

# ELINOR WONDERS WHY

## 129A: THE UNSINKABLE LYNX

Written by  
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*Kee's  
Script*

**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  
POLISH DRAFT: 07-Feb-20  
RECORD DRAFT: 21-Feb-20

1. EXT. OLIVE'S HOUSE - FIELD - DAY

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.

DIALOGUE NOTE: there are multiple characters saying the word "tag" in this episode. We want to make sure that the voice direction keeps this word consistent across actors, and from getting too Canadian sounding. We're hoping for a word that rhymes with "flag" rather than "plague."

1                    **ELINOR**  
Okay, everyone. I THINK we're ready  
for today's game, but let's make  
sure. Do we have... snow?

WIDEN to reveal the kids standing on the side of the field, where the snow is not as deep. Silas grabs a handful of snow and holds it up.

2                    **SILAS**  
We have snow!

3                    **ELINOR**  
Do we have our snow clothes?

Olive pats the sides of her snowsuit.

4                    **OLIVE**  
We're warm and tasty.

5                    **ELINOR**  
Do we have a bunch of awesome  
friends?

Koa reaches up his hands and high fives the two characters to his left and right simultaneously.

6                    **KOA**  
We are totally awesome.

7                    **ELINOR**  
Great! It looks like we're ready to  
play a game of... SNOW TAG!

The kids <SFX: YEAH> and throw their arms in the air in excitement. But when Ari raises his arms, he's holding a tennis racket in each hand. He pauses, looking confused.

8  
 Wait. I thought you said we were going to play Snow TENNIS.

Ari lowers his arms.

9  
 Snow Tennis? How do you play that?

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

He holds the rackets in front of him.

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

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

The kids <SFX: GIGGLE>.

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

Olive wades in.

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

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

Handwritten notes and diagrams on the right side of the page:

- 8. (2)
- 9. 2ab
- 10. 2a b c
- 11. (2)
- 12. 2ab c
- 13. 2a b c
- 14. (2)
- 15. 2a b c d e
- Handwritten "Ba A S" in pink.
- Handwritten "A" in a circle at the bottom.

16

**ELINOR**

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

16

12abc  
A.

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

17

**SILAS**

(shyly) Can I be It?

17

18

**ELINOR**

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

18

12abcd  
Splice.

19

**ARI**

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

19

12ab

20

**SILAS**

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

20

20a

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

21

**SILAS (CONT'D)**

Ok, ready...

21

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

22

**SILAS (CONT'D)**

(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.

22

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

23

**OLIVE**

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

23

1ab 2

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

24 SILAS 24  
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. 24a

25 Ari 25  
Uh oh. 1 2000

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 catches up to Ari and tags him. 25a

26 SILAS 26  
Tag!

ARI <SFX: AWWWS/GIGGLES> as he catches his breath.

27 Ari 27  
Nice one, Silas. Now I'M it. 1 2000b

After a beat, he makes a run towards Silas, but Silas is too fast, and he ends up going after Elinor and Olive, who are nearest to him. Eventually, he stops to take another breath. 27a

28 Ari (CONT'D) 28  
(panting)  
It's... really... hard... to move  
in this snow. 12

Elinor and Olive, who are near him, also stop to catch their breath.

29 Olive 29  
(panting also)  
Yeah... (phew)... I have to lift my  
foot up high to take a step and  
then it sinks in the snow. 12

30 Elinor 30  
Me too. 1 12

As Elinor demonstrates, she gets caught by her curiosity.

31 Elinor (CONT'D) 31  
Hmm. I wonder if there's a way to  
run better in the snow. 2000

At that moment, something catches Olive's attention. Off in the distance, we see Gael Lynx approaching the group from afar and waving.

(VOICE RECORD NOTE: the Spanish pronunciation of Gael rhymes with Babel, or kale (Kal-El). "Tale" should be ok in the song because the second syllable is stressed and it rhymes.)

32 OLIVE (O.S.) 32  
Oh look, it's Gael.

Ari, Olive, and Elinor approach the other kids, 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.

33 ARI 33  
Who's Gael?

34 OLIVE 34  
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. 34a

35 GAEL 35  
Hi, everybody. I'm Gael.

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

36 SILAS 36  
Cool! Welcome to Animal Town.

37 GAEL 37  
Thanks, I really like it here, but's it's different from where I come from.

38 ARI 38  
What's it like up north, Gael?

39 GAEL 39  
Well, it's a bit snowier.

40 ELINOR 40  
Is it really cold?

41 GAEL 41  
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>.

42 OLIVE 42  
Well, Gael, you're just in time.  
We're playing a game of Snow Tag.  
Want to join us?

43 GAEL 43  
Great! (he suddenly looks confused)  
Um, what's Snow Tag?

44 OLIVE 44  
It's the same as regular tag, but  
we play it when it's snowy outside.

45 ARI 45  
And right now, it's REALLY snowy.

Ari steps into the deep snow.

46 GAEL 46  
Mmm, where I'm from, it's almost  
always snowy, so we just call it  
tag.

The kids <SFX: GIGGLE>.

47 ELINOR 47  
Ok. Ari was It, but we should start  
over because Gael is here. Does  
anyone want to be It this time?

48 GAEL 48  
I'll be It.

49 ELINOR 49  
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.

50 OLIVE 50  
Watch out for Silas. He's really  
fast.

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

51 GAEL 51  
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.

52 GAEL (CONT'D) 52  
(panting slightly)  
Tag!

53 SILAS 53  
(panting)  
Aww, nice, you got me!

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

54 ARI 54  
(panting slightly)  
Whoa, look! Gael tagged Silas!

55 OLIVE 55  
He did? But nobody ever tags Silas.

56 ELINOR 56  
Gael did.

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

57 ARI 57  
I thought cheetahs were the fastest animals at running.

58 OLIVE 58  
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.

59 SILAS 59  
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.

60 ELINOR 60  
Wow, look. Silas sinks into the snow, but Gael doesn't.

61 ARI 61  
Whoa. You're right. It's like Gael can run on top of the snow.

62 OLIVE 62  
Yeah. Maybe that's why he can run faster. Silas has to run through the snow, but Gael just runs on top of it.

63 ELINOR 63  
That... is SO interesting!

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

64 SILAS 64  
(panting) Phew, I give up.

Gael turns back and walks over to him.

65 GAEL 65  
Are you ok, Silas?

Silas pants, takes a deep breath.

66 SILAS 66  
(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.

67 ELINOR 67  
Wow, Gael. I can't believe you made Silas tired.

68 OLIVE 68  
You're so fast running in the snow.

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

69 ARI 69  
Yeah, I got tired just watching it! Did you eat some kind of special breakfast this morning?

70

**Gael**

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.

71

**Ari**

Mmm, I love maple syrup.

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

72

**Elinor**

(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?

73

**Olive**

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

Olive steps over to the field to demonstrate.

74

**Gael**

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.

75

**Gael** (CONT'D)

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.

76

**Koa**

Whoa, that is so cool.

77

**Elinor**

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.

78

**Elinor** (CONT'D)

There must be another reason. We need more observations!

Ari joins in the hypothesizing.

79

ARI

Maybe it's because Gael is a cat,  
and cats can walk on top of the  
snow.

79

80

OLIVE

But cheetahs are also cats, and  
Silas can't walk on top of the  
snow.

80

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

81

ELINOR

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

81

82

KOA

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

82

83

ELINOR

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

83

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

84

OLIVE

Um, Elinor...

84

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.

85

ELINOR

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

85

She and the other kids <SFX: GIGGLE>.

86

ARI

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

86

Gael flops backwards onto the snow next to Ari, his feet  
sticking up. He high-fives Ari and we see their two hands  
meet up close. Elinor <SFX: GASPS>.

87

ELINOR

Gael, I see something else that's  
different about you. Your paws and  
your feet are bigger than our paws  
and feet.

87

In a SCIENCE CLOSE-UP: we see that Gael's paws and feet are amazing - they're huge, wide, and furry compared to Ari's.

88 OLIVE 88  
They are SO COOL. They're big and wide and furry.

The kids all take a thoughtful moment to hold up their paws and feet and look at them.

89 GAEL 89  
*Hey thanks!*  
Oh, thank you! We lynxes all have paws and feet like this.

90 ELINOR 90  
Maybe that's why you don't sink as much, ~~Gael~~.

91 ARI 91  
Yeah, none of us has paws like that!

92 ELINOR 92  
When we step in the snow, our smaller feet sink.

She steps into the snow and we see her feet sink.

93 ELINOR (CONT'D) 93  
But maybe because your feet are so wide, they don't sink as much.

Gael hops to his feet. He moves his feet up and down and we see that because of their width, they don't pierce through the snow as easily.

94 GAEL 94  
*Heh...*  
I think you're right!

95 OLIVE 95  
We figured it out!

On their good cheers, we go into the DITTY MONTAGE. They sing

(COMPOSER RECORD NOTE: the Spanish pronunciation of Gael rhymes with Babel, or kale (Kal-El). "Tale" should be ok in the song because the second syllable is stressed and it rhymes.)

96 ELINOR/OLIVE/ARI 96  
Listen up friends, listen well,  
We have a new lynx friend,  
The unsinkable Gael!

(MORE)

ELINOR/OLIVE/ARI (CONT'D)

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, listen

well,

We have a new lynx friend,

The unsinkable Gaaaaaaeeeel!

The kids all cheer their new friend. Ari is especially excited. He jumps in the air and flutters.

97

ARI

Look at me! I'm not sinking in the snow, just like Gael!

Ari is fluttering backwards and lands, not realizing he's landed on the rackets, he slips a bit but grasps the netting - <WHOOOPS> does a little flip and lands on the pair of rackets he had tossed earlier.

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

98

ARI (CONT'D)

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.

99

ELINOR

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

100

OLIVE

(catching on)

Yeah, if we can find wide things to put on our feet, then we can walk on top of the snow, too.

101

KOA

I've got two flying discs [Frisbees] at home I could use.

102 SILAS 102  
I have some toy plates at home.

103 OLIVE 103  
I have a couple of ping-pong  
paddles.

104 ELINOR 104  
And I have things at home I can  
use, too. Gael, will you wait for  
us here?

105 GAEL 105  
Of course!

106 ELINOR 106  
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. (They look like rudimentary snowshoes)

107 ELINOR (CONT'D) (CONT'D) 107  
Ta-da! We did it.

108 GAEL 108  
Those look awesome.

109 KOA 109  
Cool, I have lynx feet.

110 ELINOR 110  
Who wants to try theirs first?

111 OLIVE 111  
I do!

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

112 OLIVE (CONT'D) 112  
(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.

113

ARI

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

113

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

114

ARI (CONT'D)

Umm, it might take some practice to be like him.

114

The kids all <SFX: GIGGLE>.

115

OLIVE

What do you think about our lynx shoes, Gael?

115

116

GAEL

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.

116

117

ELINOR

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

117

Elinor catches herself.

118

ELINOR (CONT'D)

Oh, uh, or should I say, who wants to play TAG!

118

119

SILAS

Yeah, and I'm still it!

119

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

SEGMENT. 2.

1. INT. MZ. MOLE'S CLASSROOM -- WINTER DAY

Looking out the classroom window, a bird feeder hangs nearby. The scenery is blanketed in white snow. A cardinal lands on the bird feeder and quickly flies away.

Inside the classroom, Mz. Mole puts on some strange fluffy white snowshoes over her feet.

120 OLIVE 120  
Mz. Mole? What are those?

121 MZ. MOLE 121  
These are my ptarmigan feet, for walking on the snow.

The kids all look at each other, confused.

122 GAEL 122  
Your what?

123 MZ. MOLE 123  
My ptarmigan feet. I made them myself.

124 ELINOR 124  
Mz. Mole, (giggling) what are ptarmigan feet?

125 MZ. MOLE 125  
Oh, they are so much fun. Let's read about them!

Mz. Mole takes out her storybook and opens the front cover. CLOSE ON the storybook which shows a ptarmigan, a brown bird about the size of a chicken, standing on the ground in the summer arctic tundra.

## 2. THE STORYBOOK

The storybook comes to life and the ptarmigan begins to walk around, pecking at berries on a short bush.

126 MZ. MOLE 126  
A ptarmigan is a bird, an amazing bird with amazing feet. In the summer, the ptarmigan's feet have no feathers. But watch this!

With a quick flap of its wings, the ptarmigan hops up on a rock. The pages flip quickly creating a flipbook style of animation. Paper cutout snowflakes begin to fall. As the bird stands, its brown feathers gradually become white and fluffy.

127 MZ. MOLE (V.O.) 127  
When it starts to snow, the ptarmigan changes! What do you see?

128 **ELINOR** (V.O.) 128  
It turned white!

129 MZ. MOLE (V.O.) 129  
That's right! The ptarmigan grows  
white feathers all over its body.  
But my favorite part is the feet!  
What changes do you notice?

CLOSE ON the ptarmigan's feet. In a flipbook style, the feet  
grow white feathers all over, and its toenails grow a bit  
longer.

130 **OLIVE** (V.O.) 130  
Wow! It's feet are bigger now.

131 MZ. MOLE (V.O.) 131  
Yes! The ptarmigan grows fluffy  
feathers on its feet, and its  
toenails grow longer.

132 **GAEL** (V.O.) 132  
Why does it do that?

Cutting to a wider view, the scenery is now white with snow.  
The ptarmigan hops down from the rock onto the snow and  
begins walking. The white bird now blends in with the snowy  
backdrop, and it leaves footprints in the snow as it walks.

133 MZ. MOLE (V.O.) 133  
Having bigger feet makes it easier  
to walk on top of the snow. It's  
like a built-in pair of snowshoes!

134 **ELINOR** (V.O.) 134  
Just like Gael. He has huge paws.

### 3. INT. CLASSROOM -- WINTER DAY

Mz. Mole closes the storybook, picks up a bag of birdseed and  
heads outside.

135 MZ. MOLE 135  
Now, let's see how my ptarmigan  
feet work!

Out the window, the kids watch Mz. Mole walk on the snow and  
fill the bird feeder with seed. <SFX: KID WALLA Wow! Cool!  
Look at that!> End

END.

\*