ELINOR WONDERS WHY

EP 116B "Light the Way"

By Tom Berger

Elinor's Question: How can we talk to each other in the dark without making noise?

Logline: Elinor and her friends are having a camping sleep-over in the backyard, but when they get too loud they need to find a new way to communicate so they don't keep Dad awake.

Curriculum Goals:

SEP6: Look for and describe patterns and relationships in natural phenomena.

SEP8: Describe observable phenomena using adjectives and labels.

LS2: Understand that animals have different body parts that are used in different ways to meet their needs. (Elinor and her friends observe the flashing abdomens of the fireflies)

ND2: Begin to understand that systems developed in our world often work in similar ways to systems found in the natural world. (After being inspired by the fireflies, Elinor and her friends decide to communicate with their flashlights).

Main Characters: Elinor, Olive, Ari, Ranger Rabbit
Secondary Characters: Mr. Rabbit
Props: Pup tents, Stump, Tent Poles, Supporting Lines, Tray, Mugs, Marshmallows, Flashlights, Thought Bubble (lighthouse on cliff with ship at sea), Fireflies
Locations: Elinor's Backyard, Forest, Clearing

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1. EXT. ELINOR'S BACKYARD - CAMPSITE - DUSK

ELINOR and her friends, all wearing PJs, are camping out in the backyard tonight! FOUR PUP TENTS are set up in a circle, one for each of the kids and one for the parents. While the girls' tents are mostly up, Ari's tent only has the FRONT POLE in place while the back is collapsed. Elinor looks proudly at her tent as Olive steps out of hers.

1 ELINOR 1
There! My tent is all set up.

2 OLIVE 2
Mine too. Easy peasy.

She plucks a SUPPORTING LINE and it lets out a sharp <TWANG>!

3 ARI (O.S.) 3
Wait... this can't be right...

The girls look over to see an Ari sized lump trying to figure out where his second tent pole goes. The pole keeps poking out in different directions.

4 ARI (CONT'D) 4
Hmm, does this go here... or here?
Or maybe here?

He pokes his head out and sees everyone else's tents.

5 ARI (CONT'D) 5
Huh? Your tents are already set up?
How'd you do that so fast?

He crawls out and looks between their tents and his.

6 ARI (CONT'D) 6
What am I doing wrong?

7 ELINOR 7
(Giggles) Do you want some help?

8 ARI 8
I think I've almost got it.

His tent collapses entirely. Ari shrugs.

9 ARI (CONT'D) 9
Ok, *maybe* I need help.

Ari hops back inside as Olive moves to the back of his tent. The girls each grab one end of the pup tent and pull it into shape. Inside, Ari sets up the poles as the girls secure the fastening lines to the ground. Ari hops out and admires it.

10 ARI (CONT'D) 10
There, perfect!
(dusting his hands)
Like you said, Olive... easy peasy...with a little help from my friends.

The kids <LAUGH> and climb into their tents and sit cross legged in the openings.

11 ELINOR 11
I've been looking forward to camping all week! Sleeping outside in nature is my favorite part.

12 RANGER RABBIT (O.S.) 12
Who wants hot chocolate and marshmallows?

RANGER RABBIT and MR. RABBIT, both also wearing PJs, approach carrying a TRAY OF HOT CHOCOLATE for everyone. The kids <CHEER> as the parents give them each a MUG. Elinor takes a sip of her chocolate.

13 ELINOR 13
Thanks Mom. (Slurp) Mmmm... hot chocolate is *also* my favorite part of camping.

The kids <SFX: GIGGLE> then Ari pulls out a MARSHMALLOW from his mug, tosses it into the air and catches it with his mouth <CHOMP>!

14 ARI 14
I like the marshmallows.

Everyone <LAUGHS> as the sky darkens around them.

15 OLIVE 15
Ooo, it's starting to get dark. *My* favorite part of camping is staying up late and telling stories.

Mr. Rabbit takes a final <SIP> of his hot chocolate and lets out a big <YAWN>!

16 MR. RABBIT 16
Fine by me as long as your stories are *quiet*. Marshmallows make me (yawn) sleepy, and I'm going to bed... G'night everyone.

17 ELINOR 17
Night-night, Dad.

Mr. Rabbit walks to Elinor and kisses her head before doing the same to Ranger Rabbit and crawling into their tent. <LOUD SNORING> is heard from within instantly.

18 ELINOR (COVERING HER EARS) (CONT'D) 18
Wow... marshmallows really *do* make him sleepy.

Everyone <LAUGHS> loudly. Mr. Rabbit wakes up and pops his sleepy head out of the tent.

19 MR. RABBIT 19
Waaa? Wassup?

20 RANGER RABBIT 20
It's nothing dear, go back to sleep.

Dad pokes his head back into the tent.

21 RANGER RABBIT (CONT'D) 21
(whispers to the kids)
If you're going to talk, you'd better do it quietly.

Dad starts <SNORING> again. The kids and Ranger Rabbit stifle <GIGGLES>. Ranger Rabbit makes a friendly ZIP GESTURE across her lips. Elinor and her friends do the same, smiling.

Elinor turns on her FLASHLIGHT and shines it on Ari in the tent next to her.

22 ELINOR (STAGE WHISPER) 22
Psst. Ari, can you hear me?

Ari strains to listen, but he can't hear anything. He turns on his flashlight and points at his ears and shrugs.

23 ARI (STAGE WHISPER) 23
What're you saying?

Olive hears whispering, but can't make it out. She picks up her flashlight and shines it between Elinor and Ari.

24 OLIVE (STAGE WHISPER) 24
Huh? Are you two telling stories?

Back on Elinor, straining to hear her friends.

25 ELINOR (TO HERSELF) 25
I can't hear anything.

Elinor climbs out of her tent and walks quietly to her mom.

26 ELINOR (STAGE WHISPER) (CONT'D) 26
Is it okay if we play farther away so we don't wake Dad?

27 RANGER RABBIT (STAGE WHISPER) 27
Sure, just don't leave the yard.

Elinor walks over to Ari and gestures for him to follow.

28 ELINOR (STAGE WHISPER) 28
Pssst Ari... follow me.

Ari climbs out of his tent with his flashlight and the two sneak over to Olive's tent.

29 ELINOR (STAGE WHISPER) (CONT'D) 29
Come on, Olive... but remember we have to be quiet.

30 OLIVE (STAGE WHISPER) 30
Are you kidding? I'm the quietest at sneaking around. Just do what I do and we won't make a peep.

Olive moves away from the tents on exaggerated TIP TOES, leading with her flashlight. Elinor and Ari follow behind, copying her moves. As Ranger Rabbit watches over them and smiles, Mr. Rabbit <SNORES> in the tent, startling Ranger Rabbit, who covers her mouth to silence a <YELP>!

2. EXT. ELINOR'S BACKYARD - AWAY FROM TENTS - NOW DARK

It's now dark and the kids sneak over to the edge of the yard. They all use flashlights. Though further away, Mr. Rabbit can still be heard <SNORING>.

31 OLIVE 31
See? I told you I was good at being quiet.

Ari and Elinor <LAUGH>, loud enough to disturb Mr. Rabbit in his nearby tent. He stirs in his sleep.

32 MR. RABBIT (TALKING IN HIS SLEEP) 32
<Snore> More marshmallows? Why yes please... <Snore>

The kids look at Mr. Rabbit's tent as they cover their hands with their mouths. They look back at each other and relax.

33 ARI (TO ELINOR) 33
Marshmallows make your Dad tired
and give him marshmallow dreams?
Cool!

34 ELINOR 34
We have to try not to wake him.
(she wonders)
How can we talk to each other
without making noise?

Olive looks up at the darkened sky.

35 OLIVE (WONDERING) 35
It's too dark to write notes.

36 ARI (MAKING SILLY HAND GESTURES) 36
...or to give each other hand
signals.

As the kids wonder, a BLINKING FIREFLY passes them in the background. Elinor looks up just after it passes.

37 ELINOR 37
Huh? What was that?

38 OLIVE 38
I saw something too!

39 ARI (POINTING) 39
It went over there.

The kids look where Ari is pointing and see the firefly hovering at the edge of the yard.

40 ELINOR 40
Oh! Do you see that? What's that
flashing light?

41 OLIVE 41
Is it a star? No, it can't be...
it's not way up in the sky like the
other stars.

42 ARI 42
Maybe it's a forest fairy! Gasp!
They grant wishes, right?

43 OLIVE 43
(Giggling) It's not a fairy,
fairies aren't real...
(doubting herself)
Are they?

Ari and Olive shine their lights at the firefly, drowning the blinking light but revealing a little bug (the firefly) flying the same path. Elinor watches the flying bug.

44 ELINOR 44
Wait a minute... that's not a fairy or a star... it's a firefly! Turn off your flashlights.

The kids turn off their flashlights and the firefly's light can be seen again. (Flashlights remain off until after L98)

45 ARI 45
There it is again!

46 ELINOR 46
We need to get a closer look. But we have to be quiet so we don't scare the little bug.

47 OLIVE 47
Gotcha... Follow me.

Olive leads the kids closer on exaggerated tip toes.

3. EXT. ELINOR'S BACKYARD - EDGE OF YARD - CONTINUOUS

The kids approach the edge of the yard. The firefly lands on a nearby bush and blinks.

48 ELINOR 48
I've never been so close to a firefly before.

49 ARI 49
Wait... that blinking light is a *bug*?

He leans in and squints at the firefly.

50 ARI (CONT'D) 50
Are you *sure* it's not a fairy?

51 ELINOR 51
(Giggles) It's definitely not a fairy, Ari.

52 OLIVE 52
Wait... if it's a bug, then... where does the light come from?

53 ELINOR 53
Good question... maybe it's carrying a light?

54 OLIVE 54
Like a little lamp?

55 ARI 55
Or a teeny candle?

Ranger Rabbit approaches the kids.

56 RANGER RABBIT 56
What are you kids looking at?

57 ELINOR 57
Mom! We found a firefly.

58 OLIVE 58
We're wondering how it makes light. Is it carrying something that lights up?

59 RANGER RABBIT 59
The firefly isn't *carrying* a light, it's making light with its body.

She approaches the firefly softly and holds out a finger. They firefly flutters over and lands on it. She brings the bug over to the kids who lean in for a closer look.

SCIENCE MOMENT CU: The kids get a good look at the firefly, astounded as the bottom part of the bug's abdomen pulses a few times. NOTE FROM FIREFLY EXPERT: Firefly bioluminescence is generated from light organs that are restricted to the bottom surface of one or two abdominal segments. These segments are toward the end of the abdomen. [The whole abdomen does not light up.]

60 RANGER RABBIT (CONT'D) 60
Firefly bodies are very special... they can glow brightly or dimly.

61 ELINOR 61
That's sooo interesting!

62 ARI 62
Cool! Can I do that?

Ari tries to flex different parts of his body. First his hands, then his elbows. Nothing.

63 ARI (CONT'D) 63
(Flexing) Nope... nothing there...

He turns around and flexes his rear (NOTE: He’s genuinely trying to mimic the fireflies, not just being silly, or "flexing" in a way that makes it look like he's trying to poop).

64 ARI (CONT’D) 64
(Flexing efforts) How about now?

Everyone <GIGGLES> softly.

65 RANGER RABBIT 65
Sorry Ari, not many animals can make their bodies glow...

Ari flexes a bicep.

66 RANGER RABBIT (CONT’D) 66
...And bats aren’t one of them.

Ari stops mid-flex and looks over.

67 ARI 67
Aw, too bad.

Elinor leans back into the firefly for another look. It blinks on and off.

68 ELINOR 68
I wonder why it’s blinking like that...

Suddenly, the firefly takes off and flies into the forest.

69 ELINOR (CONT’D) 69
Let’s see where it goes.
(then, loudly)
We need more observations!

70 MR. RABBIT (TALKING IN HIS SLEEP) 70
(Snore) That’s the biggest marshmallow I’ve ever seen. (Snore)

Elinor catches herself!

71 ELINOR (STAGE WHISPER) 71
Oops. We need more observations.
(then)
Mom, can we follow the firefly?

72 RANGER RABBIT 72
Sure! I’ll come too.

73 OLIVE 73
Shhh! You know what to do, everyone.

Olive tip toes after the firefly into the forest, followed by Ari and Elinor. Ranger Rabbit smiles and shrugs, then tip toes after the kids.

4. EXT. GRASSY AREA - CONTINUOUS

ANGLE ON: The forest opens into a clearing. The firefly flies out of the forest and past camera. One by one, Elinor, Olive Ari, and Ranger Rabbit pop up from behind bushes and look past camera. Their eyes go wide with amazement. NOTE: Flashlights are still off.

REVEAL: The firefly has led them to a grassy clearing filled with fireflies. Countless flickering lights hover just above the grass, filling the darkened night with a beautiful glow. The kids step out into the clearing.

74 ELINOR 74
Woah.... There are so many of them!

Reveal Olive is trying her best to count them.

75 OLIVE 75
7...8... wait did I count that one already? 9...10... oh, stop blinking!
(she gives up)
It's impossible to count how many there are.

76 ELINOR 76
It's so beautiful. And they're *all* blinking.

The kids watch with wonder as the fireflies appear and disappear as they blink above the grass.

77 ELINOR (CONT'D) 77
But I wonder why they do that?

78 OLIVE 78
Maybe they lost their favorite toy and they need the light to find it?

An OBVIOUS FIREFLY approaches Elinor and swirls around her, blinking. She twirls and <GIGGLES>.

79 ARI 79
They sure like you, Elinor.

She holds out a hand and the firefly lands on it. Elinor raises it to get a closer look. The firefly starts to flash, following a simple pattern.

80 ELINOR 80
Woah! Look at this, it keeps flashing its light the same way over and over again.

Olive and Ari approach for a closer look. The firefly continues to flash its pattern.

81 ARI 81
Gasp! You're right, it's a pattern!

The kids watch as the bug repeats the pattern a few times. They start to follow along.

82 ELINOR / ARI / OLIVE 82
Blink.. blink.. blink-blink.
Blink.. blink.. blink-blink.

As the obvious firefly continues to flash its pattern, several more approach and hover nearby. They start to follow along, copying the pattern.

83 OLIVE 83
Wow... other fireflies are checking out the blinking pattern.

Sure enough, more fireflies approach, forming a SMALL GROUP. The obvious firefly takes off from Elinor's hands and hovers above her head before flying away from the kids. The small group of fireflies flies out over the grass and swirls around, attracting more fireflies who join and copy the pattern. Elinor considers as she watches the action.

84 ELINOR 84
Look at that... more and more fireflies are doing the blinking pattern.

85 ARI 85
It's like they're blinking to tell each other-

He starts jumping up and down and waving his arms around.

86 ARI (CONT'D) 86
Hey! Look at me! I'm over here! Follow me!

Elinor realizes something.

87 ELINOR 87
Ari! That's it... maybe they *are* talking to each other when they blink.

88 OLIVE 88
Oh I see... instead of using words, they talk by blinking their lights in patterns.

Ari holds up a closed fist. He opens and closes it to mimic "blinking".

89 ARI 89
Oh! So you're telling me "blink.. blink.. blink-blink *does* mean...
(jumping around)
"Look at me! Look at me!"??

Olive and Elinor <GIGGLE>.

90 OLIVE 90
Yeah! I think so.

Ari puffs up his chest.

91 ARI (PROUDLY) 91
I didn't know I could speak firefly.

Ranger Rabbit approaches.

92 ELINOR 92
Mom! Mom! We figured something out! We think fireflies blink their lights to talk to each other.

Ranger Rabbit watches with Elinor as the small group of fireflies continues to chase the obvious fireflies flashing in unison.

93 RANGER RABBIT 93
That's exactly what they're doing. Because fireflies are awake at night, they need to be able to talk to each other in the dark. Blinking lights is one way to do it.

94 ELINOR 94
Hmmm... I never thought of that...

95 RANGER RABBIT 95
It isn't only fireflies that use light to talk in the dark...

A **THOUGHT BUBBLE** appears. A LIGHTHOUSE sits on a cliff over an OCEAN. It shines a light out over the water and an approaching SHIP changes course away from the cliff.

96 RANGER RABBIT (CONT'D) 96
At night, we use lighthouses to talk to ships at sea. By shining a light out into the ocean, we're saying "Come this way!"

97 ARI 97
Woah! Awesome!

98 ELINOR (REALIZING) 98
Hmmm... Wait a minute... That's how we can talk to each other without waking Dad... we can use our flashlights!

She holds up her flashlight and blinks it.

MUSIC starts playing as the kids dance around with their flashlights and the fireflies.

99 ELINOR / OLIVE / ARI (SINGING) 99
Do you see that blinking light,
Flashing in the darkest night?
Are you saying 'hi' or 'bye'?
When you're blinking, firefly?

The kids and Ranger Rabbit leave the clearing. Unseen by them, a group of fireflies follow.

5. EXT. FOREST TRAIL - CONTINUOUS

The kids and Ranger Rabbit walk back down the trail.

ELINOR - When we can't use words at night
OLIVE - We can talk with our lights
ARI - We'll blink like the firefly
ALL - And use lights that shine so bright.

6. EXT. ELINOR'S BACKYARD - EDGE OF YARD - CONTINUOUS

The kids exit the forest into the yard. They blink the patterns with their lights as they sing. To his friends' delight, Ari sticks his flashlight under his shirt to make it look like his abdomen is glowing.

ELINOR - One blink means: “How are you?”
OLIVE - Two blinks mean: “Great, and you?”
ELINOR - Three blinks mean: “Wanna go play?”
ARI - Four blinks mean: “You bet! All day!”

ALL: Do you see that blinking light,
Flashing in the darkest night?
It’s us, saying ‘hi’ or ‘bye’
When we blink like fireflies!

The kids sneak back over to the campsite. After a beat, the group of fireflies exits the forest into the yard.

7. EXT. ELINOR’S BACKYARD - CAMPSITE - CONTINUOUS

Everyone sneaks back into the campsite as the music ends. Mr. Rabbit is still <SNORING> in his tent. The kids and Ranger Rabbit lie down in their tents, heads poking out.

Elinor uses her flashlight to blink a pattern to her friends. Ari <GIGGLES> and responds to Elinor with a few blinks, then turns to Olive and blinks a pattern to her. Olive <GIGGLES> and responds with a third pattern. Ranger Rabbit joins and blinks a pattern to the kids. The kids <LAUGH> too loudly, stirring Mr. Rabbit.

100 MR. RABBIT 100
(Snore) So many marshmallows...
(Snore)

The kids and Ranger Rabbit silently stifle <GIGGLES> as they continue to blink patterns back and forth in the dark. All around them, fireflies blink in the night sky. *