

First Fire



A Cherokee Folktale



By Nancy Kelly Allen
Illustrated by Sherry Rogers

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Why are ravens black? Why do screech owl eyes look red in light? How did fire come to earth? You'll find the answers to these questions in this retelling of a Cherokee *pourquoi* folktale. The earth was cold and dark, but the animals could see fire coming from a tree on the island. They tried to fly or swim to the island to bring back the fire for its heat and light. What happened to some of the animals? Which animal brought it back and how?

Animals in the book include: hoot owl, horned owl, racer, raven, screech owl, and water spider.

It's so much more than a picture book . . . this book is specifically designed to be both a fun-to-read story and a launch pad for discussions and learning. We encourage adults to do the activities with the young children in their lives both at home and in the classroom. Free online resources and support at www.ArbordalePublishing.com include:

- For Creative Minds as seen in the book (in English & Spanish):
 - Cherokee Then and Now
 - Cherokee Territory
 - Fire
 - Water Spiders
- Teaching Activities (to do at home or school):
 - Reading Questions
 - Science
 - Language Arts
 - Geography
- Interactive Quizzes: Reading Comprehension, For Creative Minds, and Math Word Problems
- English and Spanish Audiobooks
- Related Websites
- Aligned to State, Common Core & NGSS Standards
- Accelerated Reader and Reading Counts! Quizzes
- Lexile and Fountas & Pinnell Reading Levels

eBooks with Auto-Flip, Auto-Read, and selectable English and Spanish text and audio are available for purchase online.

Thanks to Gina K. Burnett, Outreach Coordinator at the Cherokee Heritage Center, for reviewing the accuracy of the information in this book.

Nancy Kelly Allen is a retired school librarian and the award-winning author of more than 30 picture books. Her inspiration for writing *The First Fire* was to honor her Cherokee great-grandmother, Sarah. She hopes that this book will provide younger generations an insight into the mystery and wonder of traditional folktales. Some of her recent and award-winning titles include *On the Banks of the Amazon*, *What Sea Creature Is This?*, and *Trouble in Troublesome Creek*. Nancy lives in Kentucky with her husband and two dogs. Visit her website at nancykellyallen.com.

Sherry Rogers spent twelve years as a corporate graphic designer and artist before leaving it all behind for the freelance world of illustrating children's books. Through illustrating *The First Fire*, Sherry remembers her own ancestor, Na Ni, a Cherokee woman from the mountains of North Carolina. Some of Sherry's other Arbordale titles include *The Penguin Lady*; *Ten for Me*; *Hey Diddle Diddle*; *Newton and Me*; *Moose and Maggie*; *Paws, Claws, Hands & Feet*; and *The Deductive Detective*; as well as her award-winning titles: *Sort It Out!*, *Kersplatypus*, *Burro's Tortillas*, and *If You Were a Parrot*. Sherry lives in Northern California with her family and their pets. Visit her website at sherry-rogers.com.



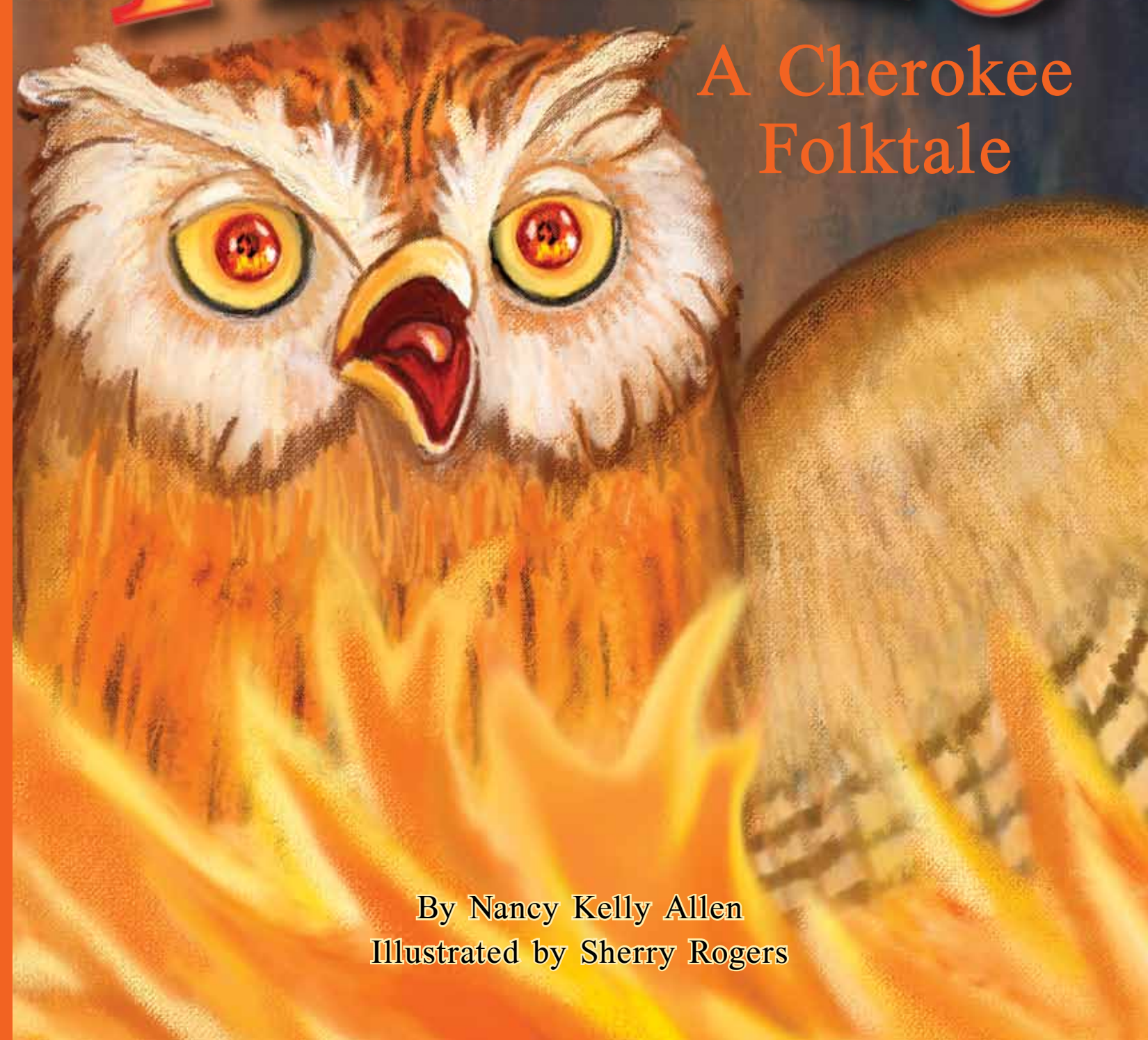
Nancy Kelly Allen



Sherry Rogers

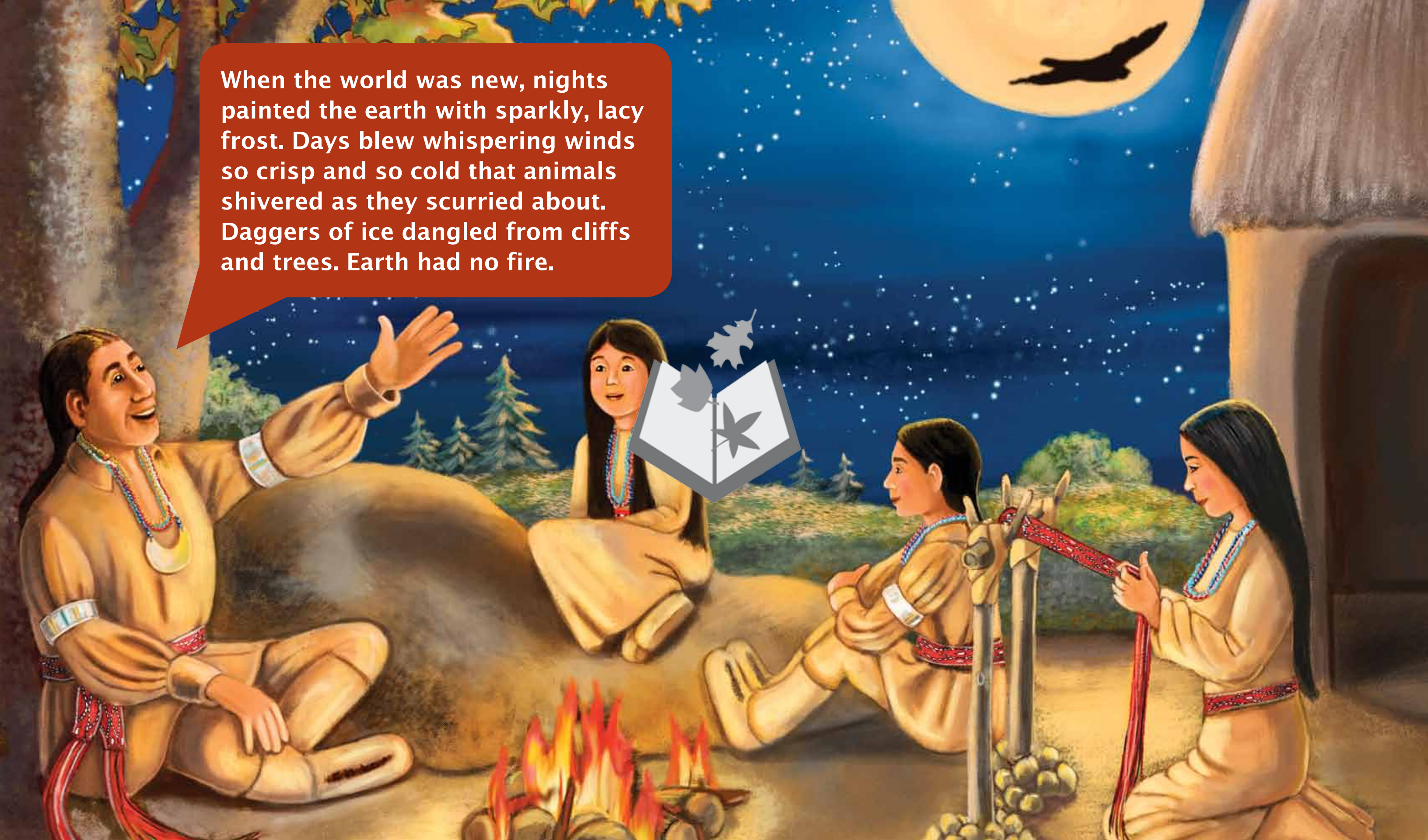
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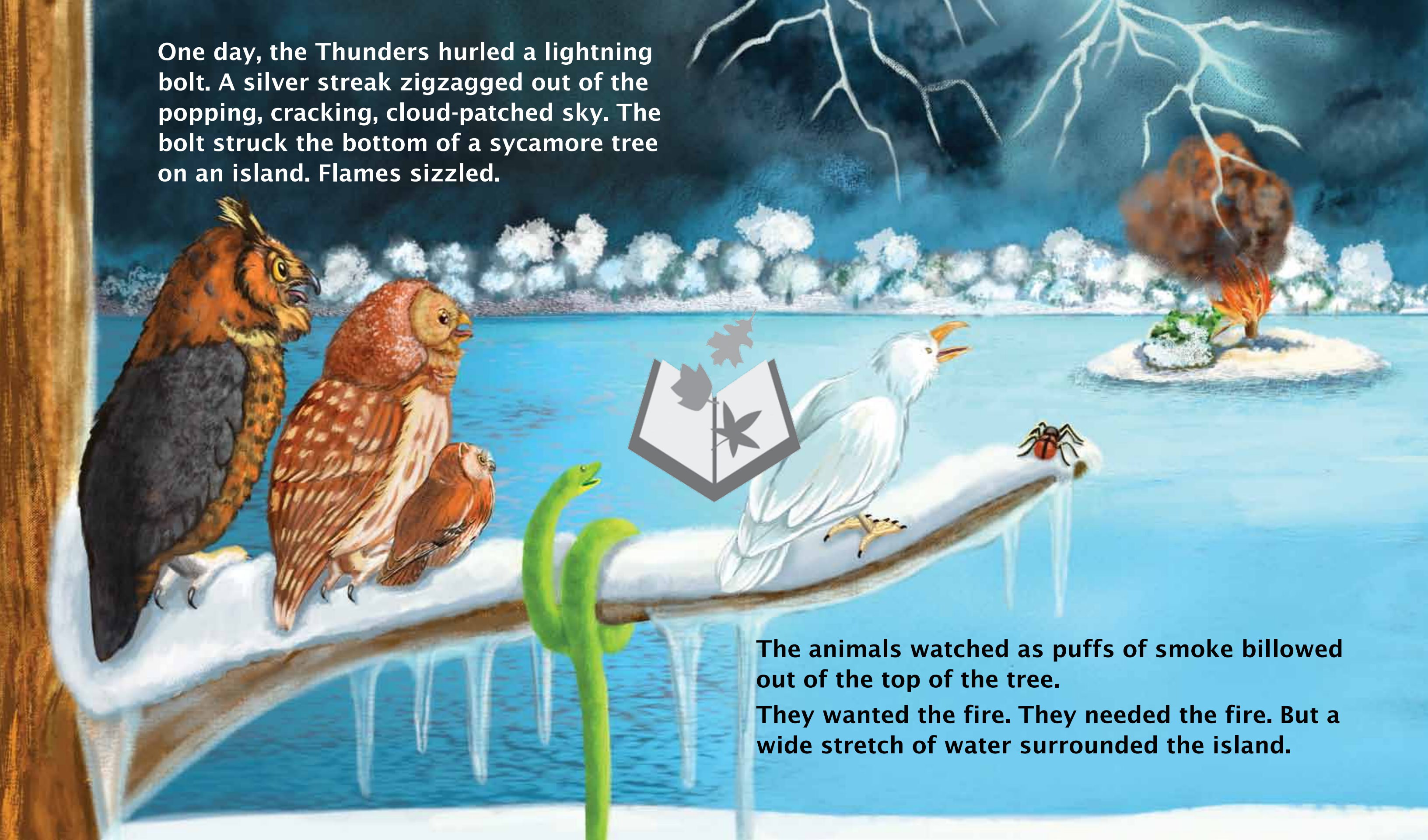


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When the world was new, nights painted the earth with sparkly, lacy frost. Days blew whispering winds so crisp and so cold that animals shivered as they scurried about. Daggers of ice dangled from cliffs and trees. Earth had no fire.



One day, the Thunders hurled a lightning bolt. A silver streak zigzagged out of the popping, cracking, cloud-patched sky. The bolt struck the bottom of a sycamore tree on an island. Flames sizzled.



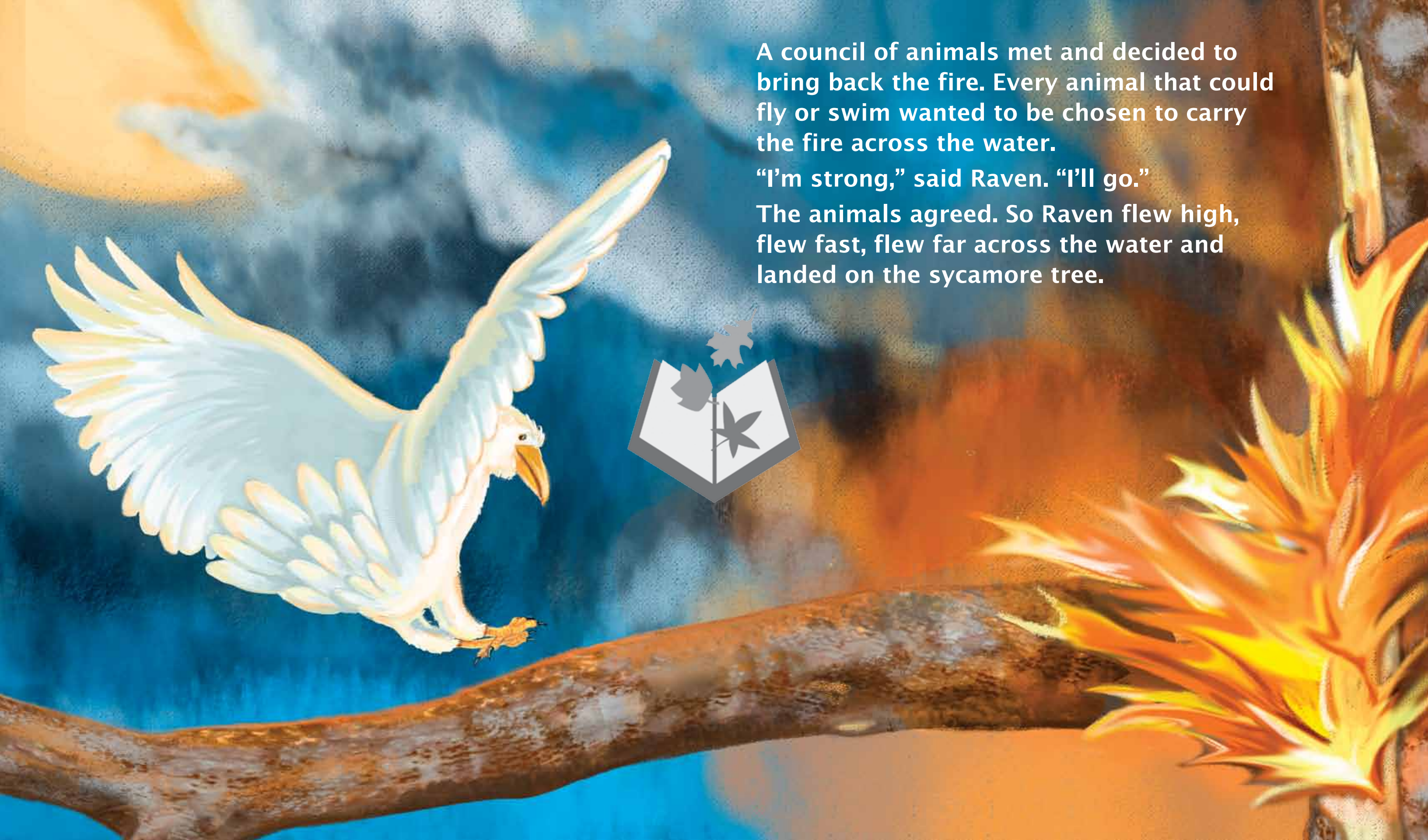
The animals watched as puffs of smoke billowed out of the top of the tree.

They wanted the fire. They needed the fire. But a wide stretch of water surrounded the island.

A council of animals met and decided to bring back the fire. Every animal that could fly or swim wanted to be chosen to carry the fire across the water.

“I’m strong,” said Raven. “I’ll go.”

The animals agreed. So Raven flew high, flew fast, flew far across the water and landed on the sycamore tree.



Raven perched on a branch and puzzled about how to carry back the fire. The heat scorched Raven's feathers black. Frightened, Raven returned to the animals without the fire. To this day, Raven's feathers are black.



For Creative Minds

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Cherokee Then and Now

This story is a legend of the Cherokee people. Historically, the Cherokee lived in the mountains of southeastern North America. The Cherokee and their ancestors lived there for thousands of years! The Cherokee were once the largest nation of Native Americans.

Many stories have been passed down, from generation to generation. The storytellers made these tales come to life. They were dancers, actors, and singers. Some stories were a sacred part of the Cherokee religion. Other stories taught how to live or explained about the world.

The Cherokee culture is very much alive today! For modern Cherokees, like in most cultures, children learn the stories, history, religion, and language of their people from their parents, grandparents, and other adults. Storytelling is still an important part of the Cherokee culture. Cherokee children hear many of the same stories that other children listened to hundreds of years ago.



Cherokee Territory



The map above shows the original lands of the Cherokee civilization. In the 1830s, the United States government forced the Cherokee out of their homes. The Cherokee were removed to Oklahoma. More than 4,000 died during this forced removal. This journey is called the Trail of Tears.

There are currently three Cherokee tribes recognized by the US government: the Cherokee Nation, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, and United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma. The Cherokee Nation is the largest of these three. The map to the right shows the **jurisdictional boundary** of the Cherokee Nation. "Jurisdictional boundary" means that this region is under the laws and government of the Cherokee Nation.



Cherokee Nation

Fire

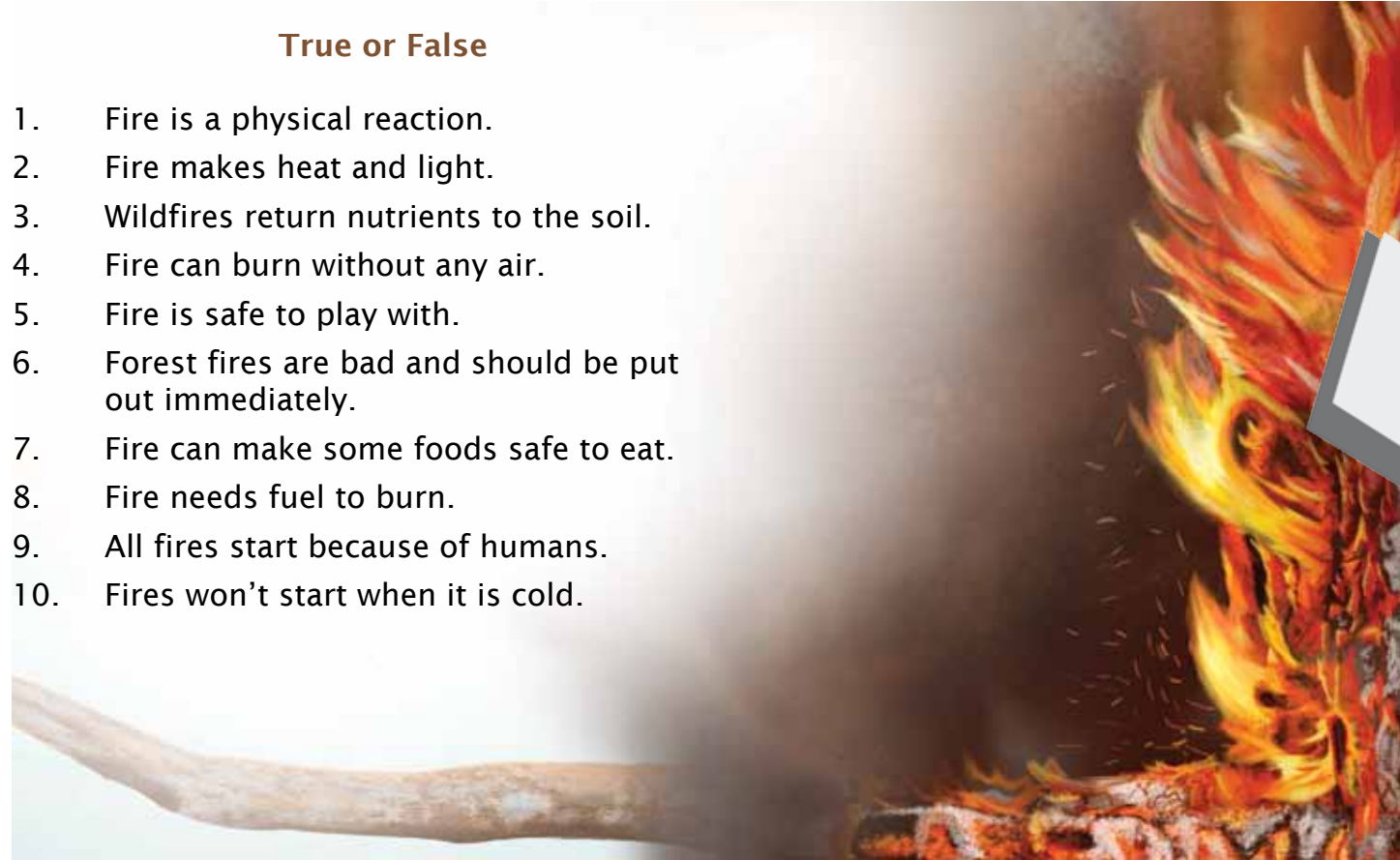
Fire is very important for the entire natural world, including humans. Fire is a chemical reaction that uses fuel and oxygen to create heat and light.

Fire helps people stay warm when it is cold and be able to see when it is dark. Fire can cook food so that it is safe to eat. Small, controlled fires are useful, but if a fire gets too big or is out of control, it can be very dangerous.

Natural fires are usually started by lightning. Wildfires burn in forests and clear out old, dry wood. This helps return nutrients to the soil so that new plants can grow. These fires are normal and natural. The fires often die off on their own. If the weather has been very dry and hot, the fire can grow very large and threaten humans and animals.

True or False

1. Fire is a physical reaction.
2. Fire makes heat and light.
3. Wildfires return nutrients to the soil.
4. Fire can burn without any air.
5. Fire is safe to play with.
6. Forest fires are bad and should be put out immediately.
7. Fire can make some foods safe to eat.
8. Fire needs fuel to burn.
9. All fires start because of humans.
10. Fires won't start when it is cold.



Answers: 1—False. It is a chemical reaction. 2—True. 3—True. 4—False. Fire needs oxygen to burn. 5—False. Fire can cause very painful burns. Always have a responsible adult with you when there is fire around. 6—False. Forest fires are necessary to clear out old plant matter. Small, naturally-occurring fires every few years can actually help to prevent major fires that threaten humans and animals. 7—True. Most raw meat and some raw plants can be dangerous to humans. Fire heats these foods until they are safe to eat. 8—True. Fire can use lots of different types of fuel, such as wood, coal, paper, and charcoal. 9—False. Lightning, lava from volcanoes, or sparks from falling rocks can start fires. 10—False. If there is good fuel and oxygen, fires can start even in cold weather. A nice, contained fire on a cold night can be just the thing you need to stay warm and cozy!

Water Spiders

“Water spider” is a common name for a spider that walks on or swims in the water. There are many different species of spiders that can do this. Some spiders, like the one in this story, spin webs that are used to hold or carry things. Match the description to the image.

wolf spider



water strider



1. Although they breathe air, these spiders live underwater. They **trap air bubbles** in the fine hairs on their stomach (abdomen) and legs. The female builds a bell-shaped web underwater that she fills with air. This bell provides a place for her to rest, mate, and raise her offspring. Newborn spiders are called **spiderlings**.

Spiders in this family live on every continent except Antarctica. Fine hairs on their legs allow them to spread out their weight so they can run across the water's surface. Instead of spinning webs to trap their prey, they chase them down! The females carry their eggs in ball-shaped **egg sacs** that they spin out of silk. After the spiderlings are born, their mother carries them on her back for a few weeks until they can survive on their own.

5. The females in this group of spiders are nearly twice as large as the males. They can grow up to 1 inch (2.6cm) long with a 3 inch (7.6cm) leg span. These spiders race out across the water to hunt. They usually eat aquatic insects, but some of the larger spiders can catch and eat **small fish**.

4. This insect is often called a “water spider,” but is **not a spider** at all. Spiders have eight legs, but insects have only six. Even though they have wings, these insects cannot fly. Instead, they walk on the surface of the water.

fishing spider



diving bell spider



Answers: 1-diving bell spider. 2-wolf spider. 3-fishing spider. 4-water strider.

To the students at G.S. School . . . great readers, great writers, great people.—NKA
 I would love to dedicate this book to my Cherokee Great Grandma Na Ni.—SR
 Thanks to Gina K. Burnett, Outreach Coordinator at the Cherokee Heritage Center,
 for reviewing the accuracy of the information in this book.

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