, dressed for the weather, with a notebook and pencil for each student. You will need a location in which the students can safely spread out, sit, and truly listen to their surroundings. Their task is to just listen, and try to hear as many sounds of nature as possible, which they will log in their notebook. If they also hear more human-caused sounds, this is perfectly fine. The exercise is intended to create space for students to connect with the outdoors and listen for the life around them. Sometimes this can involve hearing the things that block out the sounds of nature as well, which is a healthy class discussion to have. Make time for this, at least fifteen minutes, and be patient as students feel their way through the process. This can be repeated in different locations, and at different times of the year.

Deeper Connections: Consider all of the ways that swans have been described and portrayed in books, art, dance, and film. What are some common images, themes, or feelings that they are used to represent?

Materials & Resources

You will need:

- Whiteboard and markers or the ability to use tech to create a similar space for writing and sharing.
- A sufficient number of copies of E.B. White's *The Trumpet of the Swan*: White, E. B., & Frascino, E. (1970). *The trumpet of the swan*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Pencils and notebooks
- For any creative responses, the necessary art supplies.

Assessment

At the end of this activity, students should have had the opportunity, at the teacher's guidance and discretion, to create responses to the novel and its subject matter in a variety of ways. From parts of speech to conversations on social responsibility, there are numerous options to assess comprehension and ELA skill development.

Extend, Enhance, and Connect Further:

- a. First Nations Languages: Now that the class has explored swans in fiction and researched further, there is an opportunity to consider languages. Discuss the words we have for swans in English and French (*cygne*), but also discuss how for many, many years, swans who came to the Yukon had (and still have) other names. Share that in some Yukon First Nations Languages, swans are also known as:

Southern Tutchone: [dägay](#)

Gwich' in (Fort McPherson dialect): daazrai i

Kaska: [degaye](#)

Northern Tutchone: Togok

Tlingit: gúkl'

Source: Yukon Native Language Centre search, 2020

<http://ynlc.ca/languages/index.html>.

This is not a complete list, and the input of your school's Language Keeper or Teacher is important to respectfully seek if pursuing this path. A wider project may involve researching the name for swans in Indigenous languages globally.

- b. Now that the students have done sit-spots, and had the experience of listening to the world around them and identifying sounds of nature, where possible teachers may wish to take further opportunities to learn outdoors. Nature Walks, Nature Scavenger Hunts, Nature Bingo, Bird feeders, Bird walks, and other great activities can keep building those connections, as well as science and outdoor education lessons such as the following:

<https://birdsoftheworld.org/bow/home>, <https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/>,

<https://wabisabilearning.com/blogs/stem/20-stem-outdoor-activities>,

<https://www.birds.cornell.edu/k12/life-in-a-nest/>,

<https://www.birds.cornell.edu/k12/science-theme/>,

http://bms.mcps.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_92164/File/General%201/Wildlife%20-

[%20Sounds%20of%20the%20Wetlands.pdf](#),
<https://outdoorclassroomday.com/resource/outdoor-symphony/>

- c. Though designed in Iowa, this activity resource shares information about Trumpeter and Tundra Swans, as well as how extirpation occurred and how the original range has been affected. There is an excellent “Make a Wetland” project as well within this resource, and a general wealth of swan-focused biodiversity information:
https://www.trumpeterswansociety.org/file_download/inline/64ca6818-9e87-4c5f-8bcb-a5de6c7e22df



yukon wildlife preserve