

## 9 The Fire

by Shirley Nagel

### Before You Read

Before you read "The Fire," study the words below. Make sure you know what each word means. This will help you understand the story.

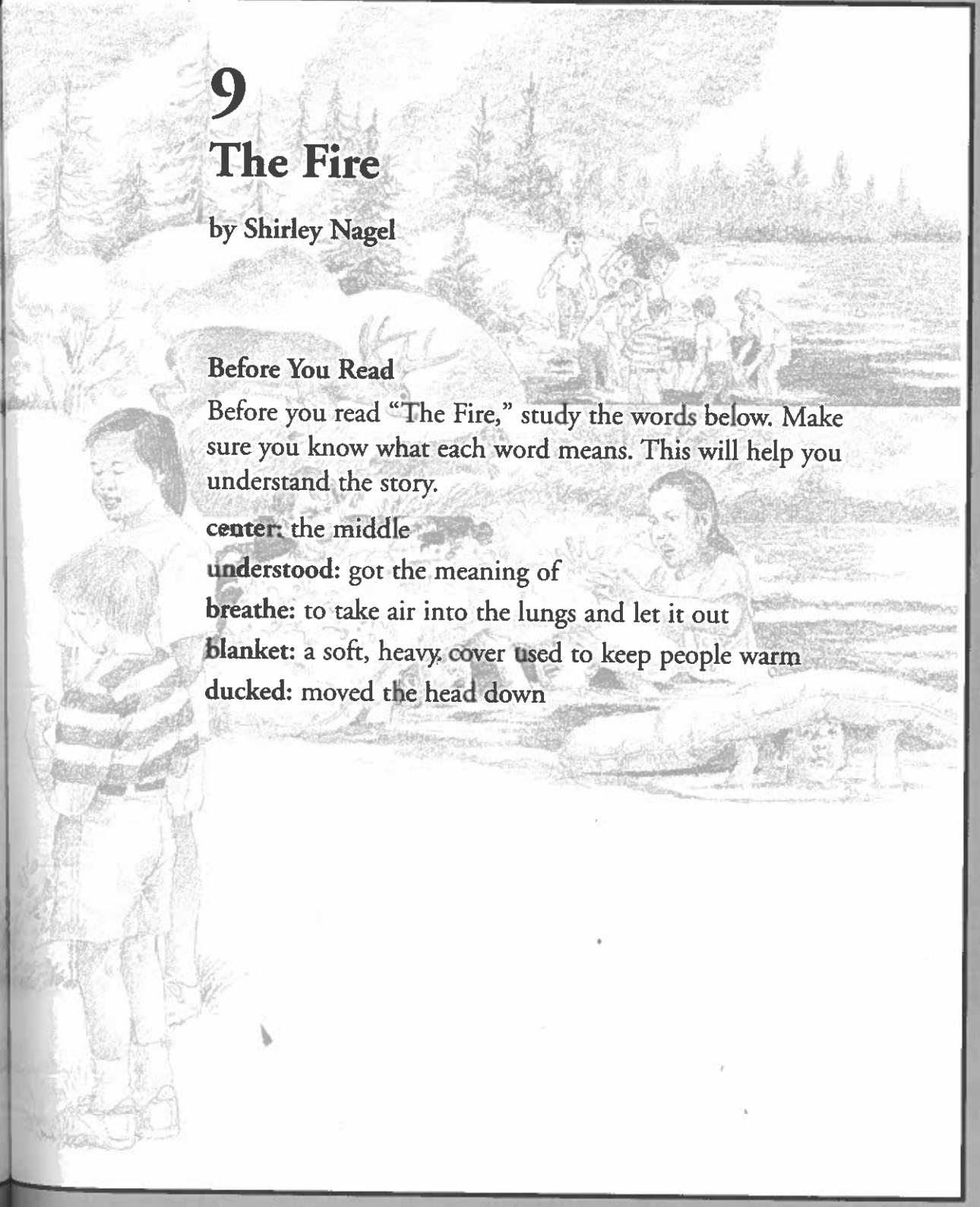
**center:** the middle

**understood:** got the meaning of

**breathe:** to take air into the lungs and let it out

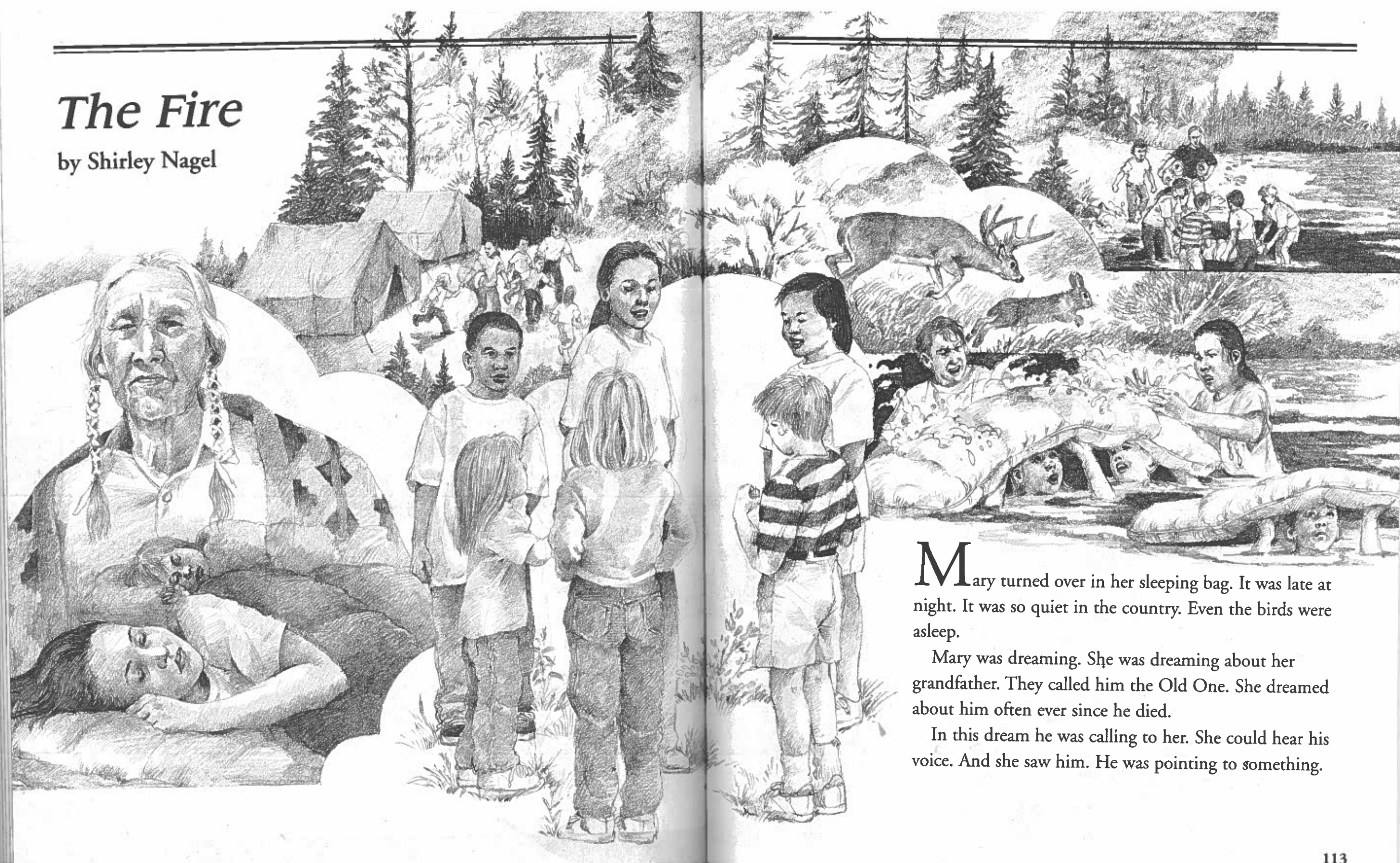
**blanket:** a soft, heavy cover used to keep people warm

**ducked:** moved the head down



# The Fire

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Mary turned over in her sleeping bag. It was late at night. It was so quiet in the country. Even the birds were asleep.

Mary was dreaming. She was dreaming about her grandfather. They called him the Old One. She dreamed about him often ever since he died.

In this dream he was calling to her. She could hear his voice. And she saw him. He was pointing to something.

The Old One's voice seemed far away. But he was calling her name. It was not the name she used in the city. It was her Indian name.

Her Indian name was Eyes-Looking-Up. Her parents gave her that name when she was a baby. They said she was always looking up. She was always watching the sky.

That was so. During the day she looked up at the clouds. At night she looked at the stars for hours. So they called her Eyes-Looking-Up.

Eyes-Looking-Up was Mary's name until she was six. Then her father moved the family away. They moved away from the reservation. There was no school near the Indian reservation. The nearest one was many miles away. Her father wanted the family to live closer to a school. So they moved to the city.



That was eleven years ago. Now Eyes-Looking-Up was seventeen. She had a job. She was a counselor. She worked in a summer camp. She took care of young children. And she had a new name. It was Mary.

Now the Old One was calling to her. He was calling to her in her dream.

The Old One's voice got louder. He was saying, "Eyes-Looking-Up. Go to the river. Go to the river. Eyes-Looking-Up, go to the river."

Mary turned over in her sleeping bag again. It was warm in the tent. But the Old One's voice got louder and louder. It called, "Eyes-Looking-Up! Go to the river!"

In her dream Mary tried to answer the Old One. It was the sound of her own voice that woke her up. Suddenly, she smelled smoke. The smell was strong. Shadows were dancing against the walls of the tent! A fire had started while she was asleep!

Mary jumped up. She hurried to the opening in the tent. She looked out. A tree was on fire! The wind was spreading the fire. Now the fire was eating at everything! It was moving closer to the tents!

"Mary. What is wrong? What is that light?" a sleepy child asked.

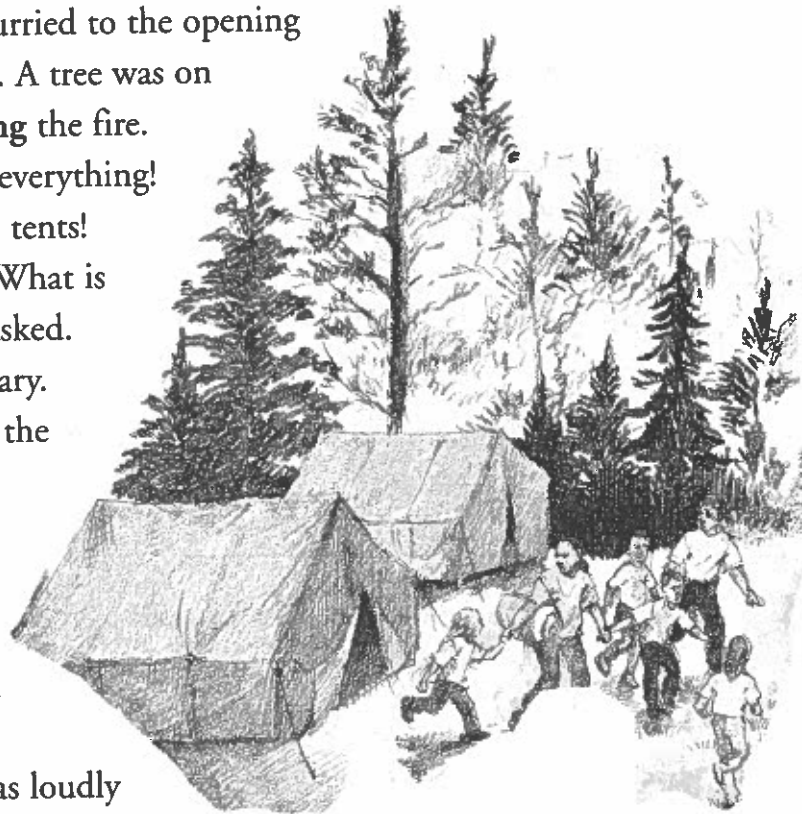
"Get up, Sarah!" said Mary. "Hurry! Help me wake up the others!"

Mary pulled the four other children out of their beds. She led them out of the tent. She took them to the center of the camp.

"Fire! Fire!" she yelled, as loudly as she could. "Wake up! Get up!"

Mary ran back to the tent. She grabbed all the sleeping bags she could carry. By then everyone had come out of the tents. The children were scared. There was fear on their faces.

Mary took the two youngest children by the hand. She pulled them along. The other children followed her. They held on to each other.



"Mary!" called the leader of the camp. "Put down those sleeping bags! You can't run with them!"

But Mary held on to the sleeping bags. She kept moving. She followed the path. It went down to the river.

There was no time to explain. Mary pulled the children into the water. Then she got into the water. She dragged the sleeping bags in. She pushed them under the water until they were soaked.

"Mary! What are you doing!" the camp leader called. "Don't lose your head! Stop moving around!"

Mary pointed to some trees near the river. She said, "Those trees will soon be on fire. The fire will jump over the river. When it does, we must keep our heads under the water. The children will not be able to do that for very long. We *have* to get under the wet sleeping bags! They will keep the heat and the smoke away!"



The leader understood. "Come on," she said to Mary. "Let's go!" They ran back up the path. They went to get more sleeping bags.

Minutes later they came back. They had more sleeping bags. They dropped them into the water. Then everyone waited.

It had been a very hot summer. Everything was dry. The forest burned quickly. Now all the trees were on fire.

Mary looked around. She saw many animals. They were racing to the river. Deer, rabbits, and squirrels splashed into the water.

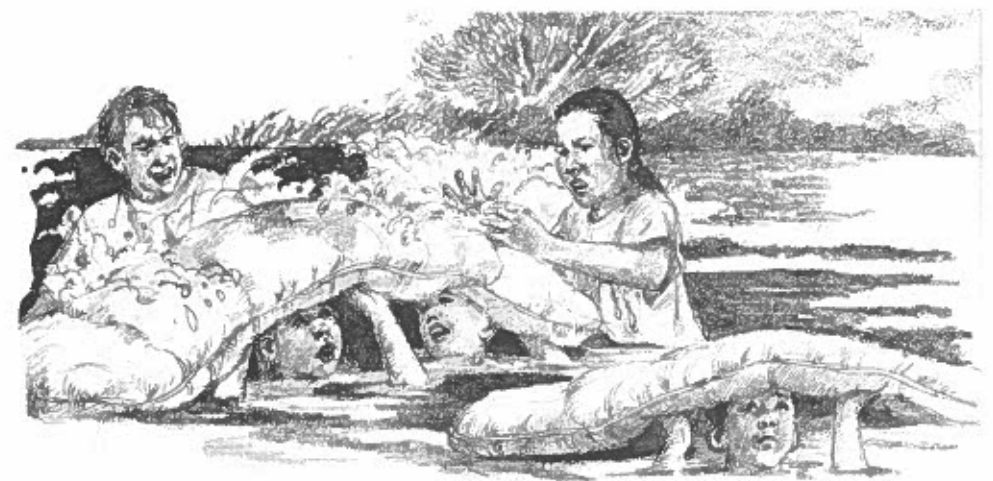
The fire roared. The flames were coming toward them. Mary could feel the heat on her face.

Mary and the other counselors grabbed the wet sleeping bags. They pulled them over the children's heads. Then Mary called out, "Listen, everybody! Stay down in the water! Keep your mouth just above the water. Leave just enough room for you to breathe. Now, everybody hold hands. Remember. No matter what happens, keep down!"

Mary got under a wet sleeping bag. Just then a wall of flames jumped over the river. Suddenly, Mary felt as if she were in one of her grandfather's stories. She used to get tired of hearing the Old One's stories. He talked on and on. He always talked about the old days long ago.

Mary loved to listen to him when she was young. She knew each story by heart. Later, she got tired of hearing the same stories. But one of those stories might save their lives now!

The Old One had told her one story many times. He had heard the story from his own father. His father's father had once saved a village from a forest fire. He had covered everyone with wet blankets. Then he led the people to the river. The wet blankets protected them from the heat.



Her grandfather loved that story. He told it over and over to little Eyes-Looking-Up. When he finished, the Old One always smiled. Then he said, "Never forget the ways of your people."

Mary knew that the sleeping bags would have to stay wet. She looked up from under her bag. She would never forget what she saw. Everything around them was bright orange and red.

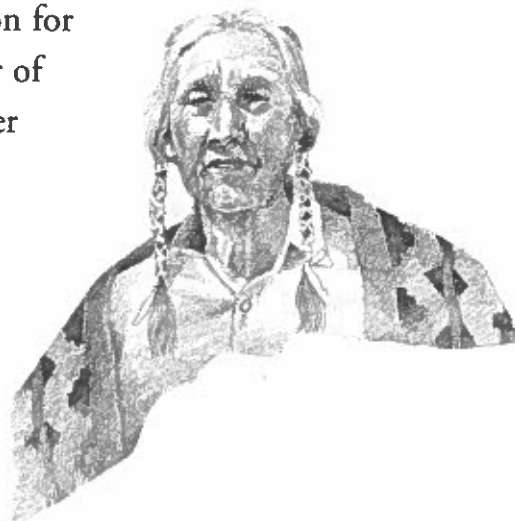
Mary and the other counselors splashed water over all the sleeping bags. They felt the terrible heat on their arms and hands. But they kept the sleeping bags wet. Then they ducked under the bags.

It seemed as though it would never stop. But the heat and smoke finally ended. Mary raised her head. She looked around. Not one of the children was hurt!

"Mary," the camp leader said. "You saved our lives! How did you know what to do?"

Mary smiled. "My grandfather told me in a dream," she said.

She knew then that she would carry on for the Old One. She, too, would be a teller of stories. And one day she would say to her own children, "Never forget the ways of your people."



### TELL ABOUT THE STORY.

Put an *x* in the box next to the right answer. Each sentence tells a *fact* about the story.

- Mary was dreaming about  
 a. a fire.  
 b. her job.  
 c. her grandfather.
- Mary's family moved to the city  
 a. to make new friends.  
 b. to be closer to the school.  
 c. so that her father could get a better job.
- Mary used the wet sleeping bags to  
 a. sleep on.  
 b. cover the food.  
 c. keep the heat and the smoke away.
- At the end of the story, Mary saw that  
 a. none of the children had been hurt.  
 b. some of the children had been hurt.  
 c. all of the children had been hurt.

x 5 =

NUMBER  
CORRECT

YOUR  
SCORE

### ADD WORDS TO SENTENCES.

Complete the sentences below. Fill in each blank with one of the words in the box. Each word can be found in the story. There are five words and four blanks. This means that one word in the box will not be used.

Here is what to do if you are ever in a \_\_\_\_\_<sup>1</sup> building. Warn others near you about the fire. Then \_\_\_\_\_<sup>2</sup> the building at once. Do not go \_\_\_\_\_<sup>3</sup> for anything you may have left behind. Call the \_\_\_\_\_<sup>4</sup> department as soon as you can.

fire      leave  
burning  
pointing      back

x 5 =

NUMBER  
CORRECT

YOUR  
SCORE

## LEARN NEW WORDS.

The vocabulary words are printed in **dark type** in the story. You may look back at the words before you answer these questions. Put an *x* in the box next to the right answer.

1. The wind was spreading the fire.

The word *spreading* means

- a. moving.  
 b. stopping.  
 c. leaving.

2. They were scared by the fire.

The word *scared* means

- a. made quiet.  
 b. made afraid.  
 c. made sad.

3. She pushed the bags under the water until they were soaked.

The word *soaked* means

- a. very soft.  
 b. very heavy.  
 c. very wet.

4. The wet blankets protected them from the fire. The word *protected* means

- a. hurt.  
 b. pushed.  
 c. kept safe.

x 5 =   
NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

## EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENED.

Here is how to answer these questions. First think about what happened in the story. Then *figure out* (work out) the right answer. This is called *critical thinking*.

1. If Mary had not told everyone what to do,

- a. campers might have been hurt or killed.  
 b. they would have stayed.  
 c. everyone would still have been saved.

2. What was *not* true of the dream?

- a. It woke Mary up.  
 b. It said to go to the river.  
 c. It was long.

3. Mary learned that it was important to

- a. remember the ways of her people.  
 b. forget the old stories.  
 c. go to bed early.

4. How often will Mary probably tell the story about the fire?

- a. never  
 b. one or two times  
 c. many times

x 5 =   
NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

## SPOT STORY ELEMENTS.

Some story elements are **plot**, **character**, and **setting**. (See page 3.) Put an *x* in the box next to the right answer.

1. What happened first in the *plot*?

- a. Mary went back to get more sleeping bags.  
 b. Mary woke up and smelled smoke.  
 c. Mary took the children to the river.

2. What happened last in the *plot*?

- a. The heat and smoke ended.  
 b. Mary pulled four children out of their beds.  
 c. Animals ran into the water.

3. Who is the *main character* in the story?

- a. Mary  
 b. Mary's father  
 c. The Old One

4. The story is *set*

- a. in a school.  
 b. in the country.  
 c. in the middle of a city.

x 5 =   
NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

## THINK SOME MORE ABOUT THE STORY.

Your teacher might want you to write your answers.

- Suppose Mary had not been working at the camp. How do you think the story would have ended?
- Who saved the campers—Mary or her grandfather or both? Explain your answer.
- Read the last lines of the story again. How was Mary going to “carry on for the Old One”?

Write your scores in the boxes below. Then write your scores on pages 138 and 139.

TELL ABOUT THE STORY  
+  
 ADD WORDS TO SENTENCES  
+  
 LEARN NEW WORDS  
+  
 EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENED  
+  
 SPOT STORY ELEMENTS  
=  
 TOTAL SCORE: Story 9