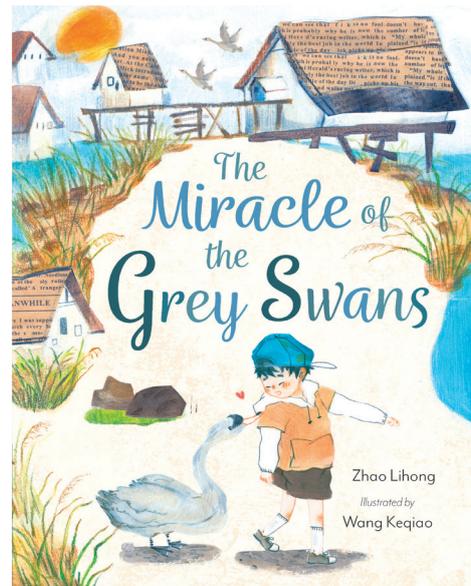


THE MIRACLE OF THE GREY SWANS

TEACHING NOTES

Written by Zhao Lihong
Illustrated by Wang Keqiao
Published by Little Steps Publishing
www.littlestepspublishing.co.uk
www.littlesteps.com.au



SYNOPSIS

A beautiful story about a deep friendship between a little boy and a family of swans. With the help of Weiwei and his family, injured mother swan gets better and successfully hatches her baby swans. When spring arrives again and father swan returns, they are happy to be together once more. Weiwei is sad when they migrate to the south in winter, but he truly believes that they will return to him the following year.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zhao Lihong is a famous writer in China. He is member of the Committee of the Chinese Writers' Association and President of the magazine Shanghai Literature. He also teaches in various universities. He has published more than 80 publications, many of which have been translated into different languages and published abroad. He has won a number of national and foreign literary awards, and many of his articles have been published in primary school textbooks.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Wang Keqiao is an illustrator and picture book creator. She was born in a beautiful coastal city in China, and she likes trees and animals.

EDUCATIONAL APPLICABILITY

The *Miracle of the Grey Swans* is a beautiful story about a little boy, Weiwei, who observes a swan family with guidance from his father. Set against the seasons, we get to know the swan family through the delight of Weiwei.

Weiwei leant against the windowsill watching in a trance. Suddenly, he spotted two swans in the reeds by the lakeshore acting strangely.



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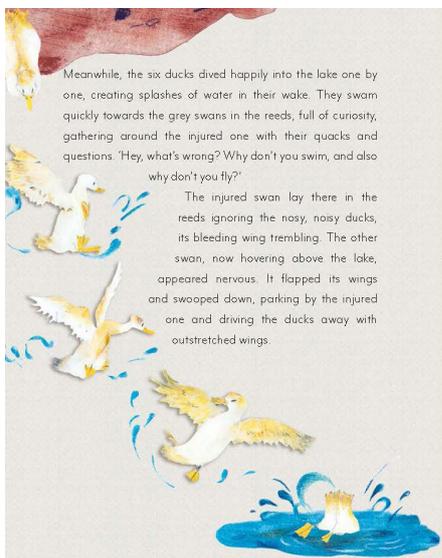


They were two grey swans. One of them was lying back in the reeds, wings flapping, but it seemed unable to fly. Beside it, the other grey swan circled its companion, every few moments spreading its wings and hovering above the water, as if coaxing the other to follow. The one stranded in the reeds flapped its wings with all its might, but nothing happened. They both let out panicked shrieks, which echoed over the lake reaching far and wide.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

Read the book together, asking questions throughout.

1. Look at the cover of the book together. What do you think the story might be about?
2. Ask the children if they've ever seen a swan before? In what setting?
3. How would you describe Weiwei? Curious? Determined?
4. Have you ever studied a bird or animal over a long period of time? In your garden or in the local park? What did you notice? Did you write anything down or maybe draw pictures in a journal?
5. Talk about the connection between Weiwei's family and the swan family. How does this develop throughout the story?
6. What is Weiwei's father's role in the story?
7. How do you think Weiwei feels at the end of the story? Happy? Sad?
8. What have you learnt about swans in this story?
9. What did the children think of the book? If they liked it, why did they like it? What was their favourite part?



Weiwei stood by the lake, watching the injured swan, feeling hopeless. Reaching for his bamboo pole, he tried to hook the injured swan and help it to shore, but the pole was too short. The injured swan flapped its good wing with all its might – it did not like Weiwei's searching pole. Meanwhile the other swan rushed over and bit on the pole with its bill, swinging its neck with force and snatching the pole from Weiwei's hold. With one final flip, it threw the pole back onto the shore.

Weiwei was shocked. He didn't expect the grey swan to be such a tough warrior.



The six ducks continued to quack and waddle around the shed, but soon left the yard to go and find food in the lake.

As mother swan rested, her strength returned little by little, but she also appeared agitated. Always looking this way and that, and sometimes up at the sky, she let out soft cooing sounds from her throat.

'She must be expecting father swan,' said Weiwei.

At lunch, Weiwei and his parents started discussing what to do about mother swan.

'We'll help her get better and let her stay here until her babies hatch,' said his father.

'What about father swan?' asked Weiwei.

'We'll keep the gates open, so he knows he's always welcome. If he wants to stay here, then he can.'

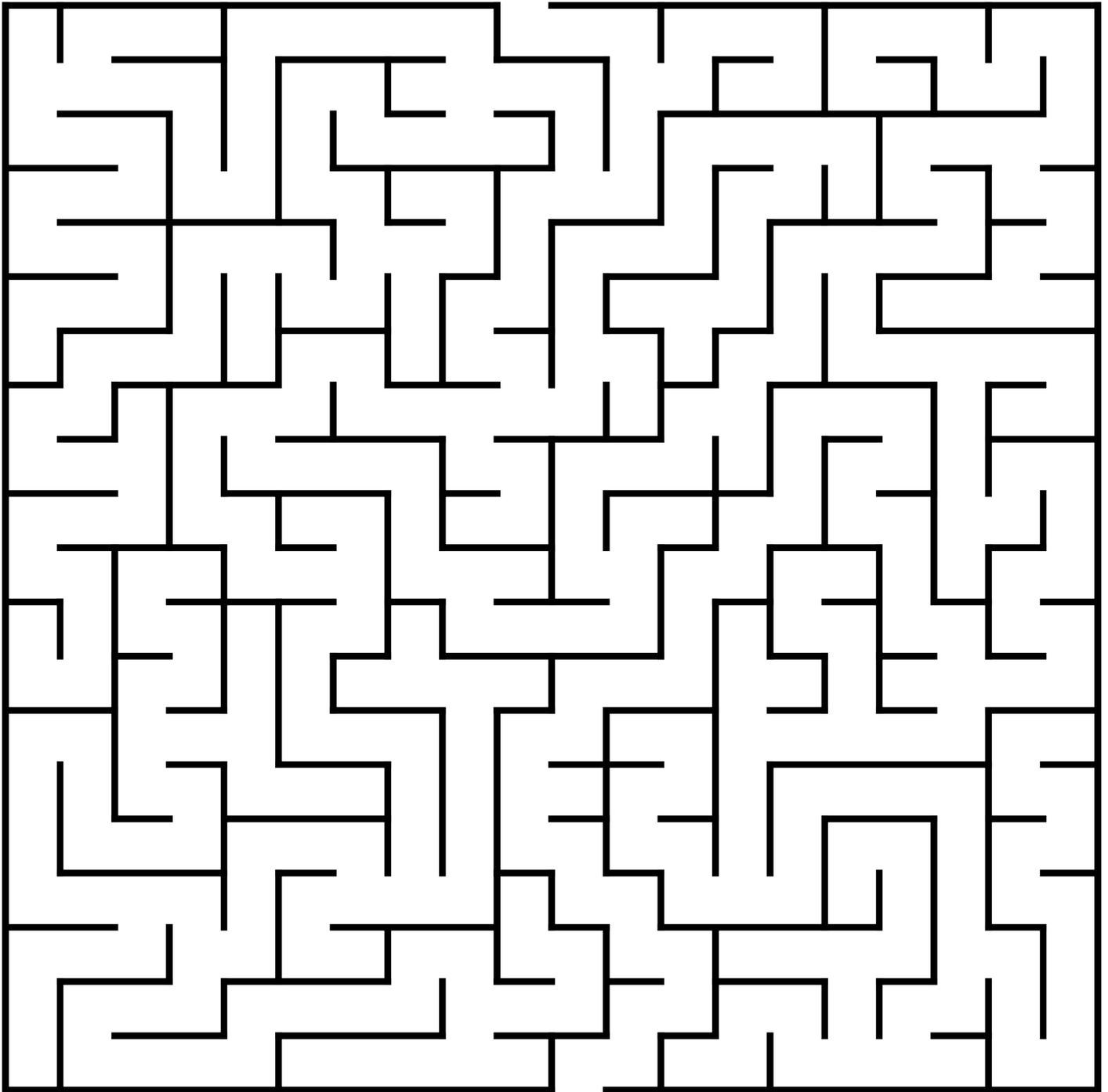
'But what about later? When mother swan's better, and the baby swans are hatched, then what?' Weiwei kept asking.

'Of course, this is just their temporary nest. Later on, they are free to make their own choices. To stay or to go, it's their decision.' His father smiled.

Weiwei then turned to his mother. 'Since we're eating, it's probably time for mother swan to eat too. But what are we going to feed her?'

A-MAZE-ING SWAN

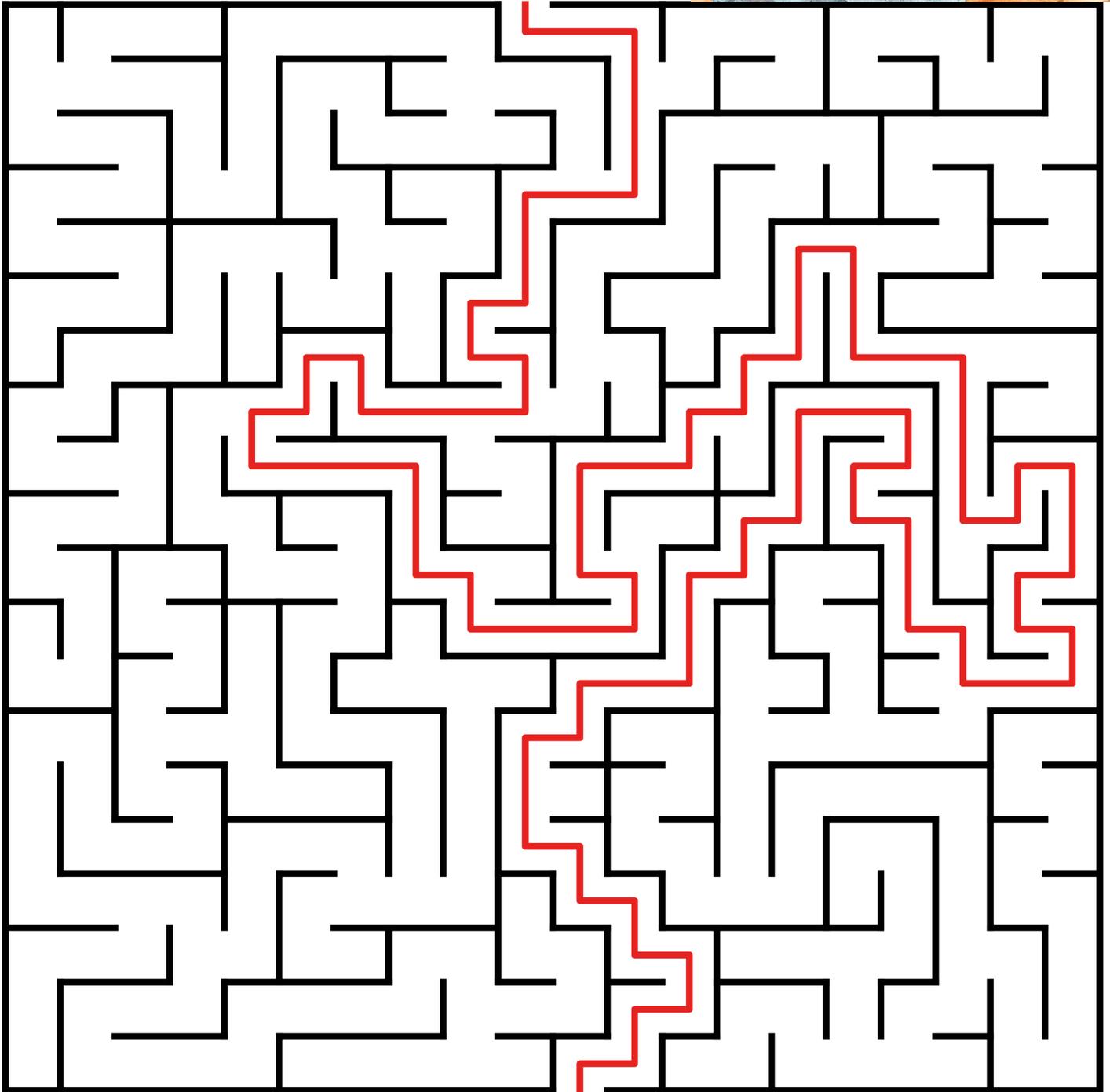
Help father swan find mother swan and the baby swans.



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A-MAZE-ING SWANS

Solution to the maze



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DRAW A PICTURE

Draw a picture of your favourite scene from the story.



THE MIRACLE OF THE GREY SWANS WORDSEARCH



Find all the words below in *The Miracle of the Grey Swans* wordsearch.

Name:

Class:

Date:

word search

THE MIRACLE OF THE GREY SWANS

Y L F N E W H Y I I
L R I M M S L U W E
D E R U J N I E I A
B H R T J A I M N Z
A T E U X W D I T S
B A H A E S U G E P
I F T I T Y C R R R
E R O H S E K A L N
S U M M E R S T A L
S P R I N G O E C T

AUTUMN
BABIES
DUCKS
FATHER
FLY

GREYSWANS
INJURED
LAKESHORE
MIGRATE
MOTHER

NEST
SPRING
SUMMER
WEIWEI
WINTER



word search

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THE MIRACLE OF THE GREY SWANS WORDSEARCH

Solution to the *The Miracle of the Grey Swans* wordsearch

Answer Sheet

word search

THE MIRACLE OF THE GREY SWANS

Y L F N E W H Y I I
L R I M M S L U W E
D E R U J N I E I A
B H R T J A I M N Z
A T E U X W D I T S
B A H A E S U G E P
I F T I T Y C R R R
E R O H S E K A L N
S U M M E R S T A L
S P R I N G O E C T

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