



HOW THE ANIMALS LOST THEIR TAILS (and Got Them Back Again)

by Carl Sandburg, adapted by Linda Bullock
Illustrations by Cecilia Rebora

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The Weather Maker perched on his stool, on the highest point of his very tall tower, gazing out at the lands that were under his care. It was his responsibility to control the weather and suit it to the seasons. He commanded the rains to fall when the ground was thirsty, summoned cool breezes when the sun grew too hot, and laid out blankets of snow when Earth needed to rest.

One day, weary and bored, the Weather Maker fell into an exhausted sleep. Soon he was dreaming of a blazing yellow sun and of swollen clouds bursting with rainwater; of bitter, blustering winds that could freeze rivers; and of delicate snowflakes spiraling through leaden winter skies. And as he slumbered, the weather obeyed his dreams.

In a distant forest, the animals were all bewildered by the extraordinary weather. First, the sun beat down until their fur dried out. Then, rain fell in torrents until they were drenched and miserable. Next, the wintry winds howled, freezing their soaked tails and then blowing harder until the tails cracked right off!

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Amplify Education, Inc.
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Suite 800
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www.amplify.com

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Level Y

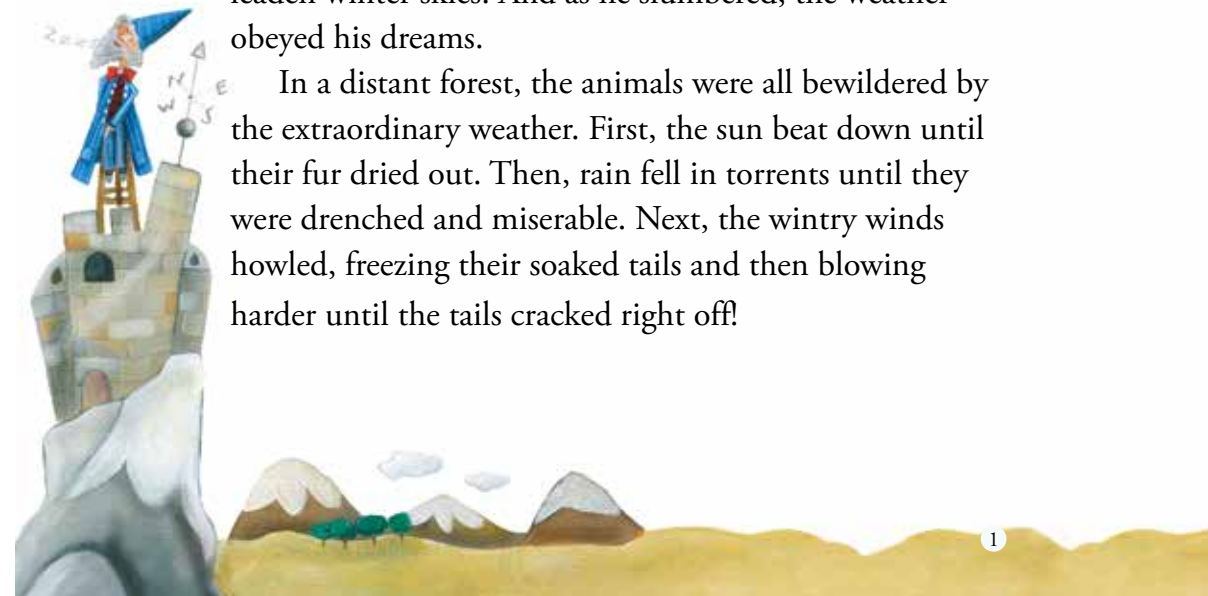
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This, the animals decided, was an utterly unacceptable development.

“It’s time for a meeting!” declared a fox, and he called on the others to form a committee.

Sixty-six animals gathered to consider the problem, from quail, squirrels, and antelope to raccoons and skunks. All wore serious expressions and scratched their heads thoughtfully. Any observer would have thought them quite an impressive assembly; they would have looked even more impressive if they’d had their tails.

Finally, a mouse proposed a solution. “I suggest we find the Weather Maker,” he squeaked, “and respectfully request that he return our tails.”

“Here, here!” cried the animals, applauding with paws, claws, hooves, and wings.

All sixty-six embarked on the grueling journey, traveling through dense forests and across dry plains, across churning rivers and arid deserts, over massive mountains, and into deep valleys, until they finally spied a high tower with lightning crackling around the top.

“I suspect we’ve located the Weather Maker,” said a wolf.

The animals began the strenuous climb, navigating dangerous rock pathways and scrambling up thousands of slippery steps. Finally, they reached the pinnacle, where the Weather Maker dozed.



The fox tugged firmly at the Weather Maker's robes.

"Who dared to enter," said the Weather Maker, "and why have you disturbed my slumber?"

"Sixty-six, and for good reason," said the fox, "for your weather dreams have blown our tails off!"

The Weather Maker was horrified by what he had done.

"I will remedy this!" he declared, producing a huge wind. Suddenly, sixty-six tails were swirling around the animals, seeking their owners, and as each reattached itself, the animals cheered. From that day forth, the Weather Maker was cautious with his great power, taking a stance of mercy, and promising to be compassionate towards the animals, even in his dreams.



Level Y

Literary

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