

Unit  
10

# The Swoose

Fitzherbert was aware that he looked different from the other goslings on the farm. One day his goose mother explained why ...

She lowered her voice.

"You," she said softly, "are a swoose."  
Fitzherbert coiled his long neck backwards into the shape of an S.

"A what?" he cried.

"Ssssssh!" hissed his mother, and she waddled off to a distant corner of the farmyard, away from all the other geese. Fitzherbert hurried after her.

"What did you say I was?" he asked.

His mother looked around to make sure they were out of earshot of the rest of the flock, and then she said, "Now listen carefully. What I am about to tell you must be a secret between you and me, always. D'you understand?"

"Yes, Mum," said Fitzherbert.

"You are old enough now to be told," said his mother, "why you are unlike all the other goslings on the farm. They are the children of a number of geese, but they all have the same father."



"The old grey gander, you mean?"

"Yes."

"But isn't he my father too?"

"No."

"Then who is?"

"Your father," said Fitzherbert's mum, and a dreamy look came over her face as she spoke, "is neither old nor grey. Your father is young and strong and as white as the driven snow."



Dick King-Smith

## Do you remember?

Write the correct ending to finish each sentence.

- Fitzherbert's mother was:
  - a swan
  - a duck
  - a goose.
- Fitzherbert thought he was
  - a chick
  - a duckling
  - a gosling.
- He had always thought his father was
  - the old grey gander
  - a cockerel
  - a white swan.
- His mother told him about his father
  - in the corner of the farmyard
  - in the barn
  - behind a shed.
- His mother told Fitzherbert that his father was
  - the old grey gander
  - a cockerel
  - a white swan.



## More to think about

- Write a sentence to answer each question.
  - What clue does the author give us near the beginning that Fitzherbert might be related to a swan?
  - Why did his mother want to tell him away from the other geese?
  - What words does the author use to show that Fitzherbert's mother was very fond of his real father?
- What do the following phrases mean?
  - lowered her voice
  - out of earshot
  - white as the driven snow

## Now try these

- If a swoose has a swan father and a goose mother, write the name for a creature which is a cross between:
  - a shark and a whale.
  - a bat and a robin.
  - a pig and a cow.
 Choose one and describe its looks and unusual ways.
- If you were the swoose, describe how you would feel when your mother gave you the surprising news about your father.
- This is the beginning of a story. Write a few sentences to tell how, if you were the author, you would finish the story of the swoose.