

ELINOR WONDERS WHY

EW 168 A Moth Mystery

By Laura Sams and Robert Sams

Elinor's Question: Why are there so many moths around Mr. Dog's porch?

Logline: The kids go summer caroling around the neighborhood, but when they get to Mr. Dog's porch, there are so many moths flying around that they can't finish singing their summer song.

Curriculum Goals:

ES2: Understand that plants and animals (including humans) can change their environment (Elinor and her friends realize they can turn off Mr. Dog's porch light and the moths won't gather around).

SEP 4: Analyzing and Interpreting Data

c: Record observations to describe patterns and/or relationships in the natural and designed world(s) in order to answer scientific questions and solve problems. (Elinor and her friends identify the pattern of moth behavior, that they cluster around lights, and solve the problem by turning off the porch light).

FIRST DRAFT: March 23, 2020

SECOND DRAFT:

POLISH DRAFT:

FINAL DRAFT:

ANGLE ON Elinor's finger pressing a doorbell. <SFX: DING DONG>

1 MARTHA 1

And a one-y, and a two-y, and a one
two three ...

2 ELINOR, OLIVE, ARI, MARTHA 2
MARTHA: We're here to sing a sunny
summer song
KIDS: A sunny summer song, A summer
sing-along
MARTHA: We're here to sing a sunny
summer song
ALL: To celebrate the summer
sunshine!

The choir holds their last note while Mrs. Dromedary <SFX: CLAPS> in celebration. Martha Cow and the kids take a bow.

3 MARTHA 3

Thanks Mrs. Dromedary. You're one
coool camel. I'm having so much
fun singin' with these cool kids on
our Super Groovy Summer Solstice
Sing-along.

4 MRS. DROMEDARY 4
Summer solstice sing-along?

5 ELINOR 5
Today is the summer solstice.

ANGLE ON: A wide view shows the sun shining low in the sky and the carolers are on the front porch of Mrs. Dromedary's house.

6 ELINOR (CONT'D) 6
It's the day of the year with the
most daylight.

7 OLIVE 7
So we're going around the
neighborhood with Martha, singing a
sunny summer song.

8 MRS. DROMEDARY 8
How wonderful. Has everyone else
been home to hear your summer song?

9 ARI 9
Well, "summer" home. "Summer" not.
(beat). Get it? Because it's
summer?

The kids all share a <SFX: GIGGLE>.

10 ELINOR 10
To the next house!

The trio and Martha hop OS.

CROSSFADE TO:

2. EXT. PORCH SONG MONTAGE (MRS. BEAVER'S FRONT DOOR, MR. RACCOON'S BAKERY, MZ. MOLE'S FRONT DOOR, THE RANGER STATION) -
- MOMENTS LATER

Note: This is a quick montage so that we hear the choir singing the summer song once through, while we see a montage of the choir visiting various neighbors. The sky is gradually getting darker as they go from house to house.

ANGLE ON: a front door opening to reveal MRS. BEAVER who suddenly grins widely. A wide shot shows Mrs. Beaver enjoying the carolers' music.

11	ELINOR, OLIVE, ARI, MARTHA	11
	MARTHA: We're here to sing a sunny summer song	
	KIDS: A sunny summer song, A summer sing-along	

ANGLE ON: the bakery's front door opening to reveal MR. RACCOON who grins widely. A wide shot shows the carolers on the sidewalk in front of Mr. Raccoon's bakery as he enjoys the song. A couple Animal Town residents, MR. BUFFALO and MR. ANTELOPE, stand on the sidewalk holding their recently purchased baked goods and smile as they listen.

MARTHA: We're here to sing a sunny
summer song
ALL: To celebrate the summer
sunshine!

ANGLE ON: a front door in the ground, which opens to reveal MZ. MOLE. She pops her head up out of the ground to see Elinor's feet as they jump high and back down. Mz. Mole watches the choir as they sing.

ELINOR: We jump really high.

ARI: We flap and fly.

OLIVE: We try to touch the sky

ANGLE ON: the door of the ranger station swinging open to reveal DEPUTY JACK MOUSE and MS GEE RAFFE (her body and tall neck but her head is OS). Jack Mouse looks grumpy but then (after a beat) gives a very tiny but still noticeable smile.

MARTHA: And now you know why
ALL: To celebrate the summer
sunshine!

END MONTAGE

CROSSFADE TO:

3. EXT. PATH - EVENING

Martha Cow walks with Elinor, Olive and Ari along a path back to Ari's house.

12 ELINOR 12
(looking up) The sky is getting
darker.

The sun is now very low in the sky, almost about to sink below the horizon.

13 MARTHA 13
 (arms in the air, swaying and
 dancing a bit, carefree)
 I guess that's the end of a super
 groovy, super sunny summer day.

Ari pauses in his tracks.

ARI

14 We never sang for Mr. Dog.

14

15 MARTHA 15
Oh you're right. And Mr. Dog is one
coool cat.

ARI

Huh? He's a dog.

17 MARTHA 17

It's just a, a phrase that means
he's coool. Anyway, we have time
for one more summer song. Let's
sing for Mr. Dog!

Martha Cow and the kids hop OS.

4. EXT. MR. DOG'S HOUSE - NIGHT

ANGLE ON: The moon shining in the sky. Suddenly Mr. Dog's mouth pops into the frame to start howling.

18 MR. DOG 18
Arwwwwoooooooooooooooooo!

MR. DOG sits in a chair on his front porch, next to a vase of flowers, howling up at the moon. Elinor leads her friends up to the porch. They are still wearing their sun hats and sunglasses, even though Mr. Dog's front porch is dark.

19 MR. DOG (CONT'D) 19
Arw Arwwwoooooohhhhooooo!

Mr. Dog turns to his friends.

20 MR. DOG (CONT'D) 20
Well, hello there.

21 ELINOR 21
What are you doing, Mr. Dog?

22 MR. DOG 22

On these beautiful summer nights, I
just love howling at the moon.
(beat) How are you all doing this
fine evening?

23 ARI 23

Don't you mean... "Howl" are you
doing this evening? (beat)

24 MR. DOG 24
Ahh good one Ari.

Mr. Dog pulls a flower from the vase and tucks it behind his ear.

25 OLIVE 25
We're great. We're here to sing you
a summer song.

26 MR. DOG 26
A song - now that sounds lovely.
Let me turn on some light so I can
see your faces.

Mr. Dog flicks a light switch, and the porch light turns on (which is directly over the carolers), illuminating the carolers grinning faces. Mr. Dog sits back to enjoy the music.

27 MARTHA 27

This is our Super Groovy Summer
Solstice Sing-along. And you are
our last stop. Ready kids?

Suddenly a single moth flutters in and lands on Martha's right ear.

28 ELINOR 28
Martha? There's a, a MOTH on your
ear.

29 MARTHA 29
 (intrigued) Really? Cooool. (she
 lifts her hoof to toward her left
 ear) Where is it? Here?

30 ELINOR 30
No, other side.

We see a wide shot of the porch with dozens and dozens of moths around the choir and Mr. Dog, just fluttering around, but the densest bunch of moths are near the porch light. The kids and Martha gently try to brush the moths away from their faces.

39 MARTHA 39
Moths are groovy, but they sure
make it hard to sing.

40 OLIVE 40
 (still laughing and brushing moths
 away) Let's come back, uh, another
 (gently swatting) time.

Olive, Ari and Elinor hurry off the porch.

41 MARTHA 41
Uuuh okay, Tootamoooo Mr. Dog!

Martha follows after the kids.

5. EXT. PATH - NIGHT

The kids and Martha walk back to Ari's house. They are still wearing their hats but have taken off their sunglasses. The moon is bright enough to light up their path.

42 ELINOR 42
Why are there so many moths around
Mr. Dog's porch?

43 I dunno. ARI 43

44 OLIVE 44
Dun, dun, dunnnn, sounds like a
mystery, (beat) a moth mystery.

45 ELINOR 45
Let's figure it out! (thinking)
What happened on Mr. Dog's porch
that was different than the other
porches where we sang?

46 ARI 46
 (thinking)
 I know. It was night time when we
 were at Mr. Dog's porch but it was
 daytime at the other places.

In a THOUGHT BUBBLE, we see the kids and Martha standing on Mr. Dog's porch (at night) over Ari's left shoulder, and we see the kids and Martha standing on Mrs. Beaver's porch (during the day) over his right shoulder.

The bubble pops.

47	OLIVE	47
	(excited) I have a book all about insects that start with the letter M, like moths, mites and millipedes.	

In a THOUGHT BUBBLE, we see Olive's insect book over her shoulder. She opens it, and we see a diagram of moths by the moon, and butterflies by the sun.

48	OLIVE (CONT'D)	48
	Most moths come out at night, while most butterflies come out in the daytime.	

The bubble pops.

49	ELINOR	49
	That's SO interesting.	

50	MARTHA	50
	Cooool. So night time is the right time for watching moths.	

51	ELINOR	51
	Let's watch and wait and see if moths show up.	

The trio and Martha all stand still and look around. Ari flutters up into the sky and looks around from up high. One moth flutters past his face in the moonlight and keeps going.

52	ARI	52
	There's one! (he looks around, but sees no others) but that's it.	

53	ELINOR	53
	Huh, it's night time, but there aren't a lot of moths here. So that's not the whole story.	

Ari lands next to his friends.

54	ARI	54
	I know. Mr. Dog was howling on his porch.	

55 ELINOR 55
Right. Maybe moths like howling.

56 MARTHA 56
Groovy idea.

The kids and Martha all look up at the moon and howl. Martha throws her hooves toward the sky and sways while she howls.

57 ELINOR, OLIVE, ARI, MARTHA 57
 "Arwwwwooooooooooooo! Arw
 Arwwwwooooohhhhhooooo!"

58 MR. DOG (O.S.) 58
(after a beat, from far away) Nice
howling!

The kids and Martha stand still and look around intently. No moths show up.

59 ELINOR 59
No moths. That's not it. Hmmm.

6. EXT. ARI'S HOUSE (FRONT PORCH)-- MOMENTS LATER

The kids and Martha hop up to Ari's front door. The porch light is off.

60 OLIVE 60
I remember something else. Mr. Dog
had flowers on his front porch.

61 ELINOR 61
Right. Maybe moths like flowers.

62 MARTHA 62
Where can we find some flowers?

Ari thinks for a quick moment.

63 ARI 63
I'll be right back.

CUT TO:

7. INT. ARI'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

MR. BAT is about to pour fresh water into a vase full of flowers on the kitchen table, as Ari quickly runs into the room, grabs the vase of flowers and is gone in a flash.

64

ARI

64

(quickly)
Hi dad. Bye dad.

Mr. Bat is left standing with his arm in the air and briefly pours water on an empty table.

CUT TO:

8. EXT. ARI'S HOUSE (FRONT PORCH)-- MOMENTS LATER

Ari comes back through the front door with the vase of flowers. He carefully sets the vase down on the porch.

65

ELINOR

65

Let's see if any moths show up.

The kids and Martha hold still, watching the flowers intently, but no moths come.

66

OLIVE

66

No moths. That's not the answer.

67

ELINOR

67

So why are there so many moths
around Mr. Dog's porch?

Just then, Mr. Bat peeks his head outside the front door.

68

MR. BAT

68

It's pretty dark outside kids.

ANGLE ON: Mr. Bat's finger flipping on the porch light switch. The porch light comes on and the kids and flowers are illuminated.

69

MR. BAT (CONT'D)

69

The flowers do look nice there.

Mr. Bat goes back inside.

After a moment, a few moths flutter up toward the porch light.

70

ELINOR

70

(pointing at the porch light)
Look! Moths!

The kids and Martha look at the light, while more moths flutter up toward the porch light. <SFX: MOTH WINGS FLUTTERING>

71 ARI 71
 (flying up a bit toward the porch
 light because he's excited)
My dad turned on the porch light
(pointing at the light) and then
the moths showed up. Mr. Dog turned
on his porch light and the moths
showed up.

72 ELINOR 72
Right. Maybe moths like the porch
light. (looking at her friends) We
need MORE observations!

SONG MONTAGE: MAYBE IT'S THE LIGHT

Elinor, Olive and Ari sing a song while they test whether the moths are attracted to light. Elinor sings as she looks up at the moths fluttering around the lit porch light. Ari turns the porch light off, so the kids and Martha are in the darkness. The moths flutter away in the darkness.

73 ELINOR/OLIVE/ARI 73

ELINOR: Maybe it's the light, maybe
it's the light,
OLIVE: Maybe that's the reason why
the moths showed up tonight.
ARI: Let's do a test, and watch all
the moths
ELINOR: When we turn the lights on
and then turn the lights off.

Ari turns the porch light on. When the porch light turns on, lots of moths flutter in and fly up toward the porch light. When the porch light turns off, the moths flutter away from the light into the darkness.

Note about the music: We suggest a short musical rhythm/interlude (like a four count or more) after the phrase "Lights on" to allow time for moths to start flying in toward the porch light. This will give the kids time to observe the moths before Olive says "The moths fly in and stay." We suggest the same type of structure after the phrase "Lights off" to give visual time for the moths to fly away. Also, we imagine that the following chorus is more of a spoken chorus, compared to the verses which are sung. That way Elinor can declare "Lights on!" Olive can say enthusiastically "The moths fly in and stay."

ELINOR: Lights on!
OLIVE: The moths fly in and stay.
(MORE)

ELINOR/OLIVE/ARI (CONT'D)

ELINOR: Lights off!

OLIVE: The moths all fly away.

Elinor sings outside under the moonlight.

ELINOR: Maybe it's the light, maybe
it's the light,
Maybe that's the reason why the
moths showed up tonight.
Let's try again and watch all the
moths
When we turn the lights on and then
turn the lights off.

Elinor, Ari, Olive and Martha stand close together on the lawn next to Ari's porch, holding their flashlights at chest height and pointed up. Then they turn flashlights on and off, to watch what the moths do. When the flashlights turn on, the beams of light illuminate everyone's faces. (The moths fly into the beam of light when the flashlight is on, fly away when the flashlight is off, etc.)

ELINOR: Lights on!
ARI: The moths fly in and stay.
ELINOR: Lights off!
ARI: The moths all fly away.

Elinor sings the final lines with the porch light shining bright behind her head and moths fluttering around her.

ELINOR: Yes it's the light, yes
it's the light,
The light is what brought all the
moths to us tonight!

A single moth flutters toward the camera and fills the screen.

MOTH WING WIPE
TO:

END SONG MONTAGE

Elinor, Olive, Ari and Martha stand in the moonlight on Ari's porch.

75 OLIVE 75
(excited, because they are solving
the mystery)
...the moths fly in toward the
light.

76 ELINOR 76
Every time we turn off the light...

77 OLIVE 77
They fly away. The moths like Mr.
Dog's porch light. We finally
solved the, dun, dun, dunn (beat)
moth mystery.

Mr. Bat comes out onto the porch.

78 MR. BAT 78
What moth mystery?

79 ELINOR 79
We wanted to know why so many moths
were flying around Mr. Dog's porch.

80 ARI 80
(excited)
And we figured it out. Moths fly
(Ari flutters up toward his porch
light) toward the light.

81 MR. BAT 81
Oh I remember reading about this in
a magazine about insects that start
with the letter M. (beat) Moths are
attracted to light. Some scientists
believe it's because the moths
think the lightbulb is the moon or
the sun, but no one really knows
why.

82 ELINOR 82
It really is a moth mystery. (to
her friends) Hey, I know how we can
finish singing our summer song for
Mr. Dog.

DISSOLVE TO:

10. EXT. MR. DOG'S HOUSE (FRONT PORCH) - NIGHT

ANGLE ON Elinor's finger pressing Mr. Dog's doorbell. <SFX:
DING DONG>

The kids and Martha wait patiently on the porch, wearing their sun hats, underneath the bright porch light. Lots of moths flutter around them.

Mr. Dog opens his front door.

83 MR. DOG 83
(smiling) So glad you're back.

84 ELINOR 84
Mr. Dog, we'd love to sing for you,
but first, would you turn off your
porch light?

85 ARI 85
Moths like the light, and they're
making it hard for us to sing.

86 MR. DOG 86
Okay. Lights off.

Mr Dog turns off the porch light, so that the choir is standing in the dark, and the moths flutter away toward the moonlight. When the moths are gone,

87 MARTHA 87
Groovy.

Martha Cow blows a note on her chromatic pitch pipe.

88 MARTHA (CONT'D) 88
And one-y, and a two-y, and a one
two three ...

SUNNY SUMMER SONG

89 ELINOR, OLIVE, ARI, MARTHA 89
MARTHA: We're here to sing a sunny
summer song
KIDS: A sunny summer song, A summer
sing-along
MARTHA: We're here to sing a sunny
summer song
ALL: To celebrate the summer
sunshine!

ELINOR: We jump really high.

Elinor jumps high.

ARI: We flap and fly.

Ari flutters up in the air for a moment.

OLIVE: We try to touch the sky

Olive raises her trunk and arms to the sky.

MARTHA: And now you know why

Martha spreads her arms wide.

ALL: To celebrate the summer
sunshine!

90	MR. DOG (clapping and smiling) That was wonderful. "Howl" about we all celebrate by howling together?	90
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91	ARI Good one, Mr. Dog.	91
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92	MR. DOG (tilting his head back) Arwwwwwhooooooooooooo!	92
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Martha Cow and the kids all join in, howling at the moon.

93	ELINOR, OLIVE, ARI, MARTHA Arwwwwwooooooooooooooooooooo!	93
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A moth flies in front of the moon and then toward the camera
until it fills the screen.

BLACK OUT

THE END