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Name _____

Read the Irish folktale and answer the questions on the following pages.

The five kings of Erin met to decide who would become overall king of the isle. King Lir of the Hill of the White Field expected to be elected. When King Dearg was chosen, Lir was incensed, and he returned home feeling great outrage. The other three wanted to attack Lir for his refusal to acknowledge Dearg as chieftain. Dearg restrained them, requesting that their lives remain peaceful.

To pacify Lir, Dearg offered him the hand of his eldest daughter, Ove. Lir and Ove were very happy and were soon blessed with twins—a son, Aod, and a daughter, Fingula. A while later, the twin sons Fiachra and Conn were born. Sadly, Ove did not live long enough to hold them in her arms or even to lay her motherly eyes upon them.

Lir mourned bitterly for his beloved wife, and had it not been for his children whom he loved dearly, he would have died of grief. In time, Lir married Ove's sister, Oifa, who was full of love and affection for Lir and his four children. But as Lir's love for his children grew deeper than his love for her, Oifa grew jealous and bitter. Soon, her feelings for the children of Lir were those of hatred and simmering rage.

One day, Oifa took the children to the Lake of the Red Eye. As they were bathing in the cool, clear waters, she cast a spell and turned them into four beautiful white swans.

"Like this you will stay for 900 years, until Lairgnen, the man from the north, marries Deoch, the woman from the south. But I will grant you two things—you will retain your voices and your songs will be the sweetest-sounding arias ever heard."

Lir knew that Oifa had somehow harmed his children. He set off toward the lake, where he was confronted with the reality of Oifa's cruel work. He was distraught. As he bade his children farewell, he knew his life would never again know happiness.

When King Dearg heard of Oifa's malicious deed, he used his Druid wand for spells and sorcery against her, compelling her to spend eternity in a life of misery as an air demon.

The people were so sadly grieved at the loss of the children that it was decreed that no swan would ever again be harmed on the isle of Erin.

For 300 years, the children of Lir spent their time on the Lake of the Red Eye, captivating everyone with their enchanting songs. Eventually, the time came for the swans to fly to the open Sea of Moyle between Erin and Albain. Here they would spend 300 years in cold and misery, ravaged by hunger and violent storms. The swans endured another 300 miserable years in the desolate land of Erris, before returning home to the Hill of the White Field. But how everything had changed! Ruins and overgrown gardens were all that was left of their once charming home—just bleak desolation and decay.

At this time, Lairgnen, prince of the north, was to marry Deoch, daughter of the king of the south. She had heard of the magnificent swans with their beautiful singing voices. She refused to marry Lairgnen until he captured them for her as a wedding present. Lairgnen was close to achieving this goal, but as he touched the wings of the birds, they lost their feathers and transformed back to their human forms. But time had not stood still for them, no longer were they young children full of life and joy, but four wizened and withered old folk, ready for the grave.

The four were buried together, and a cairn was raised for them. Such was the fate of the children of Lir.

To this day, no one is allowed to harm a swan in Ireland, the land of Erin.



THE CHILDREN OF LIR



Literal

Find the answers directly in the text.

1. List the places the swans spent each 300-year period.

2. According to the curse, before the swans could be released, who had to be married?

3. What parting gifts did Oifa leave with the children of Lir?

Inferential

Think about what the text says.

1. How do you think the children felt when they returned home to the Hill of the White Field? Explain your answer.

2. Read each sentence. Decide if each statement is **True** or **False**.

- a. Lir was happy that Dearg was chosen as chieftain. True False
- b. Lir was a doting father. True False
- c. The children enjoyed their time as swans. True False
- d. Dearg was a righteous king. True False

THE CHILDREN OF LIR

Applied

Use what you know about the text and your own experience.

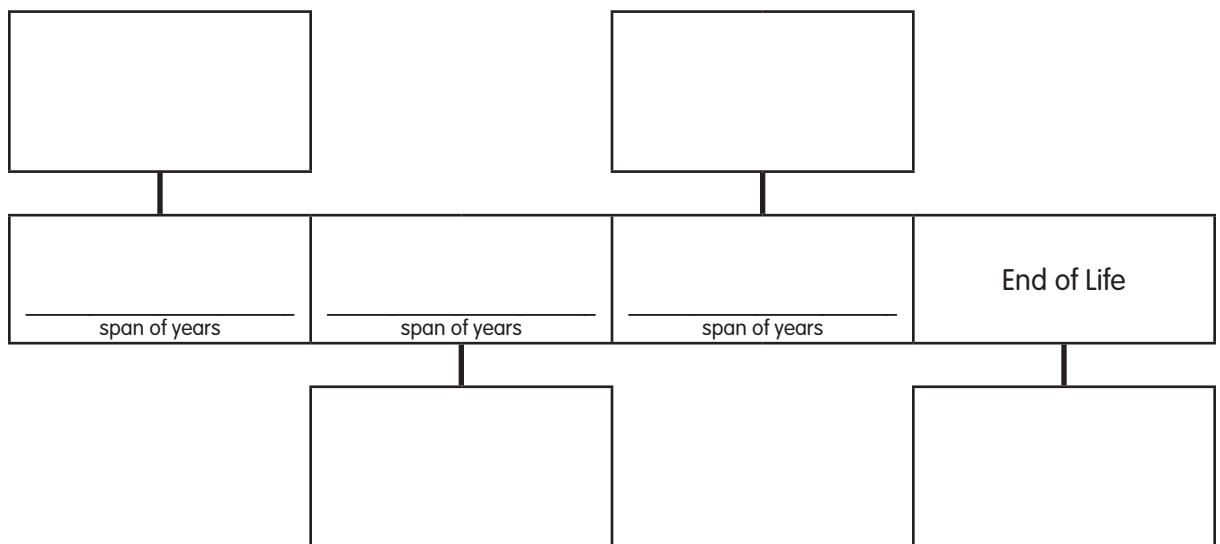
1. Why do you think it was decreed that no swans should be harmed on the isle of Erin?

2. a. Choose a character from this sad folktale.

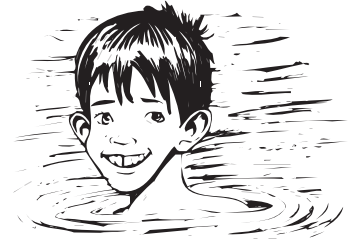
- King Lir King Dearg Oifa the children of Lir

b. Explain why your chosen character was unhappy.

3. Complete the timeline for the 900 years that the children of Lir were swans. Label each section of the timeline and the places where the swans were for each section.



THE CHILDREN OF LIR



Sequencing

Refer to the folktale on page 35 and sequence the events that take place in the story.

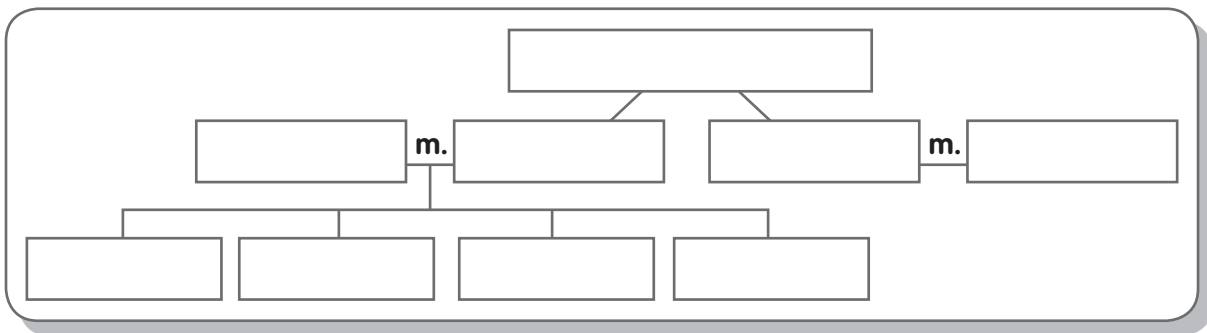
1. The story naturally falls into four parts. Consider where you think the divisions occur, and in chronological order, place these events in the correct boxes.

- Lir and Oifa marry
- swans in the Sea of Moyle
- swans revert to human form
- Oifa turned into an air demon
- swans return home
- children turned into swans
- decree that no swans be harmed
- King Dearth elected as chieftain
- swans in the land of Erris
- swans at the Lake of Red Eye
- Ove perishes
- children perish
- Lir and Ove wed
- children born

<p>Part One</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Part Two</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Part Three</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Part Four</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

2. a. Complete the family tree for the children of Lir.

Making Connections



- b. What relation is King Dearth to the children of Lir?
- c. What two categories of relationship does Oifa have with the children?