

## FIRE



Once upon a time there was just one little fire in the world. It belonged to the Great God of Fire who wouldn't let anyone else have it. Nobody had fire to keep themselves warm in their houses or caves. They had no fire to cook their food with until one day; an Indian chief's son named Boy-Who-Shoots-Arrow-Far caught a fox in a deep pit.

The fox told the Indian boy that if he was let out of the pit, he would tell where the Fire God kept his fire. The Indian boy replied that it was no secret because everyone knew the fire was kept in a hollow stone. The problem was no one knew where the stone was. The fox then claimed that he knew exactly where the stone was. It was kept in the Land of The Setting Sun where no Indians ever went.

A new problem then surfaced. They could still not get the fire because it was guarded by two old women who never sleeps. They had magical powers that enable them to run faster than any Indian or any animal. The desperate fox then devised a plan which

the boy thought was a good one. The boy released the fox and they called all the animals together. All the animals from the woods came.

The fox told the gathering his plan. They agreed to help. The squirrel and the frog were very eager to help too. But the fox told the squirrel, "You can't run fast enough." And he told the frog, "You can't run at all. You can only hop." So the poor squirrel and the frog had to stay at home while the other animals hurried away and took their places in a long line that reached over the mountains and through the woods all the way to the Land of The Setting Sun.

The trick worked exactly the way the fox had planned. The Indian boy shot an arrow at the door to the old women's cave. The old women ran out to see what was happening, and the fox grabbed a burning stick from the fire and ran away with it. The two old women ran after him. The fox was a fast runner, but with their magic steps, the old women came closer and closer. The tired fox reached the Indian boy just in time and put the burning stick into his hand. The boy ran fast, but the old women ran faster. Just in time the Indian boy reached the bear that was waiting for him over the next hill. The bear put the burning stick into his mouth and ran. He passed it on to the waiting buffalo. The buffalo to the wolf, the wolf to the coyote, the coyote to the deer, the deer to the elk, and to all the other animals, one after another, with the two old women running after them.

Finally it was the rabbit's turn to take the stick. Being the last one in the long animal chain, the rabbit was supposed to run the rest of the way and give the burning stick to the Indians. The Indians

could quickly start so many fires that even if the old women took back their burning stick, the Indians would still have fire. But the rabbit had run so fast that he became tired before he reached the Indians. He came to the squirrel who was not supposed to be in the race at all because he couldn't run fast enough. The squirrel grabbed the stick and jumped into a tree. He leaped from tree to tree, but the burning stick caught his tail on fire. He bent his tail over his back and thumped it so hard to put the fire out that even today the squirrel's tail is still bent.

The two old women on the ground stayed right under the squirrel, and when he became too tired to leap any longer in the trees, the squirrel tossed the burning stick to the frog. The frog took two great hops, opened his big mouth and swallowed the fire, stick and all. The two old women were now so close that one of them grabbed the frog's tail and pulled it off. Before the old women could touch him again, the frog jumped into a pond. The old women jumped in after him. But they couldn't swim so fast as they could run. The frog swam across the pond and coughed up the fire into the hands of the waiting Indians. And ever since that day, the Indians have had fire.

***Answer the following questions using complete sentences.***

1. Do you think the Great God of Fire is selfish ? Why do you think so ?
2. What knowledge did the fox have that the Indian boy didn't.
3. How were the two women equipped to guard the fire ?
4. Why was the fox trying so hard to help the Indian boy ?

5. Why was the frog left out of their plan ?
6. Who was the fifth runner in the line ?
7. How did the rabbit fail to do his part in their plan ?
8. According to the story, how is the frog then different from the frogs of today ?
9. How did the frog finally shake off the pursuing women ?
10. What do you think is the moral behind this story ?