

ELINOR WONDERS WHY

EP 132 "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 sleepover 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).

Line Count: 104

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

First Draft: 22-MAY-19

EXT. ELINOR'S BACKYARD - CAMPSITE - DUSK

ELINOR and her friends 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. MR. RABBIT sits on a STUMP as the kids finish setting up their tents. 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>!

ARI (O.S.)
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?

ARI

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)
 See? Easy peasy.

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

11 OLIVE 11

I've been looking forward to
camping all week! Sleeping outside
in a tent is the *best*.

12 ELINOR 12
My favorite part of camping is-

13	RANGER RABBIT (O.S.)	13
	Hot chocolate and marshmallows!	

RANGER RABBIT approaches carrying a TRAY OF HOT CHOCOLATE for everyone. The kids <CHEER> as Ranger Rabbit gives them each a MUG. Elinor takes a sip of her chocolate.

14 ELINOR 14
Thanks Mom. (Slurp) Mmmm... hot
chocolate's the best part *for sure*.

Olive <SLURPS> from her mug and smacks her lips. She sticks her trunk into her mug and comes out with a MARSHMALLOW. She tosses it into the air and catches it her mouth <CHOMP>!

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15                                OLIVE                                15
                                I like the marshmallows.

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Everyone <LAUGHS>.

16	ARI	16
	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>!

17 MR. RABBIT 17

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

18 ELINOR 18
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.

19 ELINOR (COVERING HER EARS) (CONT'D) 19
Wow... marshmallows really do make him tired!

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

20 MR. RABBIT 20
Waaa? Wassup?

21 RANGER RABBIT 21
It's nothing dear, go back to sleep.

Dad pokes his head back into the tent.

22 RANGER RABBIT (CONT'D) 22
(whispers to the kids)
Dad's trying to sleep. 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.

23 ELINOR (STAGE WHISPER) 23
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.

24 ARI (STAGE WHISPER) 24
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.

25 OLIVE (STAGE WHISPER) 25
Huh? Are you two telling stories?

Back on Elinor, straining to hear her friends.

26 ELINOR (TO HERSELF) 26
I can't hear anything!

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

27 ELINOR (STAGE WHISPER) (CONT'D) 27
Is it okay if we play further away
so we don't wake Dad?

28 RANGER RABBIT (STAGE WHISPER) 28
Sure, just don't leave the yard.

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

29 ELINOR (STAGE WHISPER) 29
Pssst Ari... follow me!

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

30 ELINOR (STAGE WHISPER) (CONT'D) 30
Come on, Olive... but remember we
have to be quiet.

31 OLIVE (STAGE WHISPER) 31
Are you kidding? I'm the quietest
sneaker 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. Ranger Rabbit watches over and smiles, as
Mr. Rabbit <SNORES> in the tent.

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>.

32 OLIVE 32
See? I bet you didn't know
elephants could be so quiet.

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

33 MR. RABBIT (TALKING IN HIS SLEEP) 33
<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.

34 ARI (TO ELINOR) 34
Marshmallows make your Dad tired
and give him marshmallow dreams?
Cool!

35 ELINOR 35
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.

36 OLIVE (WONDERING) 36
It's too dark to write notes...

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 high enough to be a star.

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.

44 OLIVE (CONT'D) 44
Huh? Where'd it go?

ARI

It was here just a second ago.

46 ELINOR 46
Try turning off your flashlights.

Ari, Olive and Elinor all turn off their flashlights and the firefly reappears.

47 OLIVE 47
 There it is again!

48 ELINOR 48
It's not a fairy or a star... It's
a firefly! Let's get a closer look.

49 OLIVE 49
Ooo! I get to flex my tip toe
muscles again... C'mon!

Olive leads the kids closer on exaggerated tip toes.

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

The kids approach the edge of the yard. The firefly blinks as it hovers just past the tree line of the forest.

50 ELINOR 50
I've never been so close to a
firefly before!

51 ARI 51
I'm confused... that blinking light
is a *bug*?

He leans in and squints at the firefly.

ARI (CONT'D) 52
Are you *sure* it's not a fairy?

53 ELINOR 53
(Giggles) It's definitely not a
fairy, Ari!

54 OLIVE 54
Wait... if it's a bug, then...
where does the light come from?

55 ELINOR 55
Good question... maybe it's
carrying a light?

56 OLIVE 56
Like a little lantern?

57 ARI 57
Or a teeny torch?

Ranger Rabbit approaches the kids.

58 RANGER RABBIT 58
That firefly isn't *carrying* any
kind of light at all...

She approaches the firefly softly and holds out a finger.
The 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.
The kids are astounded as the bug's abdomen flickers.

59 RANGER RABBIT (CONT'D) 59
The firefly *is* a light! Look...

The firefly's abdomen pulses a few times.

60 OLIVE 60
Woah! How does it do that?

61 RANGER RABBIT 61
Firefly bodies are very special...
they can make them glow brighter or
dimmer.

62 ELINOR 62
That's sooo interesting!

63 ARI 63
Cool! Can I do that?

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

64 ARI (CONT'D) 64
(Flexing) Nope... nothing there...

He turns around and flexes his rear.

65 ARI (CONT'D) 65
(Flexing efforts) How about now?

Everyone <GIGGLES> softly.

66 RANGER RABBIT 66
Sorry Ari, not many animals can
make their bodies glow...

Ari flexes a bicep.

67	RANGER RABBIT (CONT'D)	67
	...And bats aren't one of them.	

Ari stops mid-flex and looks over.

68	ARI	68
	Aw, too bad.	

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

69	ELINOR	69
	I wonder why it's blinking like that...	

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

70	ELINOR (EXCITEDLY, LOUDLY) (CONT'D)	70
	We need more observations!	

71	MR. RABBIT (TALKING IN HIS SLEEP)	71
	(Snore) That's the biggest marshmallow I've ever seen. (Snore)	

Elinor catches herself!

72	ELINOR (STAGE WHISPER)	72
	Oops. We need more observations!	
	(then)	
	Mom, can we follow the firefly?	

73	RANGER RABBIT	73
	Sure! I'll come too.	

74	OLIVE	74
	Let's be extra sneaky so we don't scare it. Follow me!	

Olive drops onto all fours and sneaks after the firefly into the forest, followed by Ari and Elinor. Ranger Rabbit shrugs and drops to all fours to follow the kids.

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.

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.

75 ELINOR 75
Woah.... There are so many of them!

Reveal Olive is trying her best to count them.

76 OLIVE 76
7...8... wait did I count that one
already? 9...10... oh, stop moving!
(she gives up)
It's impossible to count!

77 ELINOR 77
It's so beautiful. And they're *all*
blinking... but why?

78 OLIVE 78
Maybe they lost their keys and they
need the light to find them?

The fireflies appear and disappear as they flash and blink above the grass. Two OBVIOUS FIREFLIES approach Elinor and swirl around her, blinking. She twirls and <GIGGLES>.

79 ARI 79
Wow! They sure like you, Elinor.

She puts out her hands and a firefly lands on each one. Elinor raises them to get a closer look. The fireflies start to flash in unison, following a simple pattern.

80 ELINOR 80
Woah! Look at this, they're
flashing at the same time.

Olive and Ari approach for a closer look. The fireflies continue to flash in unison.

81 ARI 81
Gasp! I think it's a pattern...
they keep flashing the same way
over and over again.

They kids watch as the bugs repeat the same pattern a few times. The friends start to count along.

82 ELINOR / ARI / OLIVE 82
One.. two.. one-two. One.. two..
one-two. One.. two.. one-two.

83 OLIVE 83
You're right, Ari! It *is* a pattern.
One.. two.. one-two.

As the pair of fireflies continue to flash in unison, several more approach and hover nearby.

84 OLIVE (CONT'D) 84
Look... the blinking pattern is
attracting more fireflies.

Sure enough, more fireflies approach, forming a SMALL GROUP. The two obvious fireflies take off from Elinor's hands and hover above her head. They continue to pulse in unison as they fly away from the kids. The small group of fireflies follows them as they fly out over the grass and swirl around. Elinor considers as she watches the action.

85 ELINOR 85
Look at that... they're following
the blinking fireflies everywhere.

86 ARI 86
It's almost as if by blinking like
that, they're saying-

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

87 ARI (CONT'D) 87
Hey! Look at me! I'm over here!
Follow me!

Elinor realizes something.

88 ELINOR 88
Ari! That must be it... they're
talking when they blink.

89 OLIVE 89
Oh I see! Instead of using words,
they use patterns of blinking
light.

Ari holds up his hands with closed fists. He opens and closes them to mimic "blinking".

90 ARI 90
Oh! So you're telling me "one..
two.. one two. One.. two.. one two"
does mean...
(jumping around)
"Look at me! Look at me!"??

Olive and Elinor <GIGGLE>.

91 OLIVE 91
Yeah! I think so.

Ari puffs up his chest.

92 ARI 92
I didn't know I could speak
firefly!

Ranger Rabbit approaches.

93 ELINOR 93
Mom! Mom! Look... Those fireflies
are blinking in a pattern. We think
they're talking to the other
fireflies.

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

94 RANGER RABBIT 94
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 a perfect way to do it!

95 ELINOR 95
Hmmm... I never thought of that...

96 RANGER RABBIT 96
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.

97 RANGER RABBIT (CONT'D) 97
At night, we use lighthouses to
talk with ships at sea. By shining
a light out into the ocean, we're
saying "Watch out for the cliff!"

98 ELINOR (REALIZING) 98
Wait a minute - that's how we can
talk 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,
Flying through 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.

EXT. FOREST TRAIL - CONTINUOUS

The kids and Ranger Rabbit walk back down the trail.

ELINOR - When we want to talk at
night
OLIVE - But we can't, we'll use our
lights
ARI - We'll do like the firefly
ALL - And use lights that shine so
bright.

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.

ELINOR - One blink means: "How are
you?"
OLIVE - Two blinks mean: "Great,
and you?"
ELINOR - Three blinks mean: "Let's
look at the stars?"
ARI - Four blinks mean: "Are there
snacks on Mars!"

ALL: Do you see that blinking
light,
Flashing in the darkest night?
It's us, saying 'hi' or 'bye'?
When we're blinking like a firefly!

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

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 responds to Elinor with a few blinks, then turns to Olive and blinks a pattern to her. Olive responds with a third pattern. Ranger Rabbit joins and blinks a pattern to the kids. The kids are surprised by Mom's unexpected participation and <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.