

ELINOR WONDERS WHY

EP 137 Thinking About Blinking

By: Paul Moncrieffe

Elinor's Question: Why do we blink?

Logline: After Ari wins a staring contest, he and his friends learn everything there is to know about blinking.

Curriculum Goals:

LS2. Understand that animals have different body parts that are used in different ways to meet their needs, and that plants have different parts that help them survive and grow:

- a. Identify body parts of animals and their function
- b. Identify the basic parts of plants and their function
- c. Compare how the external body parts of animals and plants are the same and/or different
- d. Explore how different external features of an animal help it survive in its environment (Elinor and her friends explore eyelids and how blinking protects the eyes).

SEP6. Constructing explanations: Use background knowledge, experiences, and data to construct reasonable explanations and theories of natural phenomena. (Elinor and her friends construct an explanation of the question, ("Why do we blink?"))

Main Characters: Elinor, Olive, Ari, Mz. Mole

Secondary Characters: Koa

Non-Speaking Character: Fish, Goat Twins, Alejandro

Backgrounds - School playground, forest (stream)

Props - Paper Megaphone, Towel

OUTLINE: May 28th , 2019

FIRST DRAFT: June 27th , 2019

SECOND DRAFT: July 22nd, 2019

ELINOR skips to school, <HUMMING> merrily. The sun is bright and the birds are <SINGING>. She greets everything she passes.

She walks past a stream, waving to her reflection. She
arrives at school.

She waves to her shadow, her shadow waves back at her. *

3 ELINOR (CONT'D) 3
Hello every-- Hmm, where is *
everybody? I'm running out of *
people to say hello to! *

She starts to look about, seeing further by balancing on her tippy-toes like a real rabbit standing up.

4 OLIVE 4
Hi, Elinor!

5 OLIVE (CONT'D) 5
Come quick, you've got to see this. *

Olive reaches out with her trunk and hefts Elinor to her feet. They skip away.

All of Elinor's classmates are standing around the JUNGLE GYM, looking up, watching something and <CHEERING> the spectacle on.

6 OLIVE (CONT'D) 6
Ari's in a staring contest! *

Elinor is curious, she's never seen a staring contest before! *
Excited, she nudges her way into the crowd.

Olive reaches into her bag and pulls out a piece of paper, fashioning it into a megaphone and announces: *

7 OLIVE (CONT'D) 7
Come one, come all! Welcome,
everyone, to today's staring
contest! *

The crowd <CHEERS!>. Elinor is getting swept up in the enthusiasm.

8 OLIVE (CONT'D) 8
A staring contest is when two
people stare into each other's eyes
until one of them blinks - like
this! *

Olive blinks deliberately to demonstrate. *

9 OLIVE (CONT'D) 9
The last one to blink wins the
contest! *

While everyone is excited, something seems to be catching Elinor's curiosity. *

10 OLIVE (CONT'D) 10
Introducing your current
champion... Koa! *

KOA walks to the center of the ring (on top of Jungle-Gym), he's very nonchalant, hands in his pockets. <GREETINGS WALLA: YO>. *

11 OLIVE (CONT'D) 11
And his challenger, the bat with
all that... Ari! *

ARI enters, walking with his legs astride like a cowboy. Things are about to get INTENSE.

WESTERN SHOWDOWN MUSIC, we focus first on Ari's unblinking eyes, then Koa's little penny slits. A rubber ball bounces past like tumbleweed. It's a good day for a stare-off!

12 ARI 12
I'll win this thing in the blink of
an eye.

The crowd <LAUGHS>. Ari's eyes narrow. Koa opens his little penny slits to REVEAL two tiny eyeballs.

13 OLIVE 13
Begin!

She <TRUMPETS!> with her trunk. The crowd <ROARS>.

Close up shots of Ari and Koa's eyes. Each time we get closer and closer. Intensity increasing with every cut. Soon they're both struggling. There are tears. We hold onto Koa, he's REALLY struggling. Ari notices (all this still on their eyes, only) Koa is holding his eyes open. It's genuinely intense, <SFX: heart pounding!> <MFX: Music rising!> Palms sweating! Throat lumping! We hold on Koa as we feel his whole world is about to break! We hold...

And...

```
<PLINK>! Koa's little eyes blink with the sound of a toy xylophone. *
```

Ari has won, the crowd <CHEERS!>. Ari gives Koa a pat on the back as the crowd runs up to congratulate him. They all slide down the slide together celebrating.

14 ARI 14
Good game, Koa, good game.

He flutters up in the air, just full of energy.

15	ARI (CONT'D)	15	
	Anyone else wanna play?		*

2. MONTAGE. I/C AROUND SCHOOL

- Ari goes eye to eye with ALEJANDRO the possum. Alejandro BLINKS and Ari <CHEERS!>. PAN OUT AND AROUND to REVEAL both are hanging upsidedown from a tree while everyone watches.

- Ari VS the GOAT TWINS. He zips back and forth, out-staring both of them.

- Ari is intensely staring at... someone. REVEAL he's challenging Mz. Mole through the school window, she blinks and continues to scrub the window with a towel.

3. EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - CONTINUOUS

Ari is being hoisted up on his friends' shoulders like Rudy.

16	ARI	16	*
	"Eye" am the best! Get it?		*
	(pointing to his eye) Eye?		*

Elinor and Olive are watching as Ari <CHEERS> and <HOLLERS> in B/G.

17	ELINOR	17	*
	Ari's so good at <i>not</i> blinking.		
18	OLIVE	18	*
	Yeah. He's the not-blinking king.		
19	ELINOR	19	*
	But I wonder... Why did the others		*
	all blink?		
20	OLIVE	20	*
	What do you mean, Elinor?		*
21	ELINOR	21	*
	I mean, why do we blink at all?		*
	What's blinking good for?		*
22	OLIVE	22	*
	Huh. I've never thought about it		*
	before.		*
	She thinks about it for a beat and blink a couple of times,		*
	slowly and deliberately.		*
23	ELINOR	23	
	Hmm, that is sooooo interesting!		
24	OLIVE	24	
	Your eyes close when you sleep,		
	maybe blinking is your eyes trying		
	to go to bed?		*
25	ELINOR	25	*
	But none of the kids in the contest		*
	seemed sleepy. (beat) Maybe it's		
	our eyes clapping because they like		
	what they see?		
	They <GIGGLE>.		*
26	OLIVE	26	*
	No, that can't be it, eyes don't		*
	clap we'd hear them.		*
27	ELINOR	27	*
	We need more observations!		
	The two of them scurry off.		*

4. EXT. STREAM BEHIND THE SCHOOL - DAY

Elinor and Olive find a quieter spot to do some serious investigating.

28	ELINOR	28	*
	Okay, let me watch you and see if		*
	you blink.		

They both stare at each other. They both blink, but neither notices because they were both blinking.

Beat. They blink again. Unnoticed.

Beat. Olive blinks.

29 ELINOR (CONT'D) 29
You just did it. *

30 I did? OLIVE 30

Elinor blinks.

31 OLIVE (CONT'D) 31
You just did it too. *

32 ELINOR 32
Really? But I wasn't even thinking
about blinking.

33 OLIVE 33

I guess we blink without even
noticing. It's something our body
does all by itself.

*
*

34	ELINOR	34	
	Wow! Okay, let's see what happens		*
	when we try not to blink.		*

Elinor tries but soon finds her eyelids getting very heavy. She struggles, eventually giving in with an exhausted sigh. *

35 ELINOR (CONT'D) 35
Wow, it's *really* hard not to blink. *

36 OLIVE 36
Yeah, it must be something our *
bodies *have* to do. *

37 ELINOR 37
It's a mystery.

38	OLIVE	38	*
	It's a blinking mystery!		*
	Ari flaps in, still on top of the world.		
39	ARI	39	
	This is the best day ever, it's even better than my birthday or pizza Fridays! I'll never lose, I can just see it now.		*
	THOUGHT BUBBLE: Ari is in a stadium, the faceless crowd is <CHEERING HIS NAME>, waving signs with an eye symbol. Camera flashes, he's a champion.		
40	ELINOR, OLIVE, KOA, MZ. MOLE (chanting) Ari, Ari, Ari!	40	* * *
41	OLIVE (O.S.) Ari?	41	* *
	Olive's interruption pulls Ari out of his daydream, his thought bubble literally bursts.		
42	ARI Watcha doing?	42	*
43	ELINOR <GIGGLES> We're learning everything we can about blinking.	43	* *
44	OLIVE So far we learned that you blink without thinking and that it's really hard not to blink.	44	*
45	ARI Cool, this is awesome. If I know more about blinking I can win even more staring contests. Can I join you?	45	* * *
46	ELINOR Of course.	46	* *
	Ari flaps up in the air, looking very excited. Elinor and Olive shrug, then follow him.		
	They walk beside the stream, Ari still overly excited. Olive notices something.		

47 OLIVE 47
 Look Ari, I think you have a new fan. *

They look into the stream. A FISH is floating there, watching Ari. *

48 ELINOR 48
 A fish! Oooh he's so cute!

It's not cute at all. It burps up an air bubble.

49 ARI 49
 Well bubble back to you too Fishy-fish, <SIGH> you shoulda seen me beat everyone today.

They keep walking, the Fish is following Ari.

50 OLIVER 50
 Hey, Ari, I think it likes you.

Ari tests this theory. He takes a couple steps back, the Fish follows. Then a couple steps forward, the fish follows again.

51 ARI 51
 Hmm... Can you follow this!?! *

Ari quickly runs back and forth, the Fish follows. Ari does a spin, the Fish does a spin! The kids <LAUGH>. Elinor notices something.

52 ELINOR 52
 Hey, Fishy-fish, you haven't blinked once since we met you.

The Fish just stares stoically.

53 ARI 53
 You're right! Fishy-fish, you're the *perfect* challenger!

54 OLIVE 54
 I don't know, it's *really* good at not blinking.

55 ARI 55
 Pfft. I could beat it with my eyes closed!

56 OLIVE 56
 But your eyes need to be open.

57 ARI 57

(BEAT)

... oh yeah. That's fine, I'll
still win. This contest is gonna
be so tense you won't be able to
close your eyes!

58 OLIVE 58
You're not allowed to close your
eyes.

59 ARI 59
 (BEAT)
 ... oh yeah. Never mind, let the
 contest begin!

Ari stares the impassive Fish down.

On Ari. He's curious. How good *is* this guy?

On the Fish. Nothing.

On Ari. It's getting harder. Should he start to worry?

On the Fish. Nothing.

On Ari. He's struggling. Tears coming.

On the Fish. Cool as a cucumber.

On Ari. This is the fight of his life!

Aaaand...

ARI BLINKS. His first defeat. The Fish still staring, it releases some listless bubbles from its gills.

60 ARI (CONT'D) 60
That's impossible!

61 ELINOR 61
Wow, that Fish doesn't blink at
all.

ARI

All right, rematch! Let's do this.

Ari leans over and intensely stares at the bored Fish.

Elinor and Olive notice Mz. Mole.

63 ELINOR 63
Oh, hi Mz. Mole.

*

64	MZ. MOLE	64	
	Hi, Elinor. Hi, Olive.		
	She sees Ari in an intense stare-off with the Fish.		*
65	MZ. MOLE (CONT'D)	65	
	Hi Ari. Hi, umm, staring Fish.		
	Mz. Mole heads to a nearby branch that has a towel draped over it, it's directly in the sun.		* *
66	MZ. MOLE (CONT'D)	66	
	Ah yes, this was a good spot.		*
67	OLIVE	67	
	Whatcha doing, Mz. Mole?		
68	MZ. MOLE	68	
	I've hung my wet towel on this branch earlier. You see, kids, if you leave things out in the sun it's a great way to dry them out.		* * *
	She feels her towel.		
69	MZ. MOLE (CONT'D)	69	
	Ah yes, it's already working.		
	Elinor gives the towel a feel as well.		
70	ELINOR	70	
	Hmmm. That's so interesting. It's drying out.		*
71	MZ. MOLE	71	
	Yes, indeed. What are you kids up to?		
	On Ari and the Fish. Ari's eyes look like they're about to burst, he's being overdramatic and looks silly. Olive and Elinor <GIGGLE>.		
72	OLIVE	72	
	We're just thinking about blinking.		
73	ELINOR	73	
	Because Ari's in a stare off with this fish.		
	Back on Ari struggling with the contest. He finally blinks. He's defeated. He falls to his knees in dramatic fashion.		

74 ARI 74

(breathing heavily)

I can't keep my eyes open! I HAVE
to blink! You win, Fishy-fish.

You're... the champion. *

He walks over to his friends, wings dragging on the ground.

75 ARI (CONT'D) 75

I tried really hard to keep from
blinking, but then my eyes felt
scratchy like they were dry or
something and then - I blinked!

*
*

He gives them a rub. Elinor ponders on that.

76 ELINOR 76
Hmmm....dry... *

She feels Mz. Mole's towel again. It's almost completely dry now. Suddenly, a light bulb goes off. *

77 ELINOR (CONT'D) 77
Maybe that's it!

ARI

You think I need a towel to win?

*

79 ELINOR 79
 <GIGGLE> No, maybe when we keep our
 eyes open they dry out, just like
 Mz. Mole's towel. *

80	OLIVE	80	
	(opening her eyes) Yeah, it's like		*
	you're leaving them out in the		*
	open.		*

81 ARI 81
I think you're right!

He gives his eyes a nice long blink.

82	ARI (CONT'D)	82	
	When I close my eyes or blink, it		*
	does make them feel wetter and		
	better.		*

83 OLIVE 83 *
(blinking) Yeah, every time I *
blink, it makes my eyes wet again. *

SCIENCE CLOSE UP: In on Ari's eyes, when his eyelids blink it adds moisture to his eyeballs.

84	ELINOR Then that's gotta be it! The longer we don't blink the more dry our eyes get.	84	
85	OLIVE I wonder if that's why the fish doesn't have to blink.	85	*
	They look over at the Fish who still has the same blank expression, bubbles emerge from his mouth.		
86	ELINOR His eyes are always in the water so they can't get dry. They're <u>always</u> wet!	86	* * *
	Mz. Mole jumps in startling the kids with her excitement.		
87	MZ. MOLE Oh my little scientists have done it again! Great observations, kids. You are correct. We blink to keep our eyes from going dry, every time we do it, it adds water to them.	87	*
	The kids react, <EXCITEMENT>.		
88	MZ. MOLE (CONT'D) That's why fish don't need to blink. In fact most fish, like this one here, don't even have eyelids because they don't need them.	88	* *
89	ELINOR/OLIVE Cool!	89	
90	ARI (accusing) I knew something was fishy about that fish! (to the fish) No wonder you won, you don't even have eyelids.	90	* * * *
91	MZ. MOLE Our bodies do a lot of things without you having to think about it, like breathing or blinking. It's just your bodies way of making sure it stays safe and healthy.	91	

92 ARI 92
So, our bodies are the real
champions!

93 ELINOR 93
We did it! We solved the mystery.

94 OLIVE 94
The blinking-mystery. *

She flutters her eyelids in celebratory fashion. Our characters break into a song... *

5. SONG MONTAGE. I/C DIFFERENT LOCATIONS

- The playground. Ari is in another stare off, this time
against Elinor.

95 ARI/ELINOR/OLIVE 95
 ARI: Did you know you're always
 blinking?

Elinor blinks!

Elinor: You do it without thinking.

Olive appears between them.

OLIVE: Take a minute, let that sink in

ELINOR: It's just sooooo interesting!

88 - Ari in his bedroom, hanging upside down. 88

ARI: *Blinking in your bedroom*

He blinks (all blinks accompanied by a note that matches the song).

- Elinor and co in class, listening to Mz. Mole.

ELINOR: Blinking during class.

She blinks.

- Elinor running through flowers.

ELINOR: Blinking when it's
playtime.

- Grass, Olive rolls around.

*OLIVE: Or when you're rolling in
the grass.*

- Ari's bathroom, Ari's in the bath.

*ARI: It's easier to see when your
eyes are nice and wet, your body
does it just so you don't forget!*

*

Now Elinor pops up in the bathtub.

*ELINOR: You don't want them to get
dry!*

Olive emerges, the tub is barely big enough for all of them!

*OLIVE: Blinking is bath time for
your eyes!*

- Stream, the gang singing together.

*ELINOR: So you see, you're always
blinking.*

ARI: You do it without thinking.

*OLIVE: Take a minute, let that sink
in!*

*ELINOR: Wow, that is soooo
interesting!*

The song ends.

6. EXT. STREAM - CONTINUOUS

96	ARI	96	
	Well, I guess nobody can keep their eyes open forever.		* *
97	MZ. MOLE	97	
	That's right, you don't want your eyes to get all dry like my towel!		
98	OLIVE	98	* * *
	Does this mean you retire as the staring contest champion, Ari?		
99	ARI	99	
	Not yet, I still want to defeat my final challenger.		
100	ELINOR	100	*
	How are you going to do that?		

He looks down at the Fish.

101	ARI	101
	I have an idea. Olive, may I have some paper and a crayon?	

She obliges from her satchel. Ari starts to draw something.

102	ARI (CONT'D)	102
	Ta-daa!	

He holds up a crude/cute drawing of himself and hangs it on
the branch Mz. Mole used for her towel. The Fish stares at
it, and Ari eagerly stares back and forth between the sign
and the fish. *

103	ELINOR	103
	I gotta feeling he's gonna be there for a loooong time.	

Olive and Mz. Mole <GIGGLE> as we pull up into the sky and... *

FADE OUT.