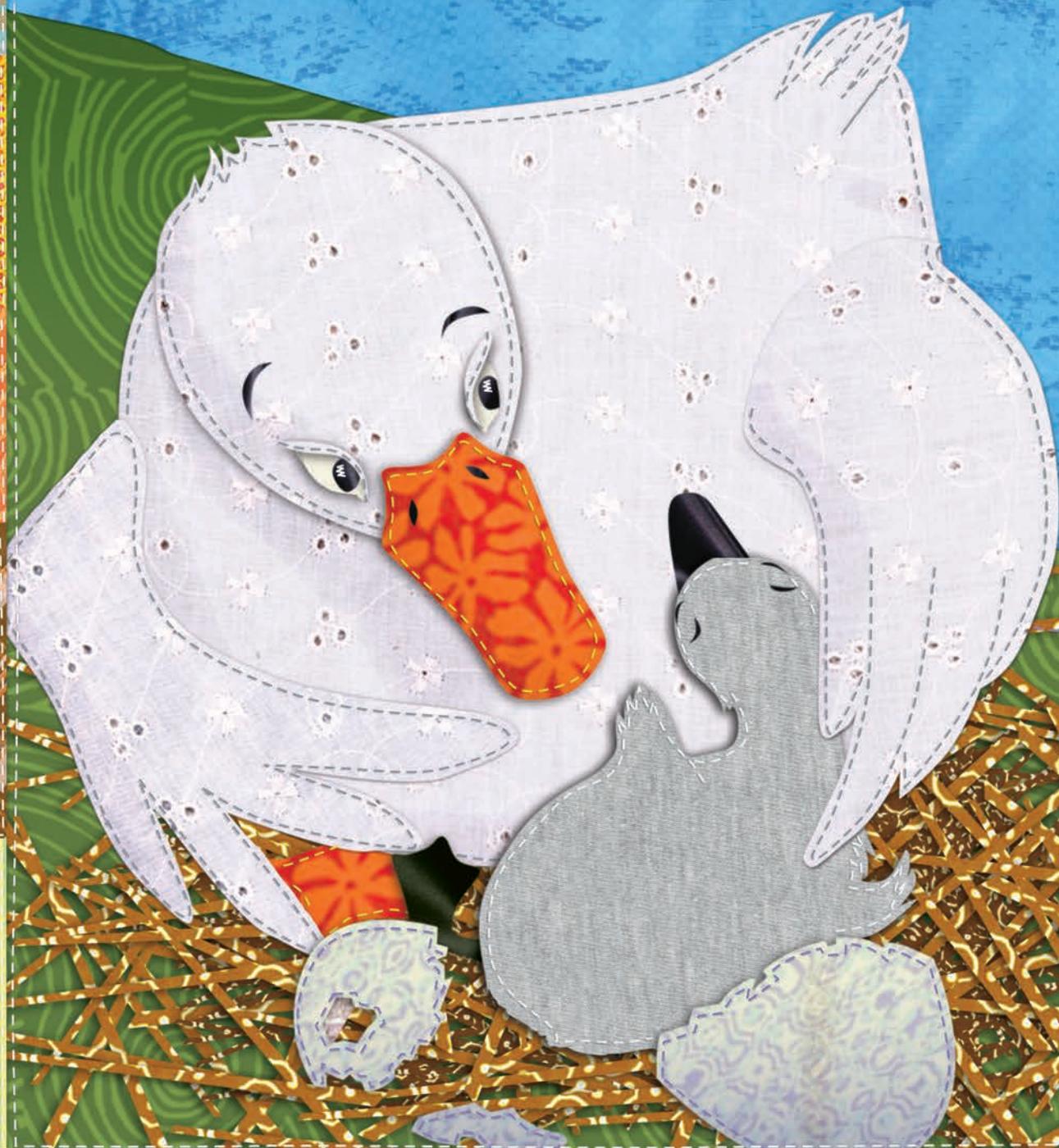


A fairy tale adapted for the youngest ears

The Ugly Duckling



As told by Brandi Chase
Illustrations by Annette Frei



Beauty is becoming what you were always meant to be.

Starfall.com[®]

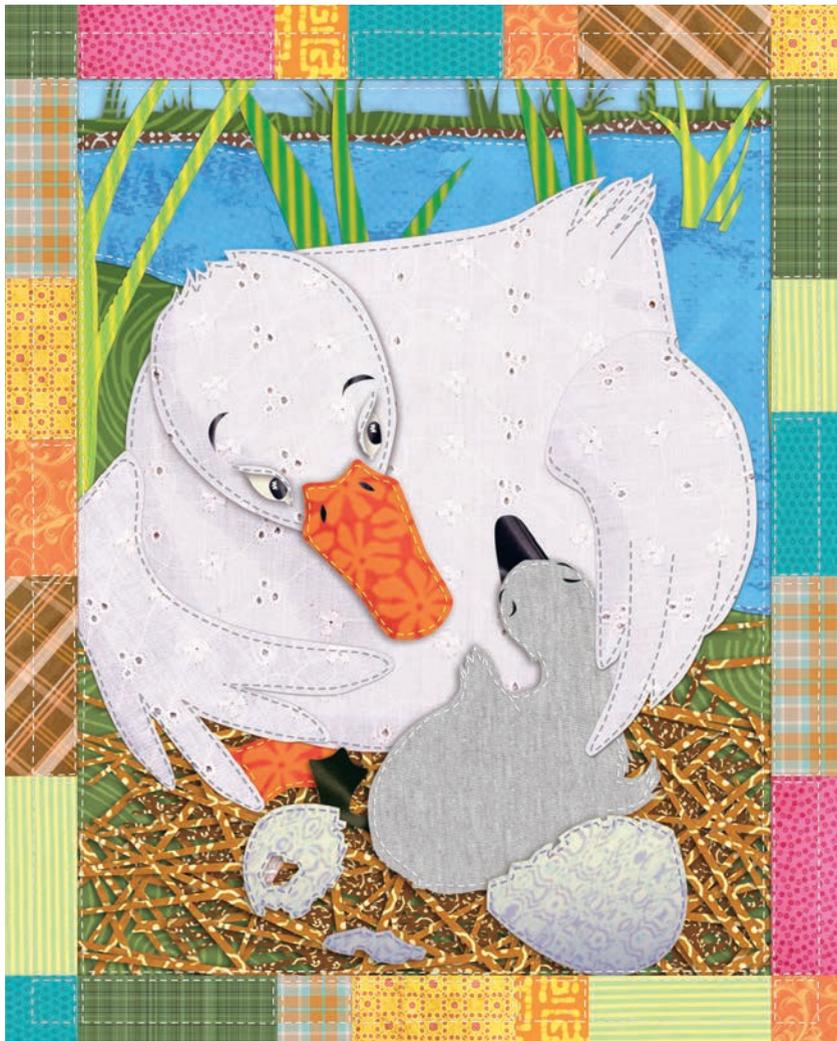
- Begin with free reading and math activities for computers and mobile devices.
- Discover even more interactive activities with a Starfall membership!
- Shop at store.starfall.com for curricula and educational products.

A fairy tale adapted for the youngest ears

The Ugly Duckling

As told by Brandi Chase

Illustrations by Annette Frei



Starfall Education Foundation

P.O. Box 359, Boulder, CO 80306





Down, down, tucked away and hidden in the reeds and rushes surrounding the old farm pond sat a young mother duck. Three of the four eggs in her clutch had just hatched.

“Peep! Peep! Peep!” they called out to their mother.

“Quack! Quack! Quack!” she corrected them.

The fourth egg, larger than the rest, remained. Mother Duck sat down again, and watched her ducklings dry their feathers and drink in the green with their eyes.



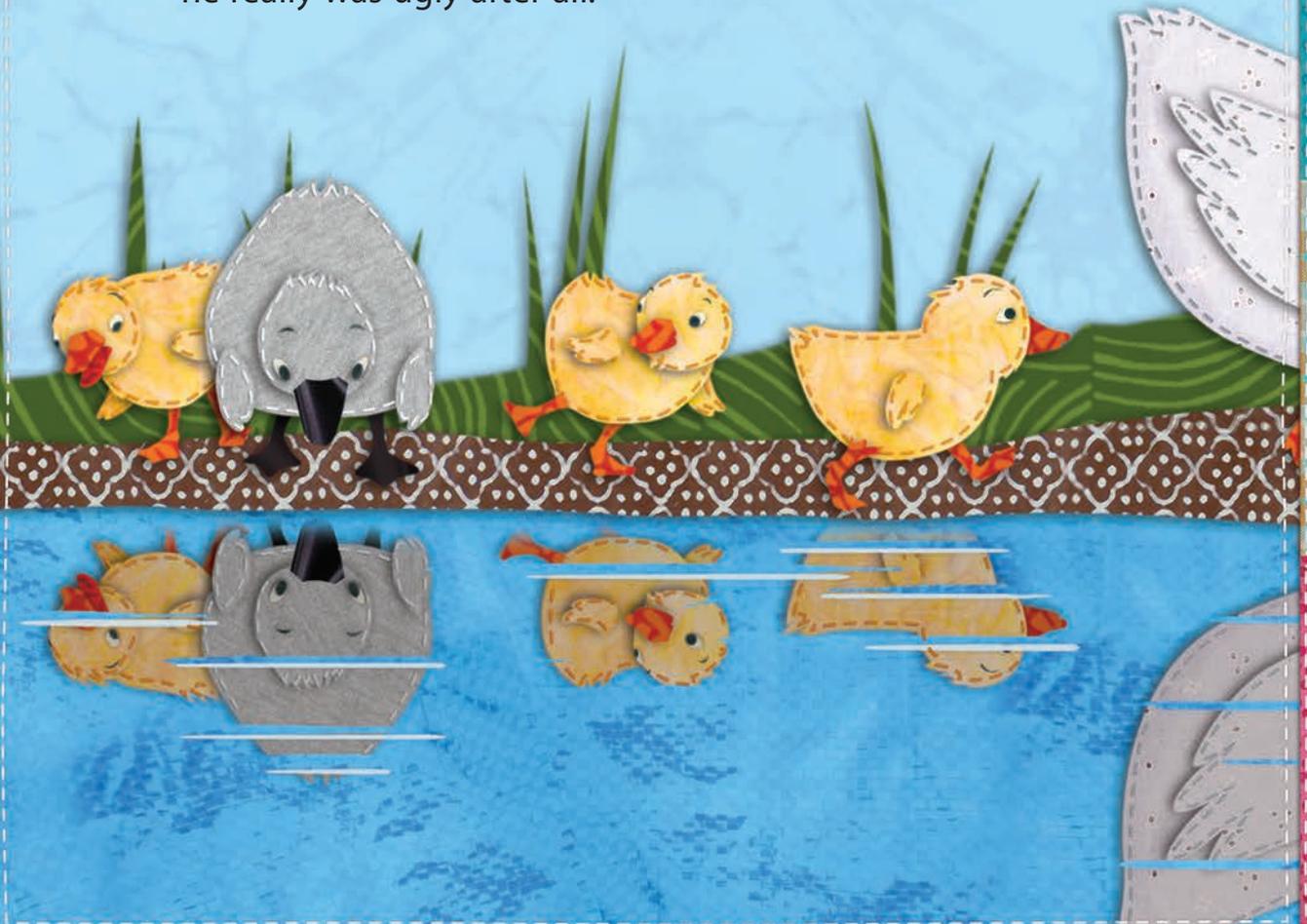
Soon the last egg hatched. Out tumbled a large, soggy, gray creature. Mother Duck was surprised by its appearance, and said, "Oh my! You are ugly for a duckling!"

Even though the duckling was ugly, Mother Duck loved him just the same. She felt sorry for saying such a thoughtless thing and told him so.

"Hoo! Hoo! Hoo!" said the ugly duckling to his mother.

"Quack! Quack! Quack!" she corrected him.

Mother Duck led her brood to the pond's edge. The ugly duckling saw his reflection in the water, and noticed how different he was from his brothers and sister. He wondered if he really was ugly after all.





Mother Duck quacked, "Follow me, darlings, and do as I do!"

With that she plunged into the water and came bobbing up again, then swam around in a circle. One, two, three pretty ducklings and one ugly duckling did just the same.

The family swam together, dipping and diving under the water to find food, and also because it was fun. Mother Duck was pleased to discover that the ugly duckling was the most graceful swimmer of all her children and told him so.





Mother Duck introduced her brood to the farmyard. The three pretty ducklings were accepted at once, but the ugly duckling was not.

A proud pig said, "That one has dull gray feathers and black feet."

A fussy chicken said, "He's so big he's sure to eat more than his share."

A snobby horse said, "He certainly is ugly for a duckling!"

Mother Duck said, "Let him be. He is the best swimmer of all my children!"

Still the farmyard animals would not accept the ugly duckling, and one by one turned away from him.



The ugly duckling said to his mother, "I am ugly for a duckling, but maybe I'm not a duckling at all. I will go into the world and find out what kind of bird I am." He waved a loving farewell to his family and flapped over the fence and into the wetland beyond the farm.

He soon heard the "Arf! Arf! Arf!" of a hunting dog and hid himself low in the grass.

The dog sniffed him out, and growled, "What kind of bird are you?"

"I'm a duck," said the ugly duckling, hopefully.

"You're no duck," huffed the dog, "and you're no goose either!"

"What kind of bird am I?" asked the ugly duckling.

But the dog, who only hunted ducks and geese, didn't stay around to answer. For the first time the ugly duckling was glad for his gray feathers and black beak. His differences had just saved his life!





A grey duckling is peeking through a gap in a grey fabric curtain. The duckling is looking towards the right. The curtain has a textured, woven appearance and is held back by a grey fabric strip. The background behind the curtain is a light blue and yellow patterned surface.

As night fell the ugly duckling looked for shelter.
He discovered a rickety shack on the other side of
the wetland. Its door hung crookedly on its hinges,
leaving a gap just large enough for the ugly duckling
to squeeze through.

Inside he found an old woman sitting near
the hearth with a kitty cat on her lap. When
she stroked the cat, sparks flickered in its fur.
A well-fed chicken sat nearby.

“Ba-gock!” exclaimed the chicken and stood
up to reveal a newly laid egg.





The cat and hen discovered the ugly duckling the next morning.

Said the cat, "I make the old woman happy, because my fur makes sparks."

Said the chicken, "I make the old woman happy, because I lay eggs."

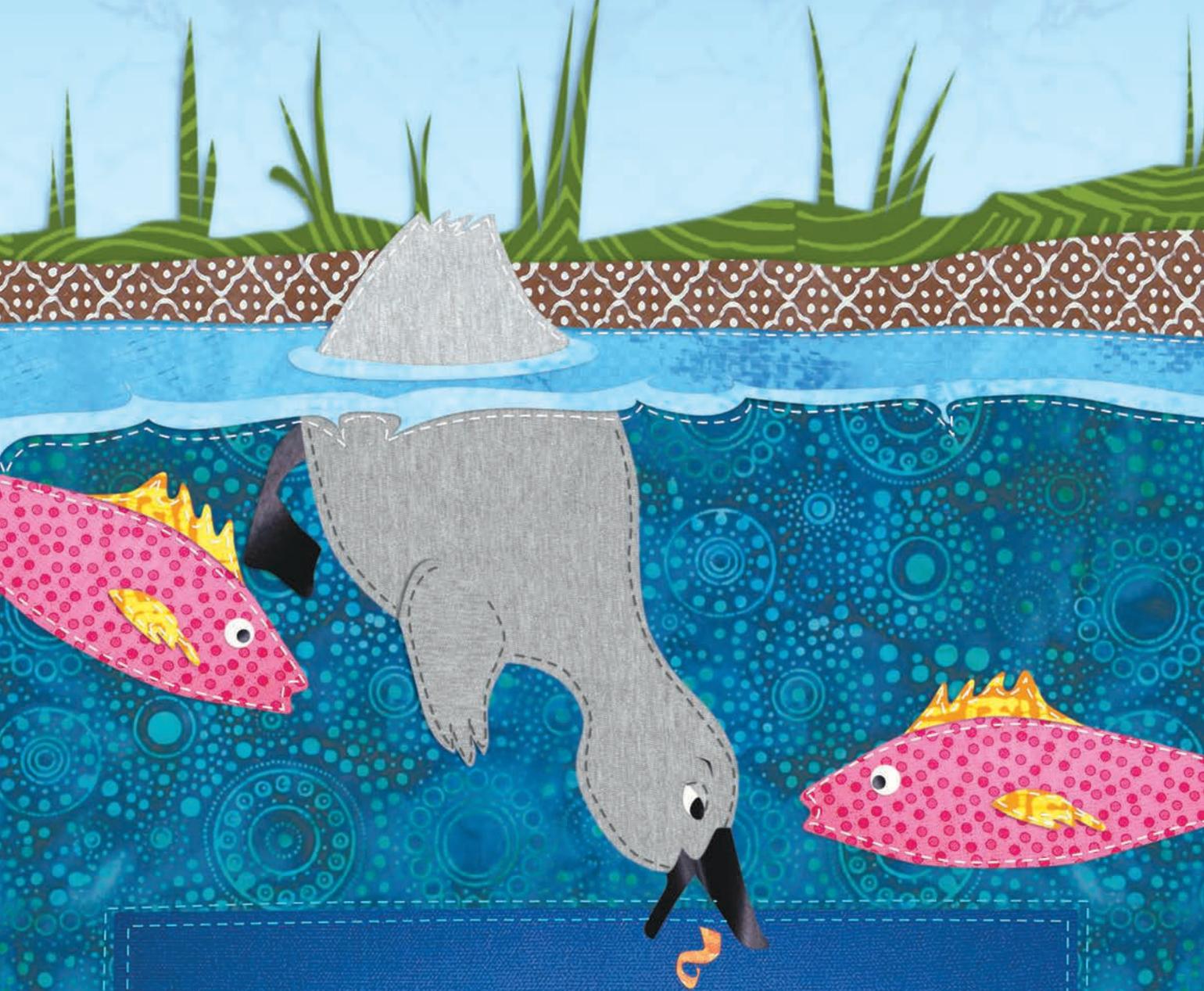
Then they both asked, "What can you do?"

The ugly duckling answered, "I can't do anything that will make the old woman happy, but I know how to make myself happy."

The ugly duckling told them how wonderful he felt when he swam and dived in the water. The chicken and the cat both thought the ugly duckling was foolish for wanting to get wet, and said so.

The ugly duckling replied, "I think you do not understand me. I will go into the world to find others who like to do the same things I do."

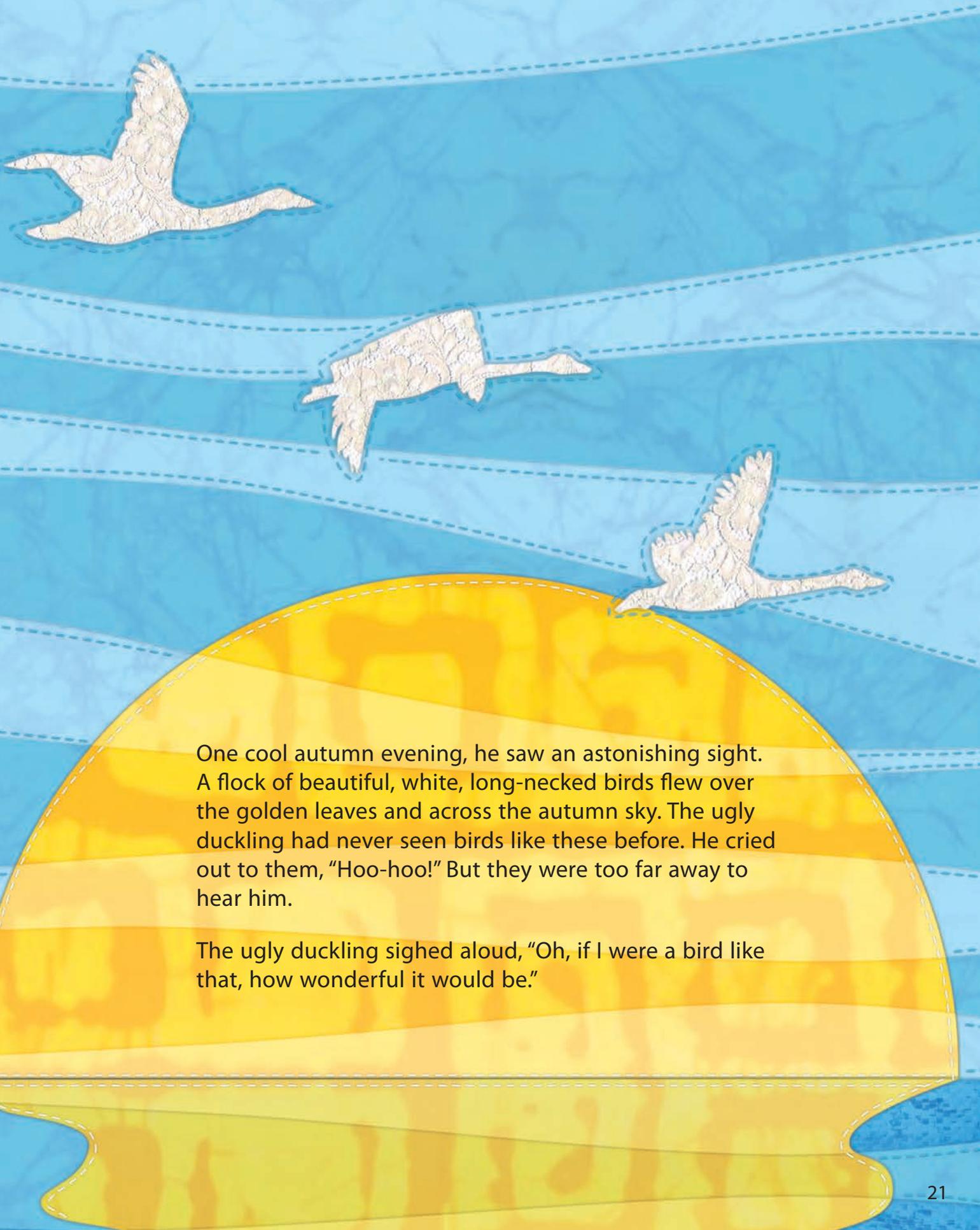




The ugly duckling came upon an empty pond at the edge of a forest. The water was cool and fresh, so he made the pond his home. He spent his days swimming and diving, until the forest leaves turned from green to gold. It was a happy but lonely time.







One cool autumn evening, he saw an astonishing sight. A flock of beautiful, white, long-necked birds flew over the golden leaves and across the autumn sky. The ugly duckling had never seen birds like these before. He cried out to them, "Hoo-hoo!" But they were too far away to hear him.

The ugly duckling sighed aloud, "Oh, if I were a bird like that, how wonderful it would be."

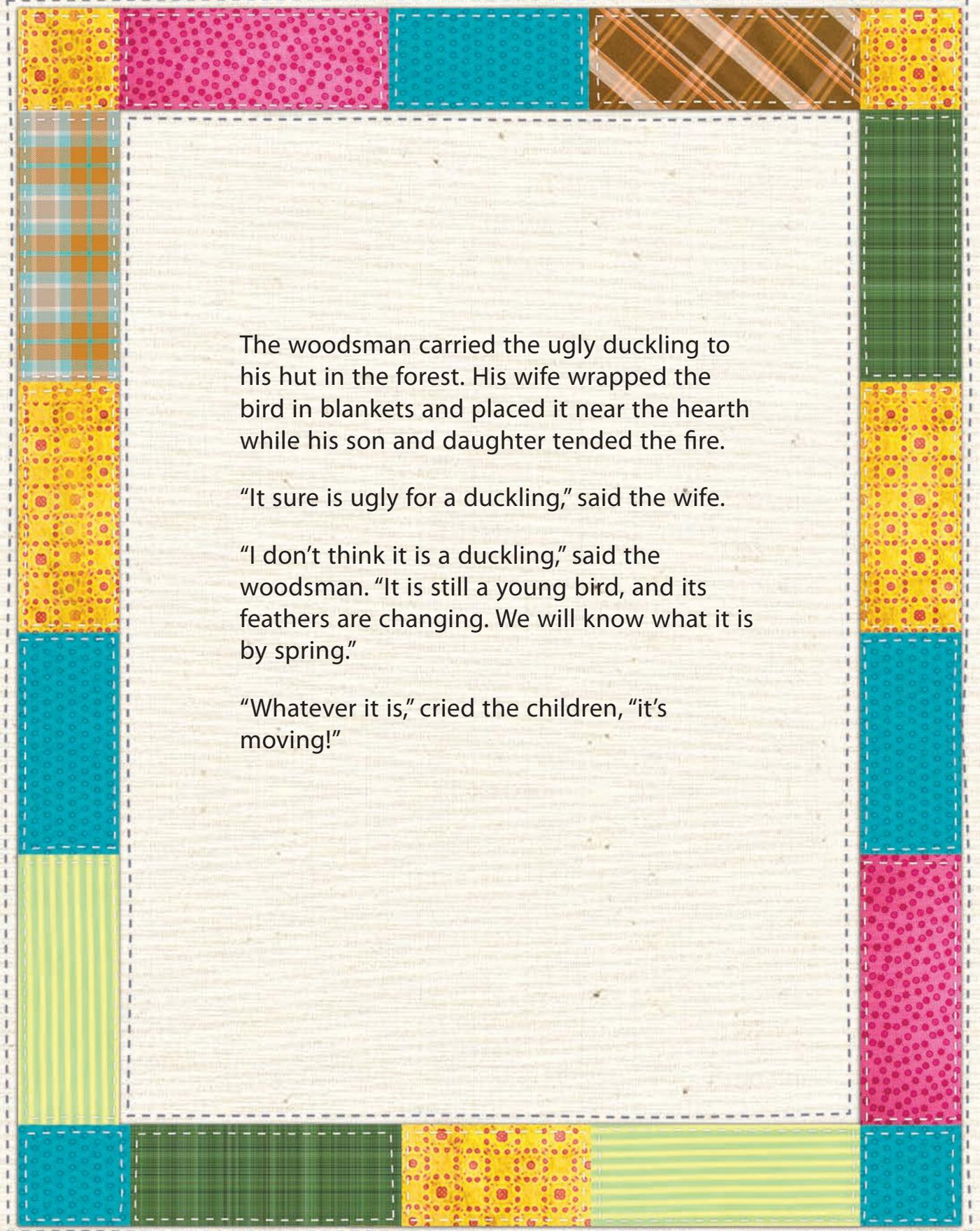


The days and nights became colder and colder and the pond began to freeze. The ugly duckling kept swimming but eventually the poor bird was frozen fast.

A woodsman happened by, and rescued him from the ice with his ax.







The woodsman carried the ugly duckling to his hut in the forest. His wife wrapped the bird in blankets and placed it near the hearth while his son and daughter tended the fire.

"It sure is ugly for a duckling," said the wife.

"I don't think it is a duckling," said the woodsman. "It is still a young bird, and its feathers are changing. We will know what it is by spring."

"Whatever it is," cried the children, "it's moving!"

The ugly duckling, startled by his surroundings, jumped out of the blankets and up onto the dinner table! He flapped his wings, spilling the milk and overturning plates and bowls. The woodsman opened the front door and the ugly duckling flew out of the hut into the chilly night.









The ugly duckling survived the bitter winter alone, but he was not without help. The woodsman taught his children to watch over the bird from afar, and protect it from the cold. They left food near trees and bushes. They built stick shelters. The children watched the ugly duckling grow and change.

"I think I know what kind of bird he is," said the daughter.

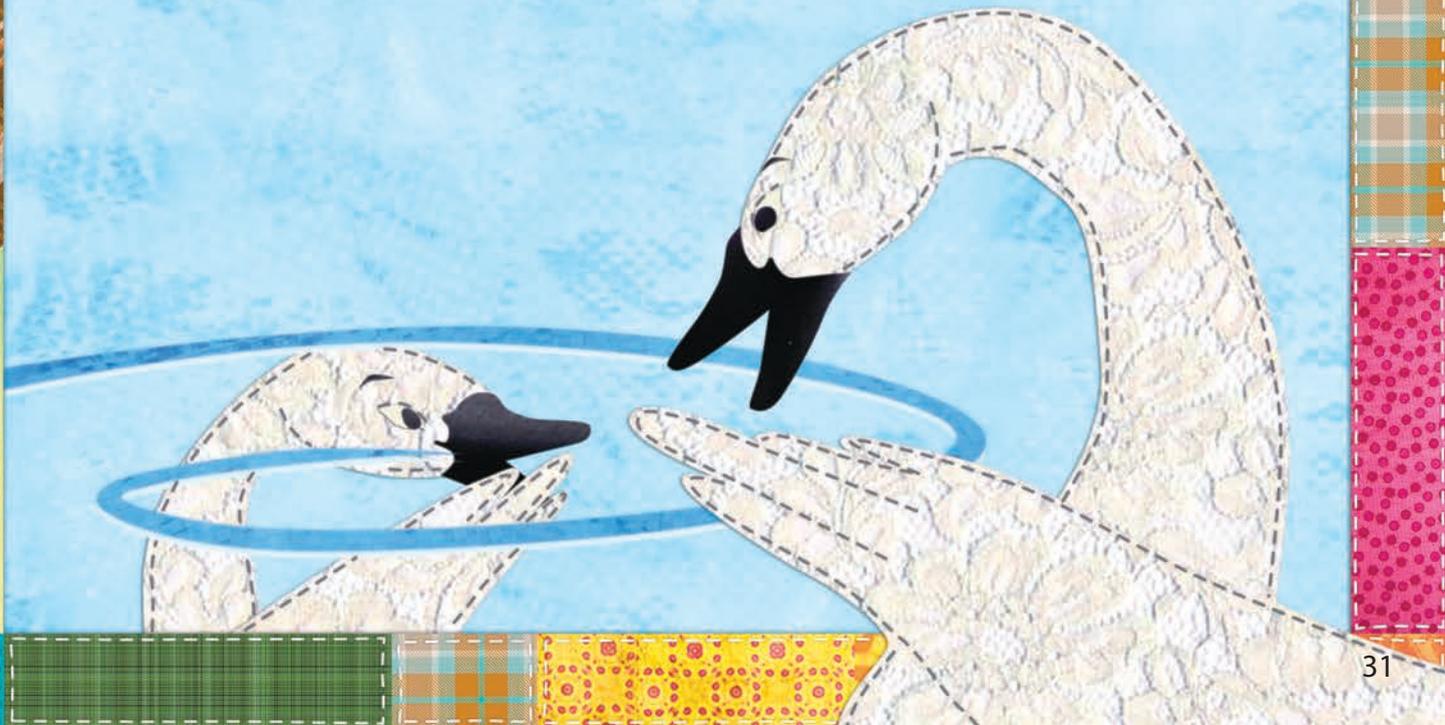
"Me too," said the son.



In time the sun began to warm the ground. White snowdrifts gave way to tender green sprouts. The lonely pond thawed and the ugly duckling returned to swim and dive as before.

This time, though, the pond was not empty. The beautiful, white, long-necked birds he had seen last fall were swimming gracefully on its surface. The ugly duckling could tell they loved swimming and diving as much as he did. He decided to join them; after all, no one knew the pond better than he.

As he neared the water's edge he saw his reflection. What he saw astonished him—he had to look twice! Instead of an ugly duckling, a beautiful, white, long-necked bird looked back at him. "Is that me?" he cried aloud.

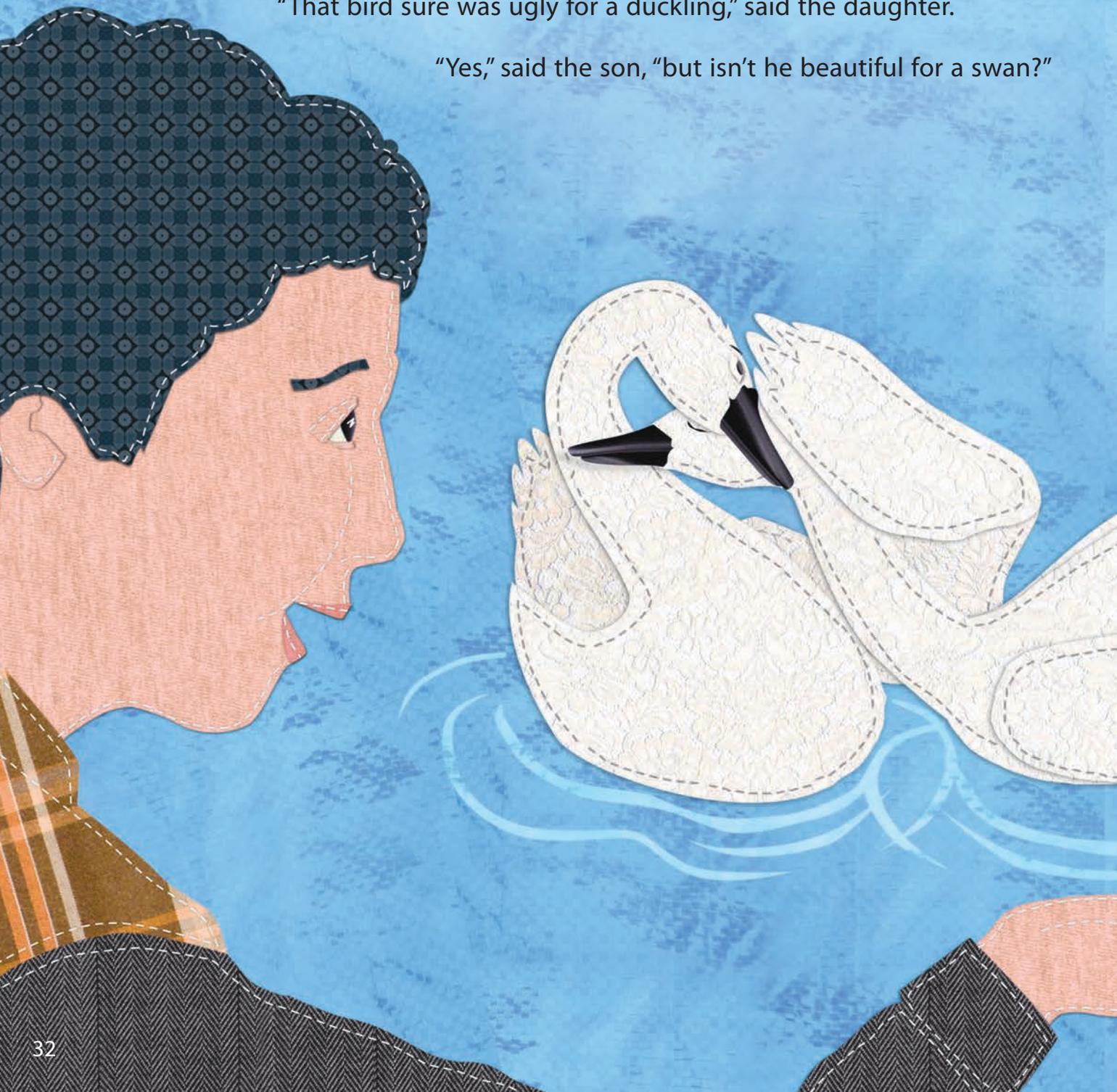


The other birds heard his cry, and quickly surrounded him with cheers of recognition, friendship, and joy.

The woodsman's children had followed the ugly duckling to the pond.

"That bird sure was ugly for a duckling," said the daughter.

"Yes," said the son, "but isn't he beautiful for a swan?"







About the Author

Brandi Chase read many tellings of *The Ugly Duckling* before embarking on her own. It struck her as odd how most accounts stayed true to Hans Christian Andersen's original: the duckling's treatment, good or ill, is always dependent on its outer appearance. She hopes her version of this classic story demonstrates that beauty is evident when a person is what he or she was always meant to be.

About the Illustrator

Annette Frei dedicates these illustrations to her mother, Caroline Frei, who has designed and stitched hundreds of patchwork quilts since her first in 1934. Caroline has great talent in choosing just the right fabrics and colors for the theme and story. Annette hopes one day to turn into the beautiful swan that is her mother.

"Being born in a duck yard does not matter, if only you are hatched from a swan's egg."

- Hans Christian Andersen