ELINOR WONDERS WHY

107 INTERSTITIAL: SENOR TAPIR

Written by

LAURA SAMS

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
SECOND DRAFT: 12-MAR-19
FINAL: 15-Mar-19

1. EXT PARK -- DAY

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

1 SENOR TAPIR 1
Hola amigos, how many guitars do I have today?

2 ELINOR 2
Two!

3 SENOR TAPIR 3
Right! I want to play a blue guitar. Which guitar is blue?

Olive points quickly to the blue guitar.

4 OLIVE 4
That one!

5 SENOR TAPIR 5
Yes. Let's sing about a scientist named Irene Pepperburg and her talking bird, who knew more than 100 words! Words such as two and blue.

Tapir picks up the blue guitar, starts to <MFX: STRUM> and sings. After a line or two, we transition to a simpler style of animation that describes what he is singing.

During the song, Senor Tapir sings in a "parrot" voice every time a word in the song is capitalized and in "quotation marks.

2. IRENE'S LAB -- DAY

Irene Pepperburg looks at Alex the Grey Parrot, who sits on a perch looking back at her. Alex sits on her shoulder and they look at each other. We see close ups of Alex's face when he says HELLO. NOTE: Please make Senor Tapir's parrot voice easy to understand.

6 SENOR TAPIR 6
(singing)
This is a song about a scientist who
Wondered if birds could talk like we do.

(MORE)

SENOR TAPIR (CONT'D)
Her name is Irene Pepperburg, and Alex the Parrot was her special bird.

Irene wondered if she could show That Alex could say a lot more than "HELLO."

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

7 SENOR TAPIR (CONT'D) 7
She said what color? He said "BLUE". She said how many? He said "TWO".

We see Irene teaching words to Alex, while Alex sits on his wooden stick perch. She shows him objects like a spoon, a banana, different colored shapes, etc.

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

8 SENOR TAPIR (CONT'D) 8
What a bird! What a bird! Said scientist Irene Pepperburg.
So many words! So many words! Her bird knew over a hundred words!

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 a loaf of bread next to Alex, who opens his beak to say YUMMY and BREAD.

9 SENOR TAPIR (CONT'D) 9
What color's bigger? He said "RED".
What do you want? He said "YUMMY" and "BREAD."

Shapes, colors, counting to eight, Alex could really communicate!

What a bird! What a bird! Said scientist Irene Pepperburg.
So many words! So many words! Her bird knew over a hundred words!

END SONG:

3. EXT PARK -- DAY

10 ELINOR 10
Let’s sing the song a hundred more times!

Tapir grabs his red guitar.

11 SENOR TAPIR 11
Great idea. Let’s start with one more time.

He starts to <MFX STRUM>

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Note from Emily DuVal, our bird expert on how Pepperburg’ 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. “