

ELINOR WONDERS WHY

107 INTERSTITIAL: SENOR TAPIR

Written by

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FOLLOWS: "BIRD SONG"

CONNECTION: BIRD COMMUNICATION

CURRICULUM: Irene Pepperburg was the first scientist to wonder whether birds were smart enough to communicate with people. She figured out that Alex the Grey Parrot was not only smart, but could tell her what he was thinking.

SEP1. Ask and/or identify cause and effect questions that can be answered by an investigation. (Senor Tapir replicates Irene Pepperburg's work with Alex the Parrot in a song)

FIRST DRAFT: 25-FEB-19

Open on SENOR TAPIR in the park of Animal Town, sitting on a tree stump at the edge of a pond. There are three different GUITARS next to him, one RED and two BLUE ones. One blue guitar is bigger than the other one. A group of kids sit at his feet, including ELINOR, ARI and OLIVE.

Irene Pepperburg gets Alex the Grey Parrot from a pet store, Alex perches on her arm, Alex sits on her shoulder and looks at her, etc.

8

SENOR TAPIR (CONT'D)

8

(singing)

Irene Pepperburg wanted to see, "Is
a parrot smart enough to talk to
me?"

She knew parrots could copy some
words, but could she teach it to
TALK to her?

She got a grey parrot from the pet
store, and invented a way to teach
him more!

We see Irene teaching words to Alex alongside a "model/rival"

[Reference: See 5:30-5:35 of <https://www.pbs.org/video/nova-sciencenow-profile-irene-pepperberg-alex/>]

Her idea worked and people were
shocked, Alex the parrot could
actually talk! "MORE!"

Irene gives Alex a piece of food and Alex says.

9

SENOR TAPIR (CONT'D)

9

"MORE!"

Irene gives him another treat and continues to work with
Alex, showing him different colored blocks, numbers, pieces
of paper, etc. We see a close up of Alex's face and eyes.

So she said,

Hey there Alex, let's get you
talkin', answering questions with a
hundred words.

Hey there Alex, let's see you
thinkin', solving puzzles like a
brainy, bright bird.

Irene holds up two blue KEYS in front of Alex the Parrot.
Alex's beak opens when he says "blue" and "two."

She said what color? He said
"BLUE". She said how many? He said
"TWO".

Close up of Irene's hands holding up two pieces of paper, one
green and one red. The red one is noticeably larger.

Alex looks at the paper and his beak opens when he says "red." Her hands hold up an entire cake next to Alex, who opens his beak to say "yummy bread."

Which one's bigger? He said "RED".
She gave him cake. He said "YUMMY
BREAD."

Hey there Alex, let's get you
talkin, answering questions with a
hundred words.

Hey there Alex, let's show you
thinkin', solving puzzles like a
brainy, bright bird.

END SONG:

TRANSITION TO:

3. EXT PARK -- DAY

10	SENOR TAPIR (CONT'D)	10
	And that's the story of Irene Pepperburg and her smart parrot, Alex. So, amigos, tell me what you're thinking.	

11	ELINOR	11
	That we want MORE music!	

Tapir grabs his red guitar.

12	SENOR TAPIR	12
	That's the answer I was hoping for!	

He starts to <MFX STRUM>

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Note from Emily DuVal, our bird expert on how Pepperburg's work is perceived in the scientific community: "She's a fellow of the Animal Behavior Society, and I lectured on her cognition work last Wednesday (including pointing out that you'd think it would be a bad idea to base your PhD on one parrot, but she pulled it off). I've seen her speak in packed-room seminars at Berkeley and at conferences. Legit. "