BRIDGES EDITION

GENRE readers' & writers' WORKSHOP™

Pourquoi Tales



Why the Sky Is Far Away

Why Thunder Chases Lightning

Why Sun and Moon Live in the Sky





retold by Cynthia Swain

Benchmark EDUCATION

Genre: Pourquoi Tales
Level: J/18*

GENRE readers' & writers' WORKSHOP

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LITERARY ANALYSIS
- Respond to and interpret text
- Make text-to-text connections
- Analyze the genre

READING SKILLS
Comprehension
- Identify cause and effect
- Analyze story elements

Word Study
- Multiple meanings

Tier Two Vocabulary
(see Glossary)

WRITING SKILLS
Writer's Tools
- Simile

Writer's Craft
- How to write a pourquoi tale

THEME CONNECTIONS
- World Cultures

*The reading level assigned to this text is based on the genre examples only. "Focus on the Genre," "Reread," and "Writer's Craft" features were not leveled. These sections are intended for read-aloud or shared reading.

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The Readers' & Writers' Genre Workshop series includes eleven fiction and nonfiction genres. There are two titles with multiple stories for each genre.

How to use this book

1. Learn about the genre by reading pages 2–3. Get background information about the stories on pages 4–5.
2. Read the pourquoi tales for enjoyment.
3. Reread the stories and answer the questions on pages 11, 15, and 21.
4. Reread the last story. Pay attention to the comments in the margins. See how an author writes a pourquoi tale.
5. Follow the steps on pages 22–23 to write your own pourquoi tale.
6. Complete the activity on the inside back cover. Answer the follow-up questions.

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Why the Sky Is Far Away



Why Thunder Chases Lightning



Why Sun and Moon Live in the Sky

Three Pourquoi Tales from Africa

retold by Cynthia Swain
illustrated by Gerardo Suzán

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Pourquoi Tales

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What is a pourquoi tale?

A pourquoi tale is a short story that explains why something in the natural world is the way it is. Usually the characters in a pourquoi tale are animals. Sometimes the characters are other objects in nature, such as the sun, the sky, or the sea.

What is the purpose of a pourquoi tale?

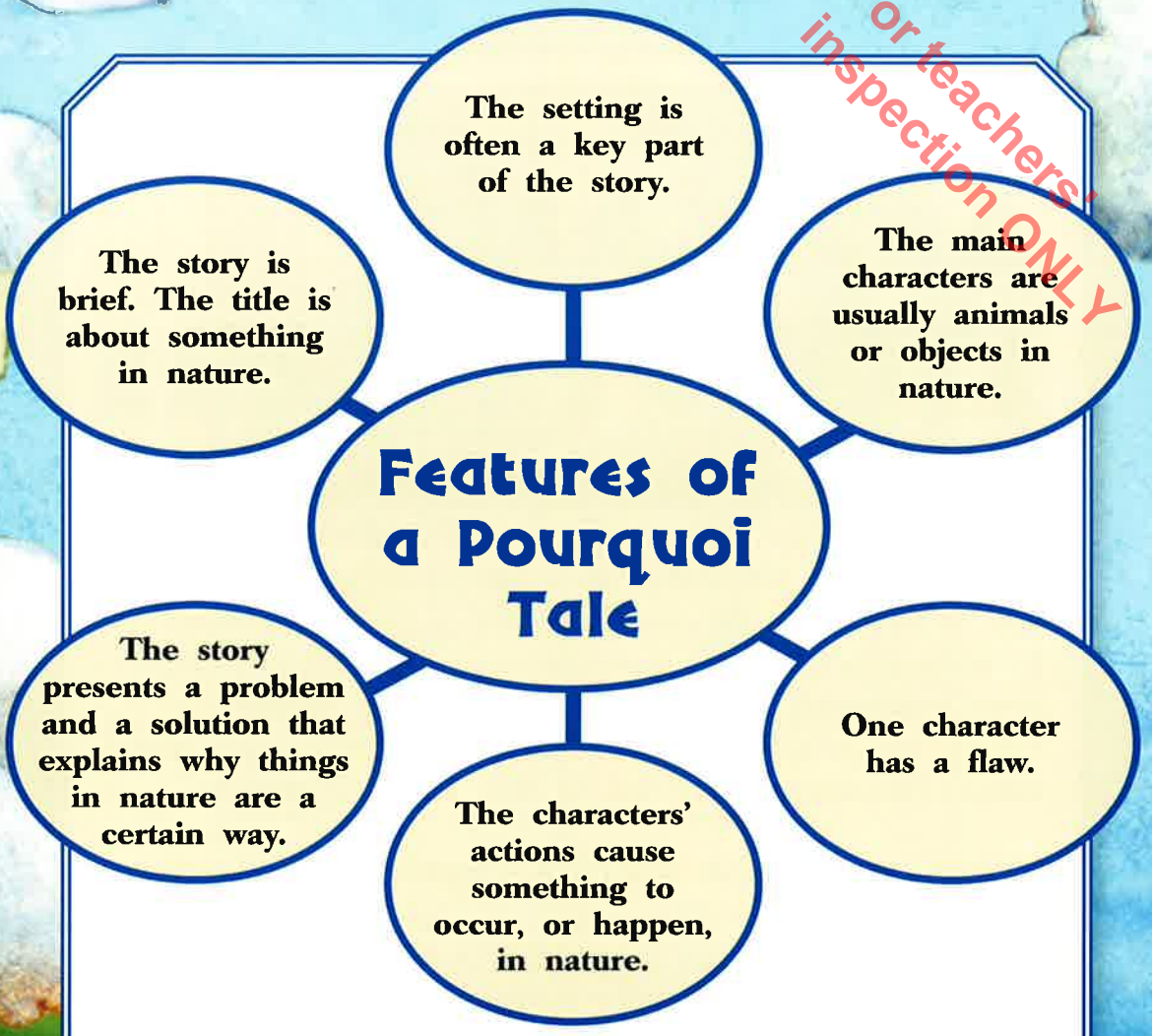
Pourquoi tales are explanations of why and how things happen in nature. Pourquoi tales allow us to think about what caused the curious things we see in the world. Pourquoi tales often point out character flaws, or foibles, that people have, such as being boastful, proud, or impatient. In addition, these tales entertain us.

How do you read a pourquoi tale?

When you read a pourquoi tale, pay attention to the title. The title will help you know what question the story answers. Pay attention to the actions of the main characters as well. These actions will cause some type of change in nature. Think about how the events in the tale explain why something is the way it is.



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Who invented pourquoi tales?

People have told pourquoi tales for tens of thousands of years. Many ancient cultures, including the Greeks, Chinese, and Egyptians, used these types of stories to explain nature and the universe. Many Native American, African, and Asian storytellers also used these tales to answer questions about the world, such as:

- Why do certain animals look and act the way they do?
- How did Earth, the sun, and the moon come to be?
- Why do the seasons change?

Today, some authors still use this genre to explain events in nature in a fun and imaginative way.

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Learn About AFRICAN STORYTELLERS

Who were the African storytellers? Tribes throughout Africa told pourquoi tales. Children were often taught to tell stories as a part of their education and to help them become members of the community. In some tribes, official storytellers, or griots (GREE-oh), were responsible for passing on the history, culture, values, and wisdom of the village. Many griots used music, dance, costumes, and props to help tell their stories.

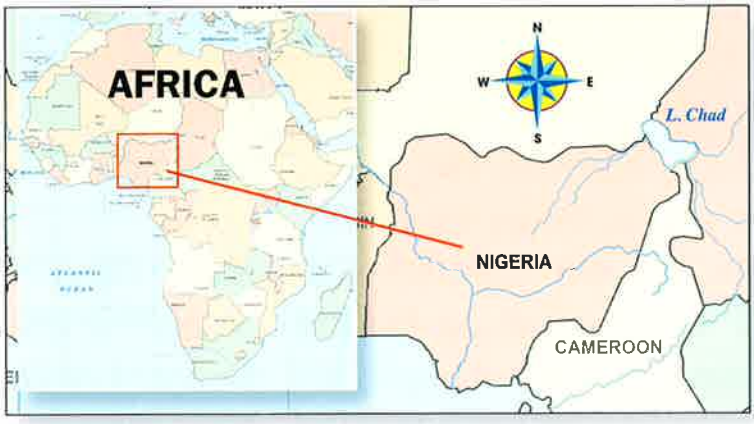
What were the stories about? Many stories were about animals that talked, thought, and acted like humans. Listeners laughed at and learned from these stories. Pourquoi tales provided the listeners with problem-solving strategies and encouraged them to use their wits in their daily challenges.

Why do we still know the stories today? The stories were passed down through the generations from one storyteller to the next. Stories often changed a bit with each retelling as people forgot or added details, changed the characters' names, and adapted the stories to their own lives. Stories also changed as people told them in different languages. For example, even today, hundreds of languages are spoken in Nigeria, the country in western Africa where these three tales originated.

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a modern-day griot



The stories in this book are from tribes in western Africa.

Tools Writers Use

Simile

Look at the word **simile** (SIH-muh-lee). Does it remind you of the word **similar**? Things that are similar are alike in some way. Most similes compare two things using the words **like** or **as**. Writers use similes to describe how characters look and act so that readers can create vivid pictures in their minds. In these pourquoi tales, notice how the author uses similes to compare the characters' traits to familiar objects, particularly those in nature.

Why the Sky Is Far Away

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Long ago, rain did not fall from the sky. The wind did not blow. The sun did not rise or set. The sky was close to the ground. People could touch the sky.

Best of all, the sky was made of food. People could take a piece of sky any time. They could eat any time. Some said the sky tasted like corn. Others said the sky was as sweet as sugar.

People did not need to work then. There were no farmers. There were no hunters. People spent their time painting. They sang. They played games. Most people were happy to share the sky. But a few people were not **content**. They were as greedy as thieves. They took big pieces of sky. They ate just a little. Then they threw away the rest.

