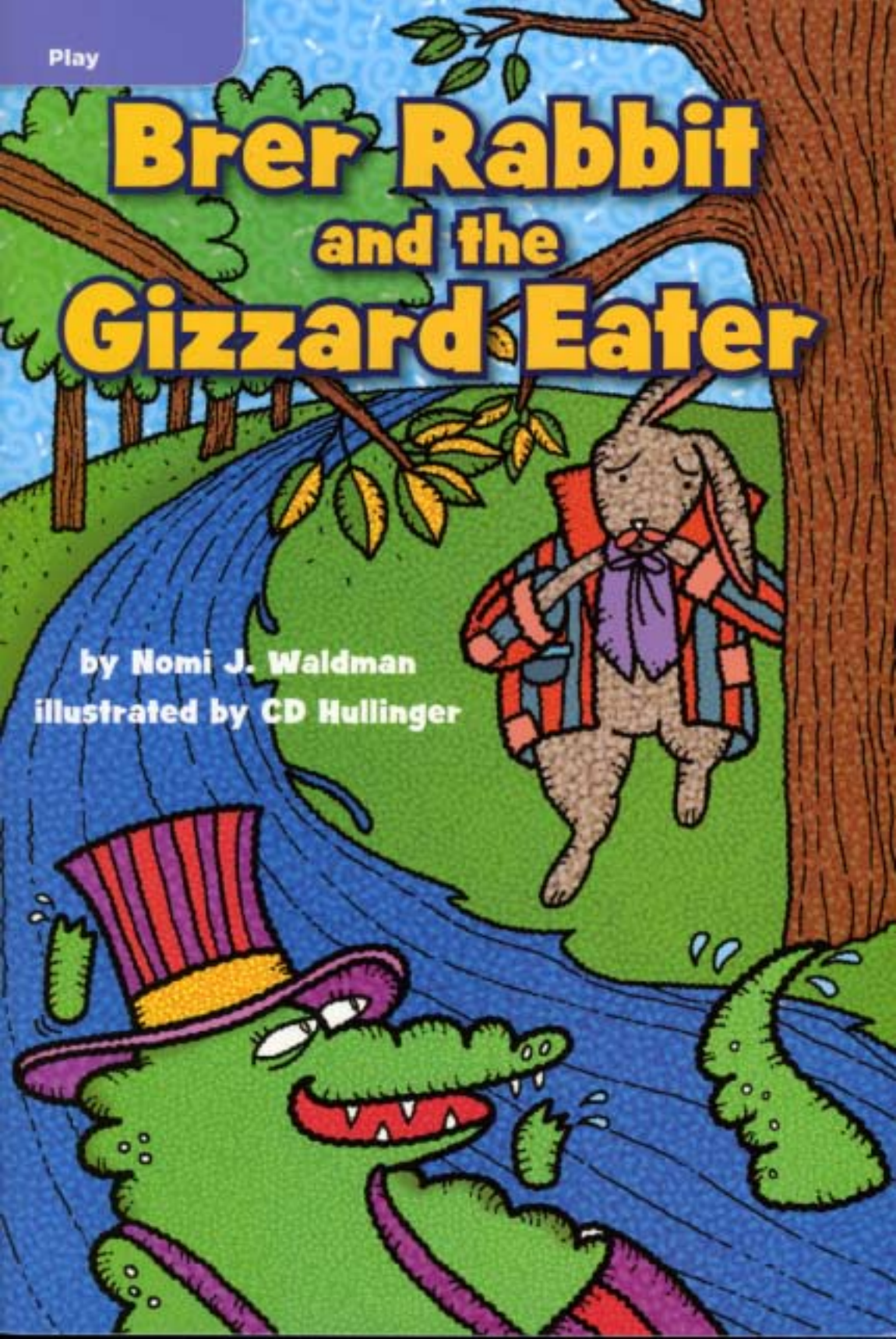


Play

Brer Rabbit and the Gizzard Eater

by Nomi J. Waldman

illustrated by CD Hullinger



Read to Find Out

Why does the author use the format of a play to tell this story?

STRATEGIES & SKILLS AT A GLANCE Comprehension

- Strategy: Evaluate
- Skill: Evaluate Author's Purpose

Vocabulary

- appreciation, burdens, educate, merchandise, riverbank, treasurer, unfortunate, wares

Vocabulary Strategy

- Use Analogies: Relationships

This play is adapted from the story of the same name by Joel Chandler Harris.

Word count: 2,118

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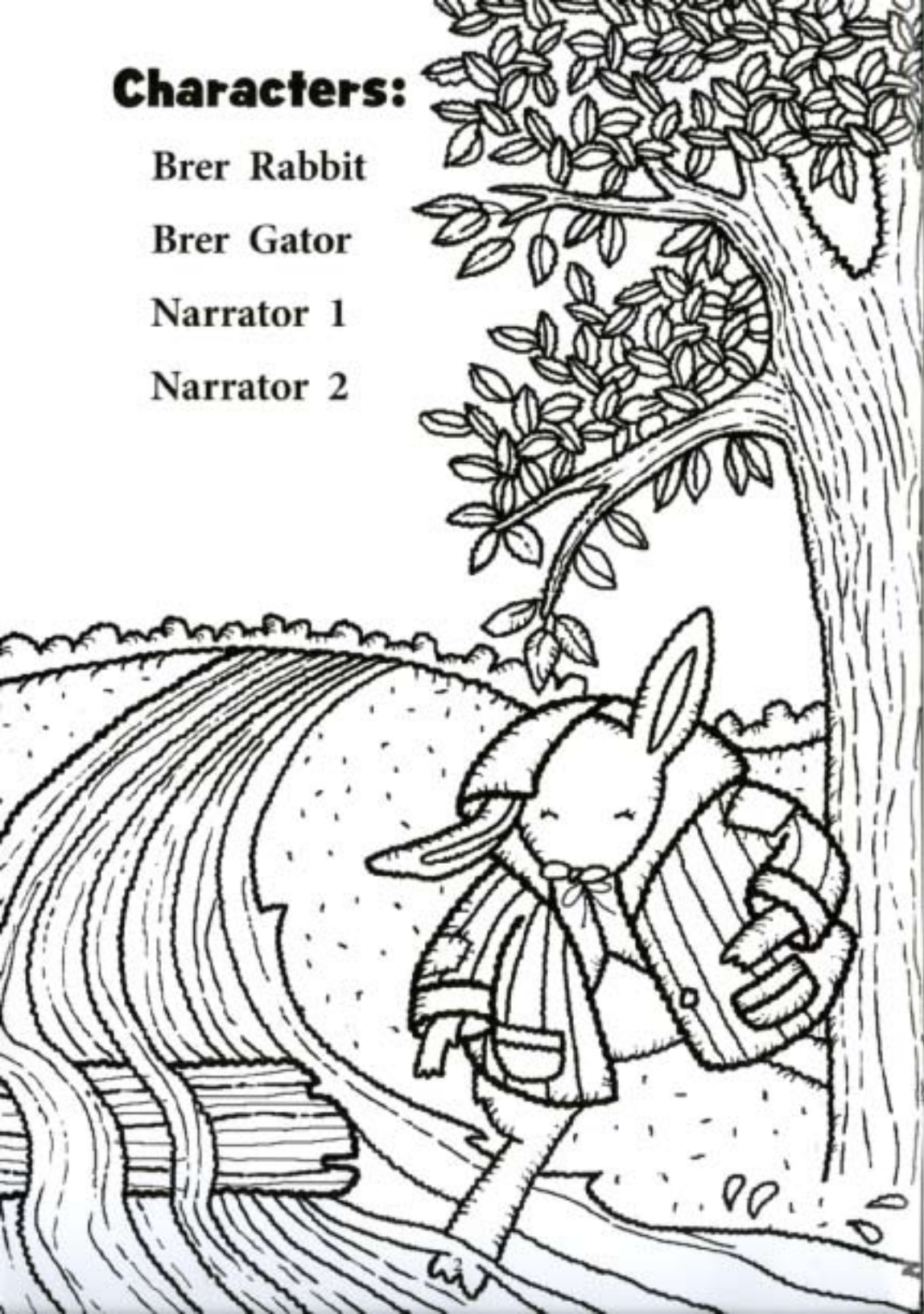
Characters:

Brer Rabbit

Brer Gator

Narrator 1

Narrator 2



Act I

Crossing the River

Scene I

Setting: *Side-by-side ropes mark a riverbank, with the only bridge a single log (a strip of brown paper). It is raining hard.*

As Narrator 1 speaks, Brer Rabbit approaches the river, looking up at the sky and holding out his hand. Feeling the rain, he pulls his collar up and approaches the log.

Narrator 1: You can hardly blame Brer Rabbit for wanting to get out of his house. It's been raining for days, and he hasn't seen his friends in all that time. So off he goes, because you just can't pen up a lively fellow like Brer Rabbit. If you try, well, it's like trying to keep a raging river within its banks, 'cause something's liable to spill over.

Narrator 2: Brer Rabbit studies the rising water and dips a toe into it. Finally he starts across, slowly putting one foot after the other.

Narrator 1: Well, at least it isn't a raging river that Brer Rabbit has to cross, just a creek. Though it is higher than usual, and the rain is still coming down hard.

Brer Rabbit: *(to the audience)* Well, that wasn't too bad. If getting my feet a little wet is the most unfortunate thing that happens tonight, I'll be just fine. *(He shakes off the wetness and looks around. Then, putting his hand to his ear, he listens for a moment.)* Music! I do believe I hear a party shaping up! *(He rubs his hands together eagerly.)* And that means dancing, and dancing means food to feed the dancers, and that means a fine time is had by all. *(He heads offstage with a hop, skip, and a jump.)*

Narrator 2: And indeed, a fine time is had by all, especially Brer Rabbit, who doesn't give another thought to the weather. He tries every dance and every dish and finds them all to his total satisfaction.

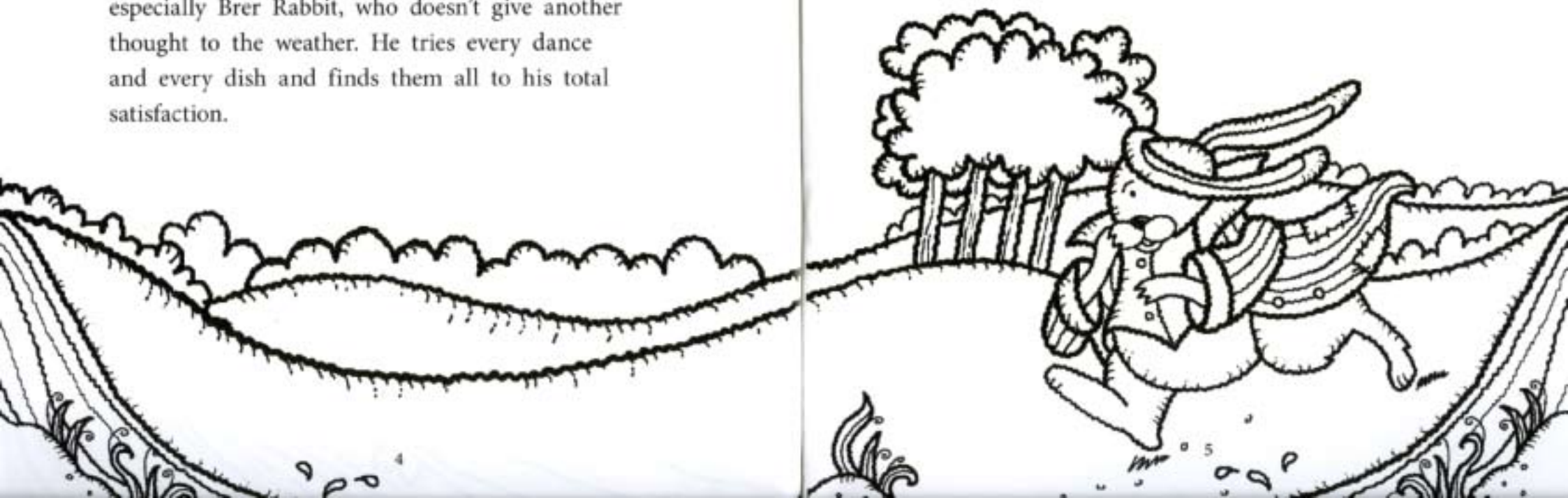
Scene 2

Setting: *Same as Scene 1, except that the ropes are farther apart, and the log is gone.*

Brer Rabbit: *(appears onstage and pantomimes the actions described by the Narrator)*

Narrator 1: But even the best party in the world has to end sometime. And when it does, and Brer Rabbit comes to the place where he has to cross the river to get to his landing, he barely recognizes it.

Now, I told you that this is no great river. But it sure is acting like one. It might as well be an ocean, because the log is gone, and there's no way for Brer Rabbit to get home.



Brer Rabbit: Oh, oh, how am I ever going to get across? *(He walks back and forth, holding his head and trying to think.)* I'll need help. *(He stops, and begins to call, pausing after each name.)* Brer Bear! . . . Brer Fox! . . . Hello! . . . Anyone? . . . Help. . . . Help. . . . Help!

Narrator 2: He calls everyone he can think of. He calls them once, he calls them twice, he calls them three times. It doesn't matter. They don't hear him. And if they do, they don't come. Well, that is, except for Brer Gator, who is sleeping in a muddy bed nearby—he hears him.

Brer Gator: *(lumbering on the opposite riverbank, slowly and sleepily rubbing his eyes)* Who's making all that noise?

Brer Rabbit: *(puts his hand to his face in alarm at what he sees)* Uh-oh.

Brer Gator: Brer Rabbit! *(smiling gleefully)* Aha!

Narrator 1: And you might as well know right now that "Aha" is alligator talk for "Now, doesn't he look tasty!"

Act 2

An Opportunity . . . of Sorts

Narrator 2: Brer Rabbit, seeing Brer Gator's bulging eyes staring hungrily at him from the opposite riverbank, is quite alarmed. But then he's never been one to miss an opportunity. And the opportunity he needs right now is to get across the river. So he decides to make the best of it, especially after he remembers that Brer Gator has a soft spot for Lapina, the Rabbit family's oldest daughter.

Brer Rabbit: *(wringing his hands and shaking his head in distress)* Oh, thank goodness it's you, Brer Gator. I just got through saying to myself, if anyone can help you, Brer Rabbit, it's Brer Gator. Let me express my appreciation in advance, and I know Lapina will be grateful, too.

Brer Gator: *(with a silly half-smile, which on an alligator is still pretty wide)* How IS your charming daughter?

Brer Rabbit: Not well, not well. So kind of you to ask. When I left home—why, it seems like hours ago—her head was all swollen. Seems Brer Fox's children were outside flinging rocks this way and that, and one of them hit Lapina right between her ears. I had to run to the doctor to get some pills 'cause she has just the worst headache.

Brer Gator: (*shaking his head*) What IS this world coming to? Children throwing rocks and hurting your lovely daughter! What's next? What's next?



Brer Rabbit: I don't know, Brer Gator, I don't know. All I do know is that I set out for the doctor as soon as I could. He looked through all his wares till he found me some pills that are sure to help poor Lapina's head. But when I came back to the river, it was all swollen up, even more than Lapina's sore head. And now here I am on this side, and my poor daughter's there on that side. But if I try to cross and get this medicine in my pocket all wet, why, all the pills will melt, and that won't do me any good. And they certainly won't do anything for poor Lapina.

Brer Gator: Well, Brer Rabbit, that is a mighty sad story you have to tell. Things haven't been too good between us lately, but I guess I could try to get you across this creek.

Narrator 1: That, of course, is what Brer Rabbit wants . . . and needs. But once Brer Gator mentions the recent bad blood between them, he begins to have second thoughts.

Brer Rabbit: Um, Brer Gator, just how deep is that water?



Brer Gator: Brer Rabbit, if I stood on my tail on the bottom and my wife sat on my head, there'd still be room for all five of our children before we reached the surface.

Narrator 2: Hearing that, Brer Rabbit feels as though he will faint.

Brer Rabbit: *(to the audience)* Now what have I gotten myself into? *(to Brer Gator)* No, no, I couldn't trouble you. Anyway, how would you get me across?

Brer Gator: I'll take you across on my back. I've carried a lot heavier burdens than you, Brer Rabbit. Five little gators weigh a lot more than one little rabbit. And how many times have I carried merchandise back when my wife sent me shopping? No, no, it won't be any trouble . . . at least, not for me.

Brer Rabbit: Well, I guess what you say is pretty near the truth. I'd better go with you, 'cause I've got to get this medicine to poor Lapina.

Narrator 1: All the time Brer Rabbit is talking, Brer Gator is moving left and right. His head is bobbing around as though he's looking for a way to cross the rushing water. Well, he must have found it, because, next thing you know, he's coming straight at Brer Rabbit.

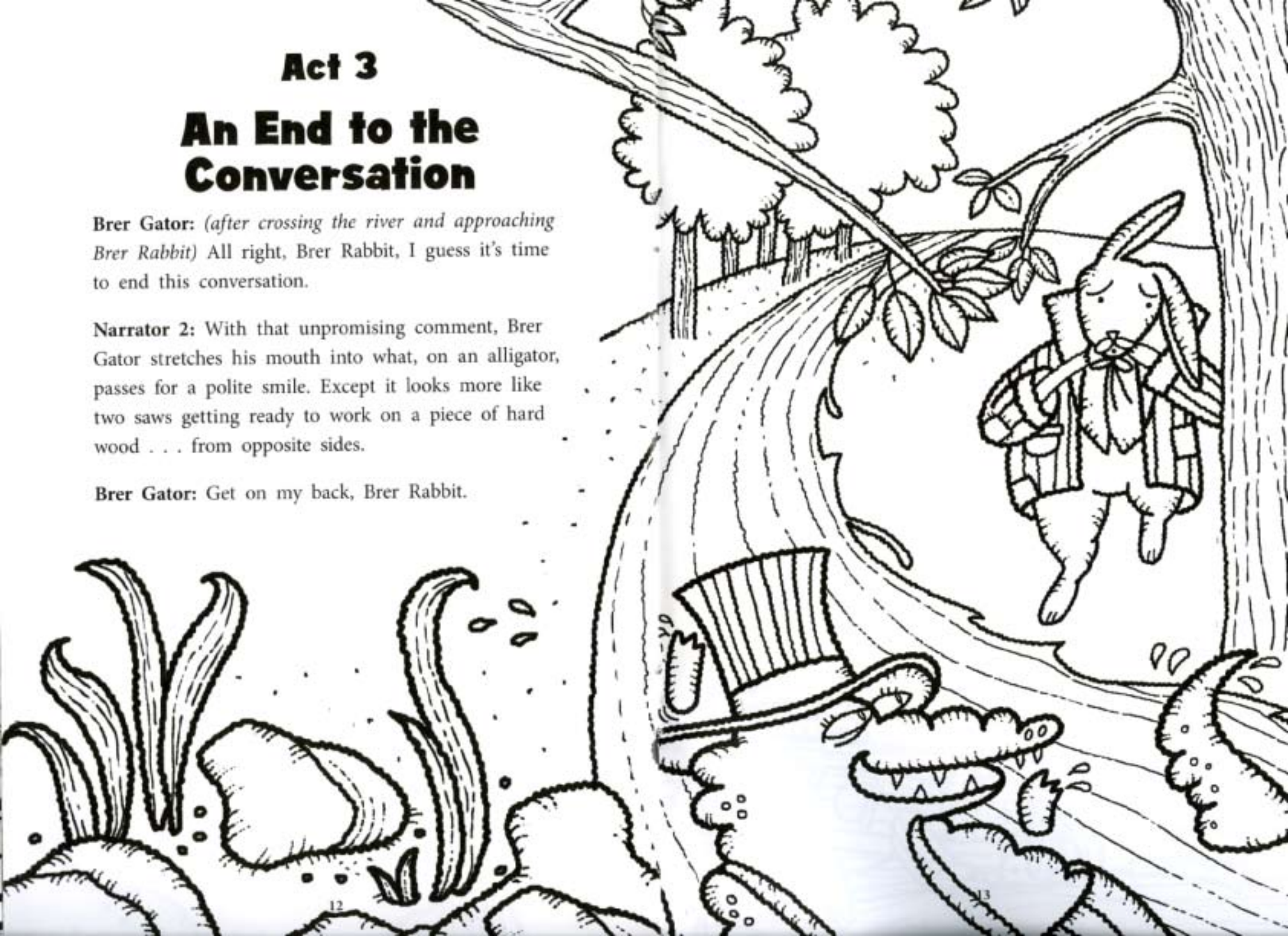
Act 3

An End to the Conversation

Brer Gator: *(after crossing the river and approaching Brer Rabbit)* All right, Brer Rabbit, I guess it's time to end this conversation.

Narrator 2: With that unpromising comment, Brer Gator stretches his mouth into what, on an alligator, passes for a polite smile. Except it looks more like two saws getting ready to work on a piece of hard wood . . . from opposite sides.

Brer Gator: Get on my back, Brer Rabbit.



Brer Rabbit: *(backing up as Brer Gator comes closer)*
I don't know, Brer Gator, I don't know. I'm so chilled already, and I might just get even wetter and colder if I ride on your back.

Narrator 1: Brer Rabbit really is shaking as though he has a chill. But it is just plain terror that's causing it. Brer Gator doesn't say anything. He just moves a little closer to the rabbit. Brer Rabbit is looking this way and that, as though he might find some help somewhere. But of course there's no one around.

Brer Rabbit: Well, now, how can I ride on your back? It's so rough.

Brer Gator: Ha, it won't be any harder than sitting on a rocking chair. Just hold on to one of the ridges and brace yourself on the bumps.

Narrator 2: There's no help for it, so Brer Rabbit climbs onto Brer Gator's back.

Brer Rabbit: *(puts one hand on Brer Gator's back)*

Narrator 1: With Brer Rabbit hanging on, Brer Gator takes off through the water like a racer at the starting gun. All Brer Rabbit can do is hang on. But he soon sees that the alligator is not heading toward Brer Rabbit's landing.

Brer Rabbit: Brer Gator, I don't want to bother you, but you don't seem to be heading for my landing.

Brer Gator: You're quite right, Brer Rabbit. You see, I haven't forgotten that day when you set fire to the dry grass near where I was resting and thought it was so funny. That fire sure did scare me, and half the swamp heard me cry like a baby. I haven't felt well since then. I've waited and waited for this day, and here it is, and now the joke's on you. *(He shakes with laughter.)*





Brer Rabbit: (*nervously*) What are you going to do with me, Brer Gator?

Brer Gator: I'm going to do just what the doctor told me to do. He says nothing will help me until I get something special for my insides.

Brer Rabbit: And what might that be?

Brer Gator: (*grinning a gator grin*) Rabbit gizzard. I'm going to fill up my ailing insides with your very own, healthy insides. 'Course, to do so, I'll have to eat your outsides, too.

Act 4

A Second Opinion

Narrator 2: As fast as Brer Gator is moving, Brer Rabbit's mind is moving faster. He's thinking of how many times he's managed to stay ahead of Brer Gator, whose mind moves a lot slower than his body.

Brer Rabbit: Well, what a lucky day this has been for both of us, Brer Gator. Yes, indeed. You see, I've been looking high and low for a gizzard eater. I've been sick for some time now. I finally had to call a specialist, someone who could educate me about my problem. After watching me roll and moan and groan for hours, though, he said he'd never seen anyone with my kind of trouble.

Narrator 1: Brer Gator doesn't say anything but just keeps moving through the water while his mind tries to add up what Brer Rabbit's saying, sort of like a treasurer with columns of figures that she's checking twice.

Brer Rabbit: This doctor went and put his head together with another doctor. And sure enough, the next day he tells me that all my trouble comes from having a double gizzard. All I had to do, he says, is find me a gizzard eater. I asked where that would be, and he says, "You'll know him when you see him. Or he'll make himself known to you." Until then, I'm supposed to stay away from water, because a double gizzard can't stand being close to water. It swells up so that your skin can't hold it.

Brer Gator: So how come you're on the water right now, then?

Brer Rabbit: The truth is that before I came across, I left my double gizzard in a hollow log. Now, if you're the gizzard eater I'm supposed to meet, then you'd better take me back to that log.

Brer Gator: I see. (*thinking for a moment*) So where did you say that log is?

Narrator 2: The rabbit points the way to his own landing, and Brer Gator swings around and paddles his way back to the very place where Brer Rabbit started out. He's barely near the landing when Brer Rabbit makes a jump right off Brer Gator's back and onto solid ground. And then he turns around and sings this.

Brer Rabbit: You poor old Gator, if you knew A from *Izzard*, You'd know mighty well that I'll keep my gizzard.

Narrator 1: And with that final insult, he's GONE.



Comprehension Check

Summarize

What was the author's purpose in writing this story? Complete your Author's Purpose Chart using examples from the story to support your thinking.

Clues	Author's Purpose

Think and Compare

1. Why does the author compare Brer Gator's thinking to a treasurer adding up columns of numbers?
(Evaluate Author's Purpose)
2. Put yourself in the place of one of the characters. Then explain how you feel about the trick the other character plays on you. *(Apply)*
3. When you read that Brer Rabbit had set fire to the grass around Brer Gator, did it change your feelings about the two characters? Explain your answer.
(Analyze)

Literacy Activities



A Trickster's Conversation

Tricksters often like to boast about tricks they play on others. Write a conversation that Brer Rabbit might have with his wife or someone else as he brags about fooling Brer Gator.



Character Analogies

Create some analogies that tell about relationships. For example, a bird is to a nest as a rabbit is to a warren. Think of the characters in the play. Use analogies to describe their characters.

Brer Rabbit and the Gizzard Eater

Brer Rabbit thinks that he can trick everyone, but will he be able to fool Brer Gator? Read this play to find out if Brer Rabbit tricks Brer Gator instead of becoming his supper.



5.4 Week 5

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