One day, almost a week later, the swan slipped quietly into her nest and laid an egg. Each day, she tried to deposit one egg in the nest. Sometimes she succeeded, sometimes she didn't. There were now three eggs, and she was ready to lay a fourth.

As she sat there, with her husband, the cob, floating gracefully nearby, she had a strange feeling that she was being watched. It made her uneasy. Birds don't like to be stared at. They particularly dislike being stared at when they are on a nest. So the swan twisted and turned and peered everywhere. She gazed intently at the point of land that jutted out into the pond near the nest. With her sharp eyes, she searched the nearby shore for signs of an intruder. What she finally saw gave her the surprise of her life. There, seated on a log on the point of land, was a small boy. He was being very quiet, and he had no gun.

"Do you see what I see?" the swan whispered to her husband.

"No. What?"

"Over there. On that log. It's a boy! *Now* what are we going to do?"

"How did a boy get here? whispered the cob. "We are deep in the wilds of Canada. There are no human beings for miles around."

That's what I thought too," she replied. "But that is definitely a boy over there on that log."

The cob was furious. "I didn't fly all the way north into Canada to get involved with a *boy*," he said. "We came here to this idyllic spot, this remote little hideaway, so we could enjoy some well-deserved privacy."

"Well," said his wife, "I'm sorry to see the boy, too, but I must say he's behaving himself. He sees us, but he's not throwing stones. He's not throwing sticks. He's not messing around. He's simply observing."

"I do not *wish* to be observed," complained the cob. "I did not travel all this immense distance into the heart of Canada to be observed. Furthermore, I don't want you to be observed. You're laying an egg and you are entitled to privacy. It has been my experience that all boys throw stones and sticks. It is their nature.

I'm going to go over and strike that boy with my powerful wing, and he'll think he has been hit with a club. I'll knock him cold!"

"Now, just wait a minute!" said the swan. "There's no use starting a fight. This boy is not bothering me at the moment. He's not bothering you either."

"But how did he *get* here?" said the cob, who was no longer talking in a whisper but was beginning to shout. "How did he get here? Boys can't fly, and there are no roads in this part of Canada. We're fifty miles from the nearest highway."

"Maybe he's lost," said the swan. "Maybe he's starving to death. Maybe he wants to rob the nest and eat the eggs, but I doubt it. He doesn't look hungry. Anyway, I've started this nest and I have three beautiful eggs, and the boy's behaving himself at the moment, and I intend to go right ahead and try for a fourth egg."

"Good luck, my love!" said the cob. I shall be here at your side to defend you if anything happens. Lay the egg!"

For the next hour, the cob paddled slowly round and around the tiny island, keeping watch. His wife remained quietly on the nest. Sam sat on his log, hardly moving a muscle. He was spellbound at the sight of the swans. They were the biggest water birds he had ever seen. Sam always felt happy when he was in a wild place among wild creatures. Sitting on his log, watching the swans, he had a very good feeling.

After he had watched for an hour, Sam got up. He walked slowly and quietly away, putting one foot straight ahead of the other, hardly making a sound. The swans watched him go. When the female left the nest, she turned and looked back. There, lying safely in the soft feathers at the bottom of the nest was the fourth egg. The cob waddled out onto the island and looked in the nest.

"A masterpiece!" he said. "An egg of supreme beauty and perfect proportions. I would say that that egg is almost five inches in length.

His wife was pleased.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Response to Literature

You have just read a selection from the book, Trumpet of the Swan, by E.B. White.

The next day, in the book, Sam returns to the lake where the swans have their nest. Using evidence from the selection, write a response to this question.

Do the swans need to be worried about the boy returning to the lake the next day?
(The person reading your writing will not have read the previous selection.)