Suggested levels for Guided Reading, DRA™, Lexile®, and Reading Recovery™ are provided in the Pearson Scott Foresman Leveling Guide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Comprehension Skills and Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Play</td>
<td>• Character, Setting, Plot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Main Idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Inferring</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scott Foresman Reading Street 3.3.2

Grandmother Spider Steals the Sun

A Cherokee Tale
By Margie Sigman
Illustrated by David Sheldon

ISBN-10: 0-328-51388-1
Vocabulary Words
accomplish
chorus
commanding
disappeared
misfortune
perimeter
quest

Word count: 1,674

Grandmother Spider Steals the Sun
A Cherokee Tale
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Note: The total word count includes words in the running text and headings only. Numerals and words in chapter titles, captions, labels, diagrams, charts, graphs, sidebars, and extra features are not included.
Originally, the Cherokee people lived in the southeastern United States. The name Cherokee probably comes from chiluk-ki, the Choctaw word meaning “cave people.” The Cherokee had an advanced culture, with farming, basket-weaving, a constitution, and an alphabet.
Characters

CHORUS
PEOPLE
’POSSUM
GRANDMOTHER SPIDER
LITTLE WASP

NARRATOR
FOX
BUZZARD
WASPS

Settings

Home, full of darkness
The other side of the world, full of light

Staging/Lighting

If there is enough room on the stage, create “Home” on one side and “the other side of the world” on the other. Allow space around the perimeter of the stage for characters to pantomime their journeys between the two places.

Lighting is key to this story. If possible, get a spotlight or lamp to light up “the other side of the world.” Keep “Home” as dark and shadowy as possible.

Scene I: Home, full of darkness

All characters stand onstage in various poses that suggest they cannot see. The Chorus is off to one side.

CHORUS (chant together):
All is dark.
We are blind in the dark.
Where is the light so that we may see?

NARRATOR (in a deep, commanding voice): Long ago, there was only blackness. People and animals were unable to see, and they kept bumping into each other.

PEOPLE AND ANIMALS (bumping into each other and calling out in random voices): OUCH! UMPH! GET OUT OF MY WAY! What this world needs is a little light!
(FOX claps his hands for quiet.)
FOX (looks at people and animals): Listen to me now. I know some people who live on the other side of the world. They have all the light they need.

’POSSUM: Well, why don’t they share?

FOX: They are greedy people. They keep all the light for themselves.

BUZZARD: What nonsense! That’s so unfair. I can’t see my beautiful feathers in the dark. I can’t see where I’m going when I fly. If we had light, we wouldn’t bump into things all the time.

(Animals and people nod and murmur in agreement. Everyone looks unhappy.)

’POSSUM: I have an idea. (Looks around shyly.) I will travel to the other side of the world and steal a little of the greedy people’s light. Surely they can spare some for us. I have a bushy tail. They’ll never see if I hide the light in all that fur.

ALL: HERE, HERE! HOORAY FOR ’POSSUM!

’POSSUM: Off I go, then. (Waves goodbye to all.)

NARRATOR: And so ’Possum set out for the other side of the world. She walked for days and days, hardly stopping to eat or drink. (’Possum walks around the perimeter of the stage, making two circles. During her journey, she begins to look very tired. She exits offstage.)
Scene II: The other side of the world, full of light

'POSSUM comes back onstage, blinking and shielding her eyes in the bright sunlight.

NARRATOR: At last ’Possum reached the other side of the world. Right away she saw the sun hanging in a tree, giving off bright light.

'POSSUM (in a stage whisper): No one will miss a little piece of that sun. (Sneaks over to the sun, grabs a little piece, and hides it in her bushy tail.)

CHORUS (chant together):
Foolish ’Possum, foolish girl,
You traveled halfway ’round the world.
Now feel how hot the sun can be.
You should have left it in the tree.

'POSSUM (holding tail and jumping up and down):
Ouch! Ouch! That bit of sun is so hot! My tail is burning up! Look at my beautiful tail!

NARRATOR: Foolish ’Possum had to give her stolen piece of sun back to the people who lived on the other side of the world. Even worse, from that time onward, all her children had bald tails. It was a terrible misfortune!
Scene III: Home, full of darkness

NARRATOR: When ’Possum finally returned, she had to admit to the animals and the people that she had failed in her quest. Their world was just as dark as ever. Everyone was discouraged.

CHORUS (chant together):
All is dark.
We are blind in the dark.
Where is the light so that we may see?

BUZZARD: It’s my turn to try! (Flaps his wings and sticks out his chest.) Only a foolish four-legged animal like ’Possum would think of hiding the sun in her tail. I know better than that.

FOX: Where will you hide the sun, Buzzard?

BUZZARD: On my head, of course. On my beautiful feathered head. I shall be famous forever. “Buzzard, Bringer of Light” is how they’ll remember me!

PEOPLE AND ANIMALS: HERE, HERE! HOORAY FOR BUZZARD, BRINGER OF LIGHT!
BUZZARD: Off I go, then. *(Waves goodbye to all.)*

NARRATOR: And so Buzzard flew off to the other side of the world. He flew across land and ocean for days and days, hardly stopping to eat or drink. *(BUZZARD pretends to fly around the perimeter of the stage, making two circles. During his journey, he, too, begins to look very tired. Finally, he exits offstage.)*

**Scene IV: The other side of the world, full of light**

Buzzard comes back onstage, blinking and shielding his eyes in the bright sunlight.

NARRATOR: Much later, Buzzard reached the other side of the world. Right away he saw the hot, bright sun hanging in its tree, giving off more light than he had ever imagined.

BUZZARD: I shall grab the light and bring it home! No one but I could possibly accomplish such an amazing deed! Who will miss a little piece of that sun, anyway? *(Dives straight at the sun, seizes a small piece in his claws, and puts it on his head.)*
CHORUS *(chant together)*:
Foolish Buzzard, foolish boy,
The sun you want is not a toy.
Now feel how hot its light can be.
You should have left it in the tree.

BUZZARD *(holding head and squawking angrily)*:
Ouch! Ouch! That bit of sun is so hot! My head is on fire! My beautiful, glossy feathers are burning up!

NARRATOR: Foolish Buzzard had to give his stolen piece of sun back to the people who lived on the other side of the world. Even worse, from that time onward, all his children had bald heads. It was a terrible misfortune!

Scene V: Home, full of darkness

NARRATOR: When Buzzard finally returned, he was embarrassed and ashamed. He had to admit to the animals and the people that he had failed to bring them light. He also had to endure their snickers as they stared at his ugly, bald head.

CHORUS *(chant together)*:
All is dark.
We are blind in the dark.
Where is the light so that we may see?

PEOPLE AND ANIMALS: We must rethink our plan to get light. Who has a way?
GRANDMOTHER SPIDER (calmly, confidently): I would like to try, but I must prepare for the journey first. Who will help me?

WASPS: We will, Grandmother.

GRANDMOTHER SPIDER (addressing Wasps): Good. Find me the creamiest, heaviest clay that you can. Bring me the finest mud from the river. Get some straw from the field to bind the mud and clay together.

LITTLE WASP: But why, Grandmother Spider?

GRANDMOTHER SPIDER: I must make a pot to carry the sun. It must have thick walls to keep in the heat. It must have a tight-fitting lid to keep in the light.

(WASPS pantomime gathering clay, mud, and straw. They watch GRANDMOTHER SPIDER as she pantomimes shaping a pot out of clay.)

NARRATOR: Grandmother Spider spent a whole day making her thick-walled pot. At last it was ready.
LITTLE WASP: Grandmother Spider, how will you get all the way to the other side of the world?

GRANDMOTHER SPIDER: I’ll spin a web.

LITTLE WASP: But you’re so small, Grandmother Spider. How will you bring back the sun?

GRANDMOTHER SPIDER: My size is my strength, little one. No one will see me coming or notice when I steal a bit of the sun. I’ll put it in my pot, cover it with the lid, and bring it back for all of you. Now, I must begin my journey. Watch for my return!

NARRATOR: And so Grandmother Spider began spinning a silken thread all the way to the other side of the world.

GRANDMOTHER SPIDER (singing or chanting):
Spin and sing,
Spin and swing.
Spin a strand,
Spin, I can.
Scene VI: The other side of the world, full of light

NARRATOR: After much spinning and swinging, Grandmother Spider reached the other side of the world. The bright light there hurt her four pairs of eyes.

GRANDMOTHER SPIDER (looking around furtively): Just as I thought! No one even knows I’m here. Ah, there’s the sun. Let me quickly snatch a piece and hide it in my pot.

NARRATOR: And so a little piece of the sun from the other side of the world disappeared into Grandmother Spider’s clay pot. Down came the lid, and off she went—spinning her web back home before anyone noticed.

CHORUS (chant together):
Wonderful Spider, tiny and wise,
You see so much with your many eyes.
Carry the sun! Hold it tight!
Bring it home to light up the night.
Scene VII: Home, full of darkness

ALL (pointing and looking off into distance):
LOOK! HERE COMES GRANDMOTHER SPIDER AT LAST!
(GRANDMOTHER SPIDER comes onstage with her pot, looking excited.)

LITTLE WASP: Welcome home, Grandmother. What is in your pot?

ALL: YES, SHOW US! SHOW US!

GRANDMOTHER SPIDER: I bring you the sun, hot and bright, to light our world.

NARRATOR: Grandmother Spider brought a piece of the sun to the animals and the Cherokee people, and they rejoiced. That's not all. It is said that she also brought fire and taught the people the art of pottery-making.
Unfortunately, early American settlers wanted Cherokee land for their own farms, and the Cherokee were forced to move west of the Mississippi River in the winter of 1838–1839. Many Cherokee died during this forced march, called the Trail of Tears. Today, most Cherokee live in Oklahoma, though a few remain on a reservation in North Carolina.

**Reader Response**

1. Tell about three characters in the play. Use a chart like the one below. Write the name of each character, and tell what he or she did in the play.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Action</th>
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2. Why was Grandmother Spider able to bring back a piece of the sun when the others were not? What information from the play helped you understand that?

3. Find two vocabulary words in the play that have prefixes. Name the base words. How do the prefixes change the meaning of the base words?

4. Why do you think the Cherokee people told stories such as the one told here?