

The Summer of the Swans

by Betsy Byars

1971 Newbery Medal Winner



A Teaching Guide

by Margaret Whisnant

***Objective Tests,
Something to Think About. . .
Something to Write About. . .
and Answer Keys***

for

The Summer of the Swans

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Chapter One Pages 1-7
Chapter Two Pages 8-10
Chapter Three Pages 11-14

Write the **letter** of the correct answer in the blank before each question.

- _____ 1. Sara Godfrey pretended to put on a show with her dog Boysie because (A) there was nothing else to do, (B) the old dog loved the attention and the scarf that Sara was using as a costume, (C) she knew it annoyed Wanda
- _____ 2. Boysie was (A) a half-grown puppy with very large feet, (B) a small poodle mix, (C) an old dog.
- _____ 3. Wanda asked Sara not to start (A) complaining about their small room, (B) listing all the things she thought were wrong with her, (C) telling fantastic stories about things that happened at school.
- _____ 4. Sara was not pleased with the fact that (A) people at school always made fun of her big feet, (B) her sneakers fit Bull Durham's feet perfectly, (C) the size of her hands and the size of her feet did not match.
- _____ 5. What color were Sara's sneakers? (A) red, (B) pink, (C) orange
- _____ 6. Sara pretended to cry, expecting Boysie to (A) dig at her with his paws and lick her hands until she stopped like he used to do, (B) put his head on her shoulder in sympathy as he always did, (C) leave the room so she could be alone in her misery.
- _____ 7. When Sara sat down on the top step beside him, Charlie was (A) talking to himself about Sara's unusual sneakers, (B) trying to put the lollipop he had been eating back on the stick, (C) crying because he could hear his aunt and Wanda arguing.
- _____ 8. Which of the following was **not** something that Sara had done the summer before as well as the present summer? (A) write in a diary about far-away places she wanted to visit some day, (B) walk to the Dairy Queen with her friend Mary, (C) baby-sit for Mrs. Hodges and watch television.
- _____ 9. This summer was different for Sara because (A) one moment she was happy and the next she was miserable, (B) Mary had left to travel on a six-week's cruise with her grandmother, (C) she had been assigned the job of looking after Charlie.
- _____ 10. Charlie had worn two grooves in the step by shuffling his feet back and forth, a habit that showed he (A) was angry with someone, (B) concerned about something, (C) afraid.



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Chapter Four Pages 15-21



Write either **Yes** or **No** in the blank before each question.

- _____ 1. Did Aunt Willie tell Frank to save himself some steps because Wanda wasn't going anywhere on the motorcycle?
- _____ 2. Was Frank a thin boy with red hair?
- _____ 3. Did Frank lose his temper when Aunt Willie said he could break his neck on a motorcycle if he wanted to, but Wanda was not going to break hers?
- _____ 4. Had Aunt Willie ever been on a motor scooter?
- _____ 5. Did Frank offer to ride off into the sunset if Aunt Willie still thought the motorcycle was not safe after she gave it a try?
- _____ 6. Was there something about a ride on the motor scooter that appealed to Aunt Willie?
- _____ 7. Did Sara say she thought her aunt was too old to be riding up and down the street on a motor scooter?
- _____ 8. Was Aunt Willie over sixty years old?
- _____ 9. Did Frank tell Aunt Willie that the motorcycle was just like a motorized baby carriage?
- _____ 10. Was Charlie watching when Aunt Willie settled herself sidesaddle on the back of the scooter?

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Chapter Five Pages 22-25
Chapter Six Pages 26-29

Write either **True** or **False** in the blank before each statement.

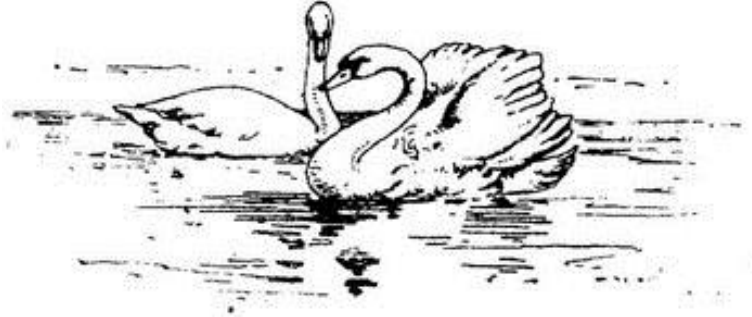
- _____ 1. Sara thought Wanda was beautiful, and she liked hearing her Aunt Willie say that she looked just like her sister.
- _____ 2. It was Sara's opinion that a person was the way he or she looked.
- _____ 3. Aunt Willie was the only person who had tried to convince Sara that looks were not important.
- _____ 4. Sara told Charlie the story about how Thelma Louise, who was beautiful, wrote a paper entitled "Making People Happy" and got an A.
- _____ 5. Sara and her family lived in the hills of West Virginia.
- _____ 6. Strip mining had begun on the hills to the north, leaving unnatural cliffs of pale washed earth.
- _____ 7. Mary had an endless collection of records, and Sara longed to be up in her friend's room listening to them.
- _____ 8. Both Mary and Sara agreed that the dress Aunt Willie was making was better than the more expensive one they could have bought from the store.
- _____ 9. When she went inside with Mary to see how her friend was going to cut her hair, Sara left Charlie sitting on the steps.



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Chapter Seven Pages 30-35
Chapter Eight Pages 36-42



the swans
dye her shoes
boys
a good sleeper

Charlie
five minutes
Sara
laughed

a roll
discontent
Aunt Willie
his brain

a university
exactly alike
the radio
kicking one foot

Frank
Wanda
a hospital
a used look

From the list above, choose the name, word, or phrase that matches each of the clues below and write it in the blank. **All** answers will be used **at least once**. **Some** answers will be used **more than once**.

- _____ 1. The first fourteen years of Sara's life had flowed along seeming to be the same, but this year she was filled with this.
- _____ 2. Sara had seen them flying over her house on their way to the pond.
- _____ 3. Wanda had to get up early to get to her job at one of these on time.
- _____ 4. Sara and Charlie feed the swans pieces of this.
- _____ 5. Sara tried to convince Charlie that she and Mary wouldn't have time to do this if he didn't leave the lake.
- _____ 6. This person felt awful because she was not cute or pretty, wasn't a good dancer, smart, or popular.
- _____ 7. The elegance of their whiteness on the dark lake and the ease of their movements made Sara catch her breath.
- _____ 8. Sara complained that this person acted like she wanted to talk to her and then started being funny.
- _____ 9. When Sara said they should go home, he refused to leave the edge of the lake where he sat watching the swans.
- _____ 10. Sara noticed that no one could tell the swans apart because they looked like this.
- _____ 11. Sara thought the sounds coming from his room seem unusually loud.

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Something to Think About. . . **Something to Write About. . .** Chapter-by-Chapter

Chapter One—Chapter Two—Chapter Three

When the story began, Sara was using one of Wanda's scarves and the family dog Boysie to entertain herself. Which of the **two** following personality traits do you think Sara revealed by this behavior? Cite things Sara said and did, including the way she reacted to Wanda's criticism, as well as the definition of the words you chose to support your answer.

insensitive
affectionate

imaginative
irritating

foolish
spontaneous

humorous
immature

obnoxious
cheerful

Sara complained about her big feet and the fact that a boy at school named Bull Durham could wear her sneakers. Wanda assured her that people didn't notice such things.

- Based on your experience, which girl do you think was correct? Are young people concerned with each other's physical flaws, or are physical differences on the unimportant-things list? Is the reality somewhere in between? Use examples to explain your answer.
- How do you explain Sara's choice of orange tennis shoes which, as Wanda pointed out, drew attention to her feet? One moment Sarah liked them and then later she hated them. What do you think this happened?

Sara believed that she was having the worst summer of her life. She compared her life to a kaleidoscope that had been turned causing everything to change so that it no longer made the same designs.

- Think of the way your life was the year before and compare it to your life today. What things have remained the same? What things are different?
- Would you return to your former life if you could? Why or why not?
- What changes do you look forward to?

Something to Think About . . . Something to Write About . . . Whole Book

Find facts in the story to prove that Sara idolized Wanda. In what way(s) was Sara like Wanda? How were the two girls different?

Charlie had a special challenge of not being able to remember or to reason. He could not help himself or his rescuers when he was lost. For most young people, however, it's helpful to have a plan in place for just such emergencies.

Design a brochure for **people younger than you** with the following information:

- Rules of behavior that would diminish the likelihood of getting lost to almost 0%. Remember to include various places—malls, hiking or camping trips, sports events, vacations, etc.
 - Advice and rules to follow for keeping safe and increasing chances for rescue if he or she is lost.
-

Charlie's habit of thumping his foot against the wall was unusually loud the night after he and Sara had gone to see the swans.

- Explain how this fact was a foreshadowing of things to come.
 - Was there any reason for Sara to be concerned about Charlie's loud thumping on that particular night? Explain your answer.
-

While he was lost, Charlie's watch, a source of comfort, stopped running. This loss, coupled with other events that he could not understand, frustrated Charlie to the point of wailing and piercing screams.

- What **one** possession would you find the most difficult to be without? Why is this possession so important to you?
 - Think of several adults you know. What comfort objects do they possess? Do they serve the same function as your important possession?
 - Why do you think people of all ages and abilities like to own special objects? What is it that they do for us?
-

Which **three** of the following words would you think *best* describe Mary as a friend? Use facts from the story and the words' definitions to support your choices.

<i>sympathetic</i>	<i>honest</i>	<i>empathetic</i>	<i>giving</i>	<i>supportive</i>
<i>caring</i>	<i>tactful</i>	<i>inspiring</i>	<i>courteous</i>	<i>amiable</i>
<i>cheerful</i>	<i>comfortable</i>	<i>trustworthy</i>	<i>patient</i>	<i>generous</i>

About Your Teaching Guide

The primary goal in creating this teaching guide is to provide a **classroom-ready**, non-threatening method for checking student comprehension and stretching thinking skills. **When used as a basic guide for teaching a novel, the materials offer many and varied opportunities for learning.**

Use your teaching pack as a guide and lead your students into discovering new ideas about

THE PLOT

Each test page is actually an outline of the plot. In your teaching pack, the chain of related events that tell the story has been pulled from the novel and reformatted into a series of questions. Whether they are aware of their ability or not, all good readers sense the **rhythm** of the **connected** events that compose the plot; and consequently **comprehend** the story. This “plot rhythm” is the basic structure of the tests.

To further your students’ understanding of plot, try the following activities:

Summarizing the Story: Using only the chapter questions as a guide, have your students write a summary of the chapter. For a set of ten questions, limit the number of sentences they may write to seven. For twenty questions, allow no more than twelve sentences.

Reporting the News: Have students write a newspaper article, based on the events from a set of questions, and add the *who, what, when, where, why* format. Some needed information may be located in previous chapters.

Twisting the Plot: Choose one or two questions from each chapter and change its answer—true to false, no to yes, or a different answer—and explain how changing a single (or several) events would change the story. To further illustrate the rhythm of a good story, try changing the answers to one complete set of questions. Your students will see how difficult, if not impossible, it is to tell a sensible story from a tangled set of events.

THE CHARACTERS

Questions that illustrate character motivation and personality are purposely included. Too often, when they are asked to tell what kind of person a story character is, the only answer many of our students can muster is “nice.”

In your efforts to remove “nice” from your students’ literary vocabulary, try this idea:

Character Charts: Display individual charts for the main characters. As the chapters are read, record **facts, behaviors, or events** that relate to the each character. Then connect the items with several appropriate words such as **empathetic, brave, calloused, bold, untrustworthy**, etc. The teacher can take the lead by contributing the first few words and then assigning the task of identifying more terms to students. Record the word collections on the charts with the story facts.

This information is a valuable student resource when displayed in the room for all to see and use during a writing assignment. In creating and using character charts, students will soon begin writing more fluently and insightfully about story personalities.

Use the charts to encourage your students to try some “predicting” or “detective” writing about what the character(s) might do next or what might have happened after the story ended. Let the charts help your students recognize **CHARACTER CHANGE (dynamics)**.

Another fun activity with the charts is to match a book personality with a zodiac sign. Students must justify their reason for thinking a character is a particular sign by citing his/her behaviors, words, reactions to situations, etc. that prove the match.

READING BETWEEN THE LINES

(Implied Meaning)

Because the primary goal for the objective questions is **basic comprehension**, items requiring a student to **interpret** an event or a character’s behavior are not included. Always included, however, are questions that *establish the existence of a story component carrying an implied meaning.*

MAKING PREDICTIONS

(Recognizing Story Clues)

Authors subtly place clues in the story line giving the reader hints as to what is about to happen. Like the implied meaning, these clues are brought to the reader's attention in the form of a question. Once a student learns to spot the gems, his/her ability to comprehend and enjoy a story tends to leap forward.

Use "thinking-out-loud" class discussions to list all the possible meanings of the clue questions. Have your student write their individual predictions (no sharing or telling), store the papers until the novel is finished, and then retrieve them for reading. Sometimes, a wrong prediction makes a story as good as the original.

OTHER FUCTIONS

The objective test pages are excellent discussion guides for both whole groups and small groups. They work well as homework reading guides and as conferencing tools. They are also useful management tools for teachers who wish to use multiple titles in one classroom.

Something to Think About. . . Something to Write About. . .

In this section, students pack up what they already know about the novel and go exploring into its every nook and cranny. Some activities require the simplest interpretation or application, while others will challenge the most proficient thinkers.

Rationale:

Guidelines. . .

These ideas and activities are based on the skills presented in the ***Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Bloom's Taxonomy)***. There are two reasons for this choice. First, it mirrors the Novel Teaching Pack's primary purpose of building a variety of sophisticated thinking skills upon a foundation of basic knowledge. Second, in following the taxonomy guidelines, activities that correlate with many state educational standards emerge automatically.

Levels of Difficulty. . .

A variety **difficulty levels** to accommodate the needs of individual students, including the gifted, is an integral part of this component. However, **all** items from this section are intended to **challenge** and **sharpen** thinking abilities.

Final Note

This teaching guide designed for use as supplementary material that supports a total reading program. It is my goal to provide busy teachers with a classroom-ready, practical resource loaded with motivational and learning opportunities for their students. It is my hope that your purchase will prove to be a hard-working instructional component for years to come. Thanks for choosing one of my products for your classroom.



Margaret Whisnant, Author