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BATS! They’re strange, unique, and also a bit scary. They are just the kind of animal that makes people wonder, “Now, where did they come from?” This Native American story has one answer for that question.

Think About Genre

Literature can be classified by genre (ZHON-ruh), or type. Some works are fiction—made-up stories. A folktale is fiction from long ago. Folktales began as stories told rather than written down. One kind of folktale is the pourquoi (pur-KWAH) tale. Pourquoi means “why.” In a “why” tale, the storyteller explains how something came to be.

Think About the Topic

Reread the above introduction to “Out of the Light, Into the Night.” Ask yourself: What do I know about how bats act? List two things you know.

1. __________________________________________

2. __________________________________________

Preview and Predict

Preview the story. Think about the title and the illustrations. Make a prediction about what will happen in “Out of the Light, Into the Night.”

What can you expect from this kind of folktale? Complete each sentence below so that it tells about a pourquoi tale.

This story will be set in a time that is ________________________.

This story will explain why ________________________.

Because this story is fiction, the characters ________________________.
adapted from a Native American (Anishinabe) story

You who are afraid of the night, come closer. Sit as near to the bright fire as you dare. Now look to your right and to your left. Your friends are near you, are they not? So you can see that you have nothing to fear. It is important that you are not afraid here in the night. And it is important that you understand this: The night creature I will tell about is not to be feared, either.

Just as you rise with the Sun and sleep when he sleeps, so do many of the creatures of the forest. That’s why it was so strange one morning long ago when the Sun’s light did not shine. Owl did not mind, for she hunts at night. But those who flee her claws were worn out and wondered out loud.

“Where is the Sun?” asked the field mouse and a little green frog. Soon, even the birds and the animals that hunt by day understood that somehow the Sun was missing.

It was a small, brown squirrel who found the missing Sun.
High up in the branches above the forest floor, the squirrel could see for miles. At first it saw only darkness. But finally, far off to the east, it saw a glow.

Hopping from tree to tree, the squirrel climbed closer and closer to the light. When it was very close, it saw that the glow came from the Sun. But the Sun was weak and pale. The Sun had become caught in the branches of a very high tree. The harder he tried to free himself, the more tangled he got.

The Sun begged the squirrel, “Help me!”

The squirrel thought about what it could do to help. Then, using its sharp teeth, it began to bite at one of the branches that held the Sun. Soon the squirrel had bitten clear through it.

The Sun sighed. “That’s good. Keep working.”

The squirrel moved from branch to branch, gnawing away. It was warm work, though. Each time the Sun broke free from another branch, it grew stronger and hotter.

“I must stop,” said the squirrel. “I’m burning!”

It was true. The heat from the Sun had turned the little brown squirrel’s fur to the color of ashes.

“Don’t stop!” said the Sun. “I’m almost free.”

Again the squirrel listened to the Sun’s plea. Again it freed another branch. And again the Sun grew still hotter.

The Sun is weak and pale. He must have used up all his strength while trying to get out of the branches of the tree.

The squirrel keeps working even though it is getting burned by the Sun. What does this tell you about the squirrel?

The squirrel’s determination to help the Sun despite its own danger.

**gnawing** (NAW-ing) biting and chewing

**DRAW CONCLUSIONS**

Sometimes authors give clues instead of directly telling you something. Use the clues to draw a conclusion about the character.

The squirrel keeps working even though it is getting burned by the Sun. What does this tell you about the squirrel?
“I’m burning from the heat,” said the squirrel. “Even my tail has burned away!”

“Just a little more,” pleaded the Sun. “A little more!”

Once more the squirrel went to work. It was nearly blind from the brightness of the Sun, but it sensed when the Sun was finally freed from the branches. Soon the Sun was riding high in the sky, where it was supposed to be.

Even from that height, though, the Sun could see the poor squirrel. Gone were its bushy tail and the brown fur that had covered its body. His eyes were closed against the brightness of the Sun.

“Poor thing,” said the Sun. “You helped me, and now I will help you. What one thing have you wanted to do all your life?”

“Fly,” was the squirrel’s simple answer.

“Then so you shall. But you will fly only at night, when you won’t have to face my bright light.”

With that, the creature that had once been a squirrel spread its new wings and began to fly. And so it does every night when the Sun goes down in the west. For that is how the first bat came to be.