

Writing Source Packet

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Institute for Excellence in Writing, L.L.C.

Copyright Policy

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Writing Source Packet

For the *Teaching Writing: Structure and Style*® student to learn to write confidently and competently, reading-level-appropriate source text is needed. This collection of source texts cover a wide variety of subjects so that instructors may choose topics that interest their students or support the content of their other subjects of study. Imagine the value of having science students writing about scientific topics, or sports enthusiasts being able to write about their athletic passion! The *Writing Source Packet* can become the *Structure and Style* teacher's go-to resource for great, ready-to-use source texts for all of their writing instruction.

The texts are divided into five different collections, listed below. Each section includes its own source text table of contents as its first page. Each source text list is grouped by general subject matter, then arranged individually by reading level. Remember, teachers should only use source texts that are at or below a student's reading level.

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These interesting animal topics Mini-Books may be used to teach collecting facts that stay on topic for a solid paragraph (Unit 4), or a teacher may use them as a transition toward independent library research (Unit 6).	

Units 1 and 2 Articles and Stories

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Cattle Ranchers

A cattle rancher must check his cows every day. He watches as they move about. He checks the water supply. He counts them. If flies pester them, he puts a fly tag on their ear. He calls a vet when they are sick. He likes to see the calves on their feet. Ranchers enjoy looking after their cows.

Australia

Australia is called “the land down under.” It is surrounded by the Pacific and Indian Oceans. The smallest continent in the world is Australia. It has many very interesting animals like kangaroos and koalas. Unusual plants also grow there. A large desert covers most of the interior. Beaches lie around the exterior. Tourists enjoy its many attractions. Australia is in the Southern Hemisphere, or “down under” the equator.

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Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox

An American Tall Tale

One winter in the North Woods of Minnesota, it was so cold that all the geese flew backwards. The fish moved south. Even the snow turned blue. During this Winter of the Blue Snow, Paul Bunyan—who was taller than the trees and stronger than any man alive—went walking in the woods. He heard a funny sound, and when he looked down, Paul found a baby ox. He was almost blue from the cold. So Paul took him near the fire. Although the little fellow dried out and fluffed up, he stayed blue. Paul Bunyan named him Babe. Quickly they became best friends, and Babe the Blue Ox grew up to be as tall as Paul.

The Sword in the Stone

It happened that Uther Pendragon, King of the Britons, died without leaving a male heir. This caused tremendous strife in the realm. Actually it was untrue, however, for Merlin the Magician had advised the king: When Queen Igraine bears your son, I shall carry him to safety. His name shall be Arthur. In my cave is a magnificent table that would have helped you become a great king. Instead, Arthur shall have it. And the whole world shall know of Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. Nevertheless, the barons in Briton battled among themselves, and foreign barbarians threatened to decimate the monarchy. Realizing that Arthur's time had come, Merlin called the barons to assemble on Christmas Day at the great cathedral of London.

When they arrived, this was what they discovered: a gleaming sword thrust into an anvil that stood over an enormous stone. Onto the blade of the sword in letters of gold was engraved, "Whoso pulleth out this sword of this stone is rightwise King of Briton." Since none of the

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Two Kids Looking in a Window



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Though loons have been called feathered seals when they dive and swim submerged, they look much more elegant than seals. Their back and wing feathers are spread with sparkling white spots on black. Lengthy, slender necks are wrapped by a white band like a necklace. Though very small, their red eyes are very powerful. Not only can loons dive and swim while submerged as well as seals, but they appear much more elegant! Clearly, loons are handsome divers.



HANDSOME DIVERS

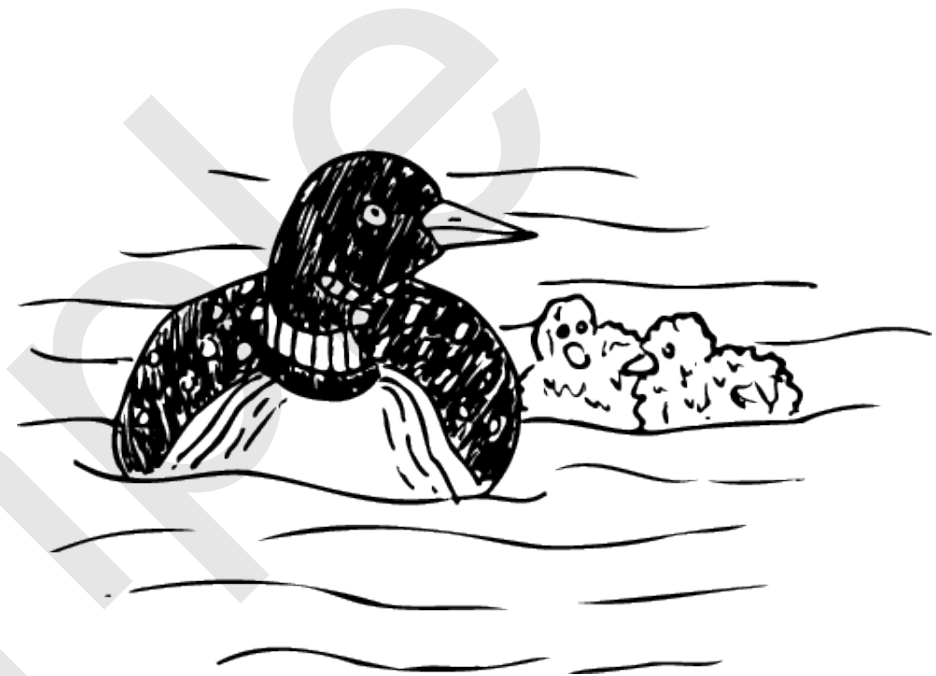
In the water the loon is noted for its speed. It can swim and dive faster than most fish. When hunting, the loon's head is slightly submerged. This position is called peering. Peering into the water, the head twists and turns, watching, looking, and searching for fish. Once prey has been spotted, the loon dives swiftly to make the catch. Rarely does the prey escape because of the loon's swift and superior speed.



Many dangers exist for loons. In addition to man, adult loons are prey to eagles and coyotes. Younger loons, the chicks, are chased and preyed upon by gulls, larger fish, and the adults' enemies. While still eggs, the list of hunters which prey upon them includes ravens and crows, raccoons, and skunks. Man has most endangered loons, however. Building on their nesting grounds, he has changed their water sites and polluted their environment. If the loons survive these many hazards, they may live for twenty to thirty years. Loons live dangerously.

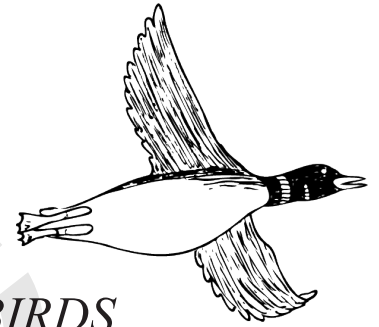
Demonstrating a variety of vocal calls, it has been said that the loon is a master singer among the birds. Short hoots are used to track other loons. To attract or call a mate, the loon uses a crying wail. As it echoes over the lake, the loon sounds lonely. Possibly it is. Trembling high-pitched sounds signal danger. Surprisingly, each loon yodels a unique tune to warn others who cross into his territory. A loon is a bird with many voices, numerous cries, and countless wails. Loons are wonderful songsters.

Young loons are made to swim soon after hatching. After twenty-eight days of incubation, the first and second hatchlings appear. Eagerly they break through their shells. As soon as their sticky black down becomes fluffy and



dry, they are taken on a trial swim. During this swim, a search is made for a soft, suitable, and secure nursery. After testing their ability to swim, the young may be seen happily riding on a parents' back for safety and warmth. The chicks look darling. They feel secure. They nestle. However, most often they are encouraged to swim from the earliest possible moment.

heavily, they splash like a rock. Despite these difficulties, loons are swift, powerful fliers often identified by their voices. They can be identified by their songs which are unusual and unique and by their peculiar and awkward flight.



SONG AND FLIGHT BIRDS

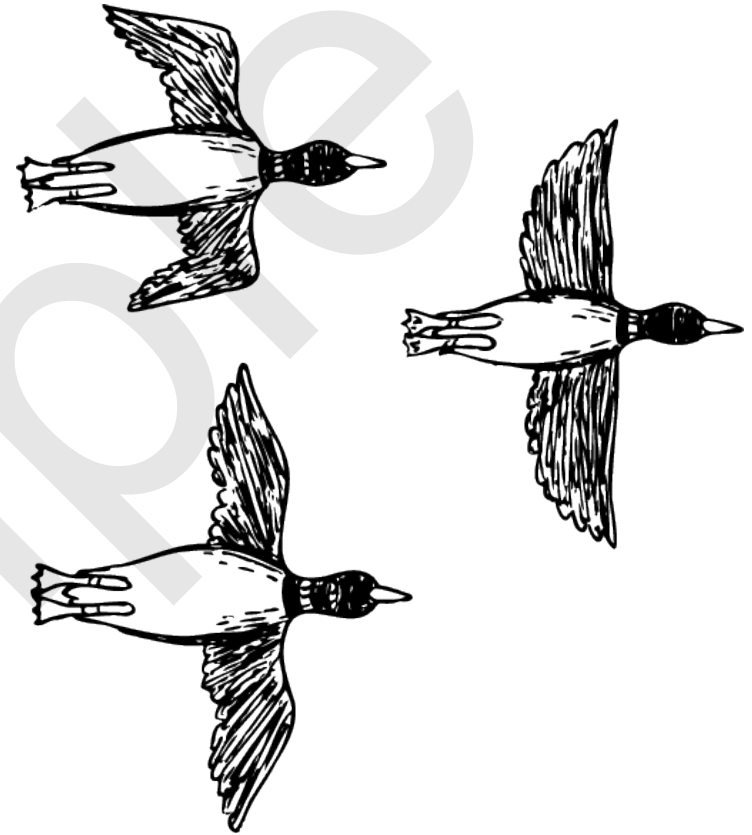
The common loon is best known for its voice. It has numerous voices. With many different calls, loons speak to their neighbors. Especially talkative at night, they often chorus loudly in response to other loons. Hooting cries, which are used to keep track of others, sound like the laugh of a lunatic. Because of its hooting voice, this bird was named “loon.”



A loon is a marvel in water! Hunting for prey, loons outclass most fish in swimming and twisting, turning, pivoting, and diving. Silently they swim swiftly submerged. Since their legs are very far back on their bodies, they dive with little resistance. Though not classed as water-fowl, loons perform marvelously in water.

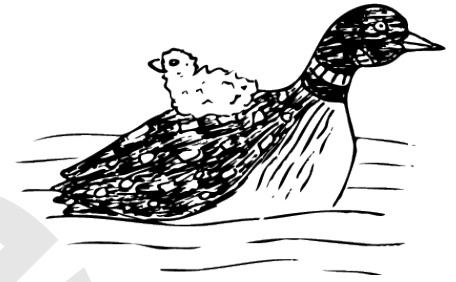
Some loons mate for life. After courting, mating, and locating a suitable nesting site, the female loon lays two olive brown eggs which are protected carefully. The parents share incubation duties. Obviously, they believe in cooperative parenting because they share equally. Not only do loons come together to breed, often their partnerships last for a lifetime. They are faithful mates.

The loon looks as if it has dressed for a gala evening. Clearly they are ready to party. Like sequins, small white spots cover the glittering black feathers of wings and back. Their appearance is completed by a white band—a necklace—around their elegant necks. Loons are not multicolored. Loons are not flashy. Loons are elegant. If you should spot a smartly-dressed, long-necked, white-on-black water bird, most likely you have seen the well-dressed loon.



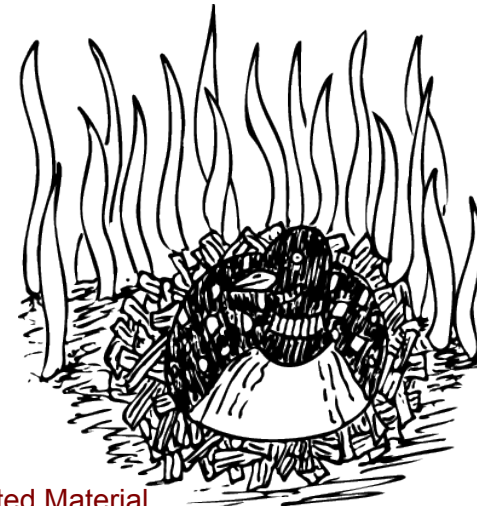
Once airborne, loons are fine, fast fliers. They break the speed limit because during migration they have been timed at two kilometers per minute. Unfortunately, loons have trouble with take off and landing. Only from water can they ascend into the air, and they need a long runway. While half flying and half beating their feet on the top of the water, loons strain to ascend into the air. Another problem is descending. Landing

Loons have been likened to submarines. Remarkably, their dives are the deepest, fastest, and longest of any other birds'. They submerge rapidly. While submerged, they are able to twist, turn, and pivot with great speed. Avoiding them is difficult. Along with this mobility, loons are known to stay underwater for as long as forty seconds. Fish seldom escape these feathered, loony submarines.



THE LOONY SUBMARINE

In danger on land because they move so clumsily, loons must leave the water to mate. Mating begins with nodding to signal agreement. Obviously, there is no elaborate courting ceremony. After this choosing, the pair swim about together in search of a nesting place. When a suitable spot is found, the eggs are laid. Incubating the eggs is shared by the parents. Loons are sensible. Parenting means partnership. They share responsibilities. Like true mates, loons share the duties and dangers of nesting on land.



Loons can fly at speeds of 120 kilometers per hour! As remarkable as their speed is, take off is difficult for them, however. Their runway must be water. Lifting its eight to fourteen pounds into the air is extremely difficult without a lengthy run at it. Once in the air, though, loons fly at great speeds. Evidently, landing is difficult because they almost crash into the water. As Mrs. Loon gazed skyward, she chuckled to herself, “My loony mate is about to enjoy a crash landing.” He did. She smiled. She sobered. Descending with greater speed, he had slammed into the water with a mighty splash.



In spite of their weight, loons move with enviable speed and power in water and in air. Heavy bones account for an adult weight of up to fourteen pounds. These heavy bones, which have been designed for submerged swimming, along with a body shape which is long and sleek, combine to give the loon power. Because of solid weight and a streamlined body, the loons move speedily and powerfully.

A loon's cry may be frightening. Though loons have several calls, the most notable one sounds like the laugh of a lunatic. The word “lunatic” means crazy. “Loon” is a short form of this word. When people do odd things, we say they are “crazy as a loon.” In Canada, the dollar coin carries an engraving of a loon. Canadians call them “loonies” partly to make fun of the loon, but also because they thought the government was crazy to issue the coins. On the other hand the cry of the loon has inspired poets and writers.

Far from crazy, these wonders in water can make you shiver at their cry, feel lonely at their wail, and smile at their laugh.