

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 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

FIRST DRAFT: May 22, 2019
SECOND DRAFT: June 13, 2019

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.

*

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.

ARI (CONT'D) 10

There, perfect!
(dusting his hands)
Like you said, Olive... easy peasy.

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

ELINOR 11 *

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

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.

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>!

ARI 14 *

I like the marshmallows.

Everyone <LAUGHS> as the sky darkens around them.

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>!

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.

ELINOR 17 *

Night-night, Dad.

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 tired. *

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 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.

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 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.

36 ELINOR 36
Huh? What was that?

37 OLIVE 37
I saw something too!

ARI (POINTING) 38
It went over there.

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

39 ELINOR 39
Oh! Do you see that? What's that
flashing light?

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40                                OLIVE                                40
    Is it a star? No, it can't be...
    it's not way up in the sky like the                               *
    other stars.                                                         *
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41 ARI 41
Maybe it's a forest fairy! Gasp!
They grant wishes, right?

42 OLIVE 42
 (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.

43 ELINOR 43
Wait a minute... it'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) *

44 OLIVE 44
There it is again!

45 ELINOR 45
We need to get a closer look. *

46 OLIVE 46
Let's be extra quiet so we don't
scare the little guy.... 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 blinks as
it hovers just past the tree line of the forest.

47 ELINOR 47
I've never been so close to a
firefly before. *

48 ARI 48
Wait... that blinking light is a
bug? *

He leans in and squints at the firefly.

49 ARI (CONT'D) 49
Are you *sure* it's not a fairy?

50 ELINOR 50
(Giggles) It's definitely not a
fairy, Ari. *

51 OLIVE 51
Wait... if it's a bug, then...
where does the light come from?

52 ELINOR 52
Good question... maybe it's
carrying a light?

53 OLIVE 53
Like a little lantern?

54	ARI	54	*
	Or a teeny candle?		
	Ranger Rabbit approaches the kids.		
55	RANGER RABBIT	55	*
	What are you kids looking at?		*
56	ELINOR	56	*
	Mom! We found a firefly.		*
57	OLIVE	57	*
	We're wondering how it makes light.		*
	Is it carrying something that		*
	lights up?		*
58	RANGER RABBIT	58	*
	The firefly isn't <i>carrying</i> a		*
	light... its body is a light		*
	itself.		*
	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.]		
59	OLIVE	59	*
	Woah! How does it do that?		
60	RANGER RABBIT	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.		

64	ARI (CONT'D) (Flexing efforts) How about now? Everyone <GIGGLES> softly.	64
65	RANGER RABBIT Sorry Ari, not many animals can make their bodies glow... Ari flexes a bicep.	65
66	RANGER RABBIT (CONT'D) ...And bats aren't one of them. Ari stops mid-flex and looks over.	66
67	ARI Aw, too bad. Elinor leans back into the firefly for another look. It blinks on and off.	67
68	ELINOR I wonder why it's blinking like that... Suddenly, the firefly takes off and flies into the forest.	68
69	ELINOR (EXCITEDLY, LOUDLY) (CONT'D) We need more observations!	69
70	MR. RABBIT (TALKING IN HIS SLEEP) (Snore) That's the biggest marshmallow I've ever seen. (Snore) Elinor catches herself!	70
71	ELINOR (STAGE WHISPER) Oops. We need more observations. (then) Mom, can we follow the firefly?	71
72	RANGER RABBIT Sure! I'll come too.	72
73	OLIVE 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.	73

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4. EXT. GRASSY AREA - CONTINUOUS

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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.

*
*

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 do they do that?

*
*

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

*
*

Two OBVIOUS FIREFLIES approach Elinor and swirl around her, blinking. She twirls and <GIGGLES>.

*

79 ARI 79
They sure like you, Elinor.

*

She holds out a hand and the fireflies land on it. 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.

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

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

83 OLIVE 83

You're right, Ari. It *is* a pattern. *

Blink.. blink.. blink-blink. *

As the pair of fireflies continue to flash in unison, several more approach and hover nearby. Unlike the obvious fireflies, they don't blink in any particular pattern.

84	OLIVE (CONT'D)	84	
	Look... other fireflies are		*
	checking out the blinking pattern.		*

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 like they're blinking to tell		*
	each other-		*

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's it... maybe they are *
talking when they blink. *

89	OLIVE	89	
	Oh I see... instead of using words, they talk with a blinking pattern.		* *
	Ari holds up a closed fist. He opens and closes it to mimic "blinking".		*
90	ARI	90	
	Oh! So you're telling me "blink.. blink.. blink-blink <i>does</i> 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 (PROUDLY)	92	
	I didn't know I could speak firefly.		* *
	Ranger Rabbit approaches.		
93	ELINOR	93	
	Mom! Mom! Is that true? Do fireflies flash their lights to talk to each other?		* * *
	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
 send messages to ships at sea. By
 shining a light out into the ocean,
 we're saying "Watch out for the
 cliff!" *

98 ARI 98
 Woah! Awesome! *

99 ELINOR (REALIZING) 99
 Hmmm...wait a minute.. Ah! 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.

100 ELINOR / OLIVE / ARI (SINGING) 100
 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.

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*

101

MR. RABBIT

101

(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.

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