

ELINOR WONDERS WHY

158: THE UNSINKABLE LYNX

Written by
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Elinor's Question: *How do lynx move fast in deep snow?*

Logline: *When the kids discover that Gael the lynx's feet prevent him from sinking in the deep snow, they make their own snowshoes.*

Curriculum Goals: **LS2.** Living things have different body parts to suit their needs. [The kids learn that Gael, who comes from Up North, has wide, flat, fluffy feet that help him walk on snow.]

ND3. (RTL Crosscutting concept 'Structure and Function'):

Understand that structures and materials in the natural world can be used or can inspire the engineering of structures with similar function in the designed world. [Inspired by a lynx's feet, the kids design their own set of snowshoes.]

SEP3b: Compare and contrast objects and events by describing similarities and differences in detail [The kids compare themselves with Gael to determine which variable is causing Gael to sink into snow.]

SEP6a: Use background knowledge experiences, and data to construct reasonable explanations and theories of natural phenomena [The kids hypothesize that wider feet make it easier to move in snow.]

Main Characters: Elinor, Olive, Ari, Gael, Koa, Silas (in winter clothes)

Props: Two tennis rackets, roll of duct tape, shoelaces, twigs, pieces of felt, sheet of shiny snowflake stickers, bag of banana chips

Locations: Field near Olive's house

FIRST DRAFT: 20-Dec-19
SECOND DRAFT: 16-Jan-20

It's a snowy day in Animal Town. Wearing their snow clothes, ELINOR, ARI, OLIVE, KOA, and SILAS have gathered next to the field beside Olive's house to play a game. The field is covered in deep snow (up to about their knees). We start with a CU: just Elinor's face looking from side to side as she dramatically introduces today's game.

Ari lowers his arms.

9 ELINOR 9
Snow Tennis? How do you play that?

10 ARI 10
I don't know. I thought you knew!
That's why I brought these rackets.

He holds the rackets in front of him.

11 OLIVE 11
(giggles)
Ari, we're playing Snow TAG today.
It's just like regular tag, but we
play it in the snow.

12 ELINOR 12
Yeah, snow tag is much cooler.
(giggling) Get it? Because it's
colder?

The kids <SFX: GIGGLE>.

13 ARI 13
Ok! I guess I won't be needing
these.

Ari tosses the tennis rackets to the side in the field and immediately perks up. Elinor steps out and notices how deep the snow is.

14 ELINOR 14
Wow, there is so much snow today.
Look how deep it is.

Olive wades in.

15 OLIVE 15
Yeah, that might make it a little
hard to run around.

16 ARI 16
That's no problem. I'm still going
to run really fast!

Ari runs out into the field, followed by Silas who kicks up a flurry of snow.

17 SILAS 17
Me too!

Ari runs in place and Silas runs a quick loop around, and it's clear that the snow keeps them from running at full speed.

18 ELINOR 18
I guess it's not snow tag if there
isn't any snow. Should we start the
game?

The kids all respond <SFX: YEAH! WOO HOO!>.

19 SILAS 19
 (shyly) Can I be It?

20 ELINOR 20
Sure, Silas! But... (good natured-
ly) you're the fastest runner, so
I'm guessing you won't be it for
long.

21 ARI 21
Yeah, Silas. I bet cheetahs are
fast, even in the snow.

22 SILAS 22
 (a little bashful at that)
I'll give you a really big head
start. I'll count to 25.

The kids all agree at that <SFX: WALLA YEAH/OK/COOL>.

23	SILAS (CONT'D)	23
	Ok, ready...	

Silas covers his eyes and all the kids scramble away, wading through the snow.

24 SILAS (CONT'D) 24
 (counting really fast)
One, two, three, four, five, six-
seven, eight nine, ten eleven,
twelve, thirteen, fourteen,
fifteen, sixteen, seventeen,
eighteen, nineteen, twenty, twenty-
one, twenty-two, twenty-three,
twenty-four, twenty-five.

ANGLE ON: Elinor and Olive, who stop running and look back. They can hear Silas counting.

25 OLIVE 25
(To Elinor, partway through Silas' counting) Silas even COUNTS fast!

Elinor <SFX: GIGGLES> and they both keep running. BACK ON:
Silas, who finishes counting.

26 SILAS 26
Ready or not, here I come!

Silas looks around and, as the kids all <SFX: GIGGLE>, he makes a few starts towards some of other kids, trying to figure out who to go after. There's snow and giggles flying everywhere. Finally, he hones in on Ari.

U_h, o_h.

ARI

Ari makes a run for it and scrambles through the snow. Silas gives chase. (Note: Silas is faster than the other kids, but he's not cartoony fast. See the "Look What I Can Do" episode, and halve that effect for deep snow). It's a good natured chase, but Silas eventually catches up to Ari and tags him.

28 Tag! SILAS 28

Ari tries a last minute dodge (but fails) and ends up tumbling in the snow. He emerges from the pile with a mound of snow on his head. Olive, Elinor and Silas come over.

29 OLIVE 29
Are you ok, Ari?

Ari shakes the snow and smiles.

ARI
Yup. And I'm also... it!

He makes a lunge for the other kids, who scramble away <SFX: GIGGLING>. Silas takes off quickly, as does Elinor, and Ari ends up chasing Olive for a bit, eventually tagging her.

ARI (CONT'D) 31
Tag, you're it, Olive!

Olive <SFX: AWWWS/GIGGLES> as she catches her breath. After a beat, she makes a run towards Silas, but he's too fast, and she ends up going after some of the other kids including Elinor, who's nearest her. Eventually, she stops to take another breath.

32 OLIVE 32
 (panting)
It's... really... hard... to move
in this snow.

Elinor, who's near her, also stops to catch her breath.

33 ELINOR 33
(panting also)
Yeah... (pew)... I have to lift my
foot up high to take a step and
then it sinks in the snow.

As Elinor demonstrates, she gets caught by her curiosity.

34 ELINOR (CONT'D) 34
I wonder if there's a way to run
better in the snow.

At that moment, something catches Olive's attention. Off in the distance, we see Gael Lynx (spanish pronunciation GAH-EL) approaching the group from afar and waving.

35 OLIVE (O.S.) 35
Oh look, it's Gael.

Ari and some of the kids approach Olive and Elinor, wading through the snow and also catching their breath. They all move to the side of the field, where the snow isn't as deep.

ARI
Who's Gael?

37 OLIVE 37
He's new in town! His family just moved here from up north. (to Gael, who just arrived) Hi, Gael!

Gael bounds up to the kids and stands next to Olive. He's a cheerful and affable lynx. He's not wearing mittens or boots (he doesn't need them). Like lynxes in real life, he has extra big paws and feet.

Gael

Hi, everybody. I'm Gael.

The kids all greet him (SFX: WALLA HI/HELLO!>.

39 KOA 39
Cool! Welcome to Animal Town.

40 GAEL 40
Thanks, I really like it here.

ARI
What's it like up north, Gael?

42 GAEL 42
Oh, it's a lot like here, but
snowier.

43 ELINOR 43
Is it pretty cold?

44 GAEL 44
Yeah. But don't worry. I'm a lynx,
and lynxes have really thick fur to
keep us warm.

There's general appreciation of that by all the kids <SFX:
WALLA WHOA/COOL>.

45 OLIVE 45
Well, Gael, you're just in time.
We're playing a game of Snow Tag.
Want to join us?

46 GAEL 46
Great! (he suddenly looks confused)
Um, what's Snow Tag?

47 OLIVE 47
It's the same as regular tag, but
we play it when it's snowy outside.

48 ARI 48
And right now, it's REALLY snowy.

Ari steps into the deep snow.

49 GAEL 49
Mmm, where I'm from, it's almost
always snowy, so we just call it
regular tag.

The kids <SFX: GIGGLE>.

50 ELINOR 50
Ok. Olive was It, but we should
start over because Gael is here.
Does anyone want to be It this
time?

51 GAEL 51
I'll be It.

52 ELINOR 52
Ok, count to ten and then, it's
snow tag time!

The kids all start to scatter. Olive stays behind to give
Gael a tip.

53 OLIVE 53
Watch out for Silas. He's really fast.

Olive wades out into the snow and joins the others as Gael counts.

54 GAEL 54
One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. Here I come!

Gael steps out into the field (he doesn't sink into the snow like the other kids) and over <SFX: GIGGLES AND TAG PLAY WALLA> another round of tag begins. Gael makes a few starts to go tag other kids, who scramble away. Finally, he starts chasing Silas. Silas zigs and zags, but he's losing ground as he wades in the deep snow. Gael, on top of the snow, gains ground and eventually tags Silas.

55 GAEL (CONT'D) 55
(panting slightly)
Tag!

56 SILAS 56
(panting)
Aww, nice, you got me!

The two kids <SFX: LAUGH AND GIGGLE>. Elinor, Olive and Ari are close together.

57 ARI 57
(panting slightly)
Whoa, look! Gael tagged Silas!

58 OLIVE 58
He did? But nobody ever tags Silas.

59 ELINOR 59
Gael did.

Back on Silas, we see him get back to playing. The other kids scramble and Silas chases them around.

60 ARI 60
I thought cheetahs were the fastest animals at running. *

61 OLIVE 61
Not at snow tag. Look, Silas is trying to catch Gael now.

BACK ON: Silas, who looks around for a second, then bounds after Gael over more <SFX: TAG GIGGLES>.

Silas chases Gael into an area with slightly deeper snow (waist high now). Silas begins to sink deep into the snow, and he slows down, making it clearer that Gael doesn't sink as much.

SILAS

Gosh. The snow sure is deep over here.

Gael continues to run almost on top of the snow (snow to his ankles); it doesn't slow him down very much. Elinor looks back and forth between the two and takes notice of this.

63 ELINOR 63
Wow, look. Silas sinks into the
snow, but Gael doesn't.

64 ARI 64
Whoa. You're right. It's like Gael
can run on top of the snow.

65 OLIVE 65
Yeah. Maybe that's why he can run
faster. Silas has to run *through*
the snow, but Gael just runs on *top*
of it.

66 ELINOR 66
That... is SO interesting!

Eventually Silas slows to a stop. He's out of breath <SFX: PANTING> and plops down.

67 SILAS 67
 (panting) Phew, I give up.

Gael turns back and walks over to him.

68 GAEL 68
Are you ok, Silas?

Silas pants, takes a deep breath.

SILAS
69 (pants, takes a deep breath) Yeah.
You're way faster than me.

They both <SFX: LAUGH> as Gael helps him up. The kids all gather back at the side of the field.

70 ELINOR 70
Wow, Gael. I can't believe you made
Silas tired.

71 OLIVE 71
You're so fast running in the snow. *

Ari flops backwards into the snow, his feet sticking out. *

72 ARI 72
Yeah, I got tired just watching it! *
Did you eat some kind of special
breakfast this morning?

73 GAEL 73
Uh, I don't think so. I ate the
same thing I eat every morning:
Oatmeal with extra maple syrup. We
eat a lot of maple syrup up north.

74 ARI 74
Mmm, I love maple syrup.

His stomach grumbles a little and the kids <SFX: GIGGLE> a
bit.

75 ELINOR 75
(thoughtful) Hmm. Gael, we noticed
that you don't sink in the snow as
much as we do. Is that why you can
run faster?

76 OLIVE 76
Yeah, when we walk in the snow, we
sink down but you don't.

Olive steps over to the field to demonstrate.

77 GAEL 77
Huh. I hadn't thought about it
before.

He walks over next to Olive, and it's clear that Olive sinks
down a lot more.

78 GAEL (CONT'D) 78
You're right! I always walk on top
of the snow. It's what lynxes do.

Koa wades in, sinks, and look up at Gael.

79 KOA 79
Whoa, that is so cool.

80 ELINOR 80
Hmmm... I wonder why you don't sink
in the snow like we do, Gael.
You're about the same size as us.

From Elinor's POV, we see her use her hand to compare Gael's size to another kid standing on the side of the field. Back on Elinor, we see her scratching her chin.

81 ELINOR (CONT'D) 81
There must be some another reason.
We need more observations!

Ari joins in the hypothesizing.

82 ARI 82

Maybe it's because Gael is a cat-
like animal, and cat-like animals
can walk on top of the snow.

83 OLIVE 83
But cheetahs are also cat-like, and
Silas can't walk on top of the
snow.

ANGLE ON: Silas, still panting. Elinor has an idea.

84 ELINOR 84
Gael has thick fur. Maybe thick fur
helps you run on top of the snow?

85 KOA 85
Umm, I also have thick fur, but I
sink in the snow.

86 ELINOR 86
True. I know, Gael has long ears.
Maybe having long ears keep you
from sinking in the snow.

Olive looks at Elinor's ears and maybe points at them. *

87 OLIVE 87
Uh, Elinor...

Elinor suddenly realizes what she's saying. She looks up as if trying to see her own ears, turning her head from side to side, then bending them down.

88 ELINOR 88
Oops, I forgot I have long ears
too, and I sink in the snow.

She and the other kids <SFX: GIGGLE>.

89 ARI 89
Well, whatever the reason, I think
it's super awesome, Gael. Give me a
high five!

99

ELINOR/OLIVE/ARI

99

Listen up, friends,
And we'll tell you the tale
Of our new lynx friend,
The unsinkable Gael!

OLIVE: His feet are wide.

He's got fluffy toes.

ELINOR: These amazing feet
Won't sink in the snow.

ARI: Having wide feet

Help you stay on top

ELINOR: So you can run faster
and never stop

ALL: Listen up, friends,
And we'll tell you the tale
Of our new lynx friend,
The unsinkable Gael!

The kids all cheer their new friend. Ari is especially
excited.

100

ARI

100

I wish I had feet like you, Gael.
Then I could run without sinking in
the snow.

Ari does a few flutter hops, jumping up and down (and
sinking) in the knee-high snow to and fro. On his last hop,
however, he happens to land on the pair of rackets he had
tossed earlier.

101

ARI (CONT'D)

101

Whoops.

He looks down and, grasping the netting with his foot claws,
he lifts them one by one.

102

ARI (CONT'D)

102

Haha, hey look, now I have wide
feet like Gael, and I don't sink in
the snow!

He takes a few steps around the snow using the rackets like
snow shoes.

103

ELINOR

103

Ari, you just gave me an idea.
Maybe we can ALL have feet like
Gael.

104	OLIVE	104
	(catching on)	
	Yeah, if we can find wide things to put on our feet, then we can walk on top of the snow, too.	
105	KOA	105
	I've got two flying discs [Frisbees] at home I could use.	
106	SILAS	106
	I have some toy plates at home.	
107	OLIVE	107
	I have a couple of ping-pong paddles.	
108	ELINOR	108
	And I have things at home I can use, too. Gael, will you wait for us here?	
109	GAEL	109
	Of course!	
110	ELINOR	110
	Great, let's see what we can make!	

The kids all scramble, and through a quick Watterson split-screen cross-fade montage, we see the different kids grabbing their things and jerry-rigging them. On the last cross-fade, we end up back at the snow field to reveal that everyone has a version of snow-shoes.

Triumphantly, Elinor holds up the makeshift snowshoes she has on her feet. She took a pair of twigs and wrapped them around to form a loop, then used twine or cloth to wrap and make a surface that attaches to her feet.

111	ELINOR (CONT'D)	111
	Ta-da! We did it.	
112	GAEL	112
	Those look awesome.	
113	KOA	113
	Cool, I have lynx feet.	
114	ELINOR	114
	Who wants to try theirs first?	
115	OLIVE	115
	I do!	

Olive steps out in the snow with her ping-pong paddle shoes.

116 OLIVE (CONT'D) 116
(laughing) They work! Having wide
feet keeps you from sinking in the
snow.

Soon, all the kids step out. Ari takes a few running steps.

117 ARI 117
And now we can run on top of the
snow instead of through the snow.
Watch me zoom like Gael!

He gets a little over eager, and trips and tumbles in the
snow.

118 ARI (CONT'D) 118
Umm, it might take some practice to
be like Gael.

The kids all <SFX: GIGGLE>.

119 OLIVE 119
What do you think about our lynx
shoes, Gael?

120 GAEL 120
They're great. All this tromping
around in snow makes me feel like
I'm back up north. Thanks for
making me feel so welcome today. *

121 ELINOR 121
Thank YOU for teaching us something
new today, Gael. Now... who wants
to play... SNOW TAG!

Elinor catches herself.

122 ELINOR (CONT'D) 122
Oh, uh, or should I say, who wants
to play REGULAR TAG!

The kids all <SFX: LAUGH AND WALLA CHEER> as they run out
into the field and chase each other. The camera pans up into
the winter sky as we...

IRIS OUT

END. *