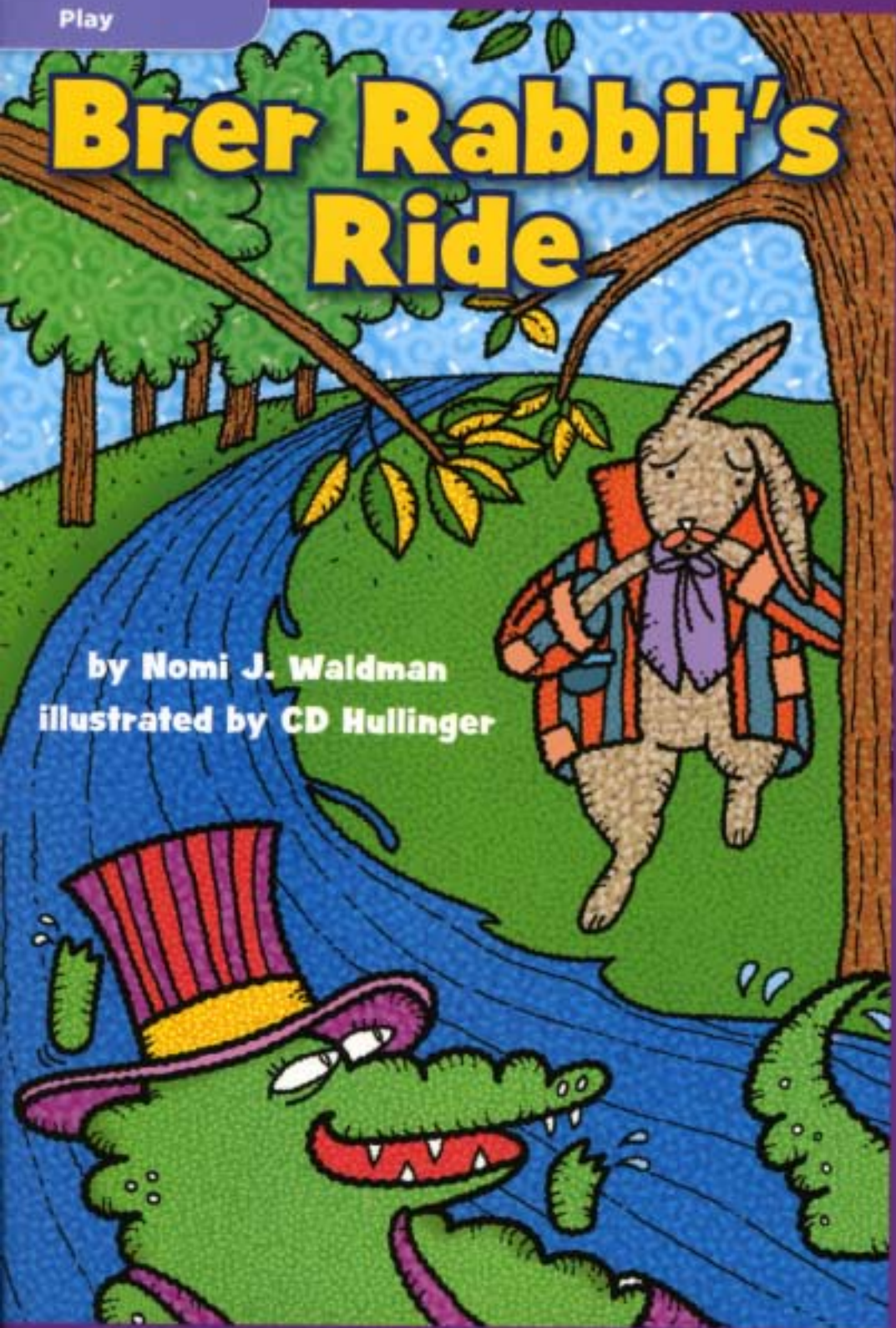


Play

Brer Rabbit's Ride

by Nomi J. Waldman
illustrated by CD Hullinger



Read to Find Out

What are some of Brer Rabbit's tricks?

STRATEGIES & SKILLS AT A GLANCE

Comprehension

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

Vocabulary

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

Support Words

- alarm, gizzard, have a soft spot for, raging, swollen

High-Frequency Words

- advance, conversation

Vocabulary Strategy

- Use Analogies: Relationships

This play is adapted from the story *Brer Rabbit and the Gizzard Eater* by Joel Chandler Harris.

Word count: 2003

B

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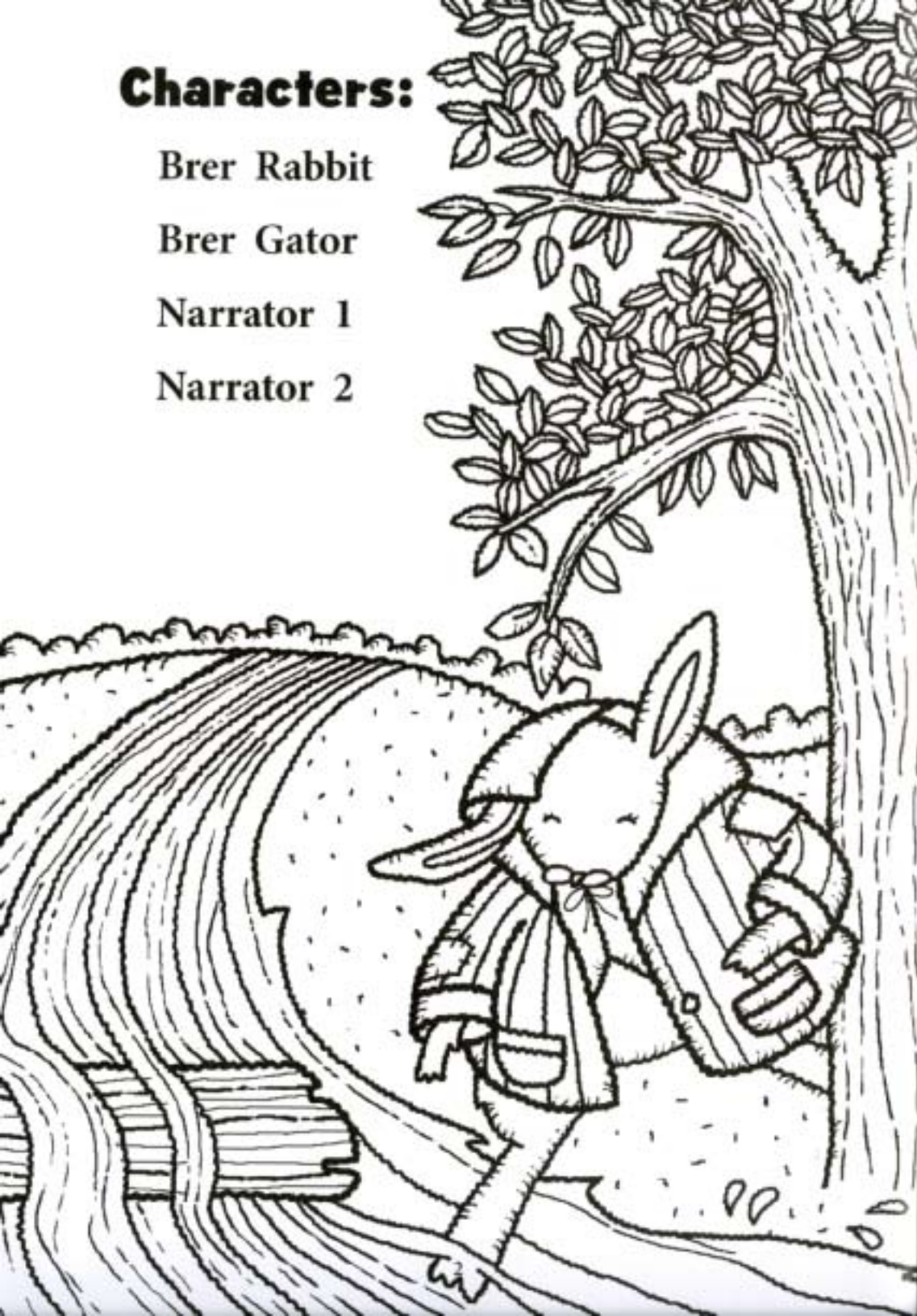
Characters:

Brer Rabbit

Brer Gator

Narrator 1

Narrator 2



Act I

Crossing the River

Scene I

Setting: *Ropes are close together to mark a riverbank. The bridge is a single log, shown as a long piece of brown paper. Rain is falling.*

As Narrator 1 speaks, Brer Rabbit moves toward the river. He looks up at the sky and feels the rain with his hand. He puts his collar up and walks to the log.

Narrator 1: Brer Rabbit wants to get out of his house. It's been raining for days, and Brer Rabbit has not seen his friends. So he goes out, because you can't keep a lively fellow like Brer Rabbit in his house. If you try, it's like trying to keep a raging river in its place.

Narrator 2: Brer Rabbit looks at the rising water and dips a toe into it. Then he walks slowly across the bridge.

raging: full and flowing fast

Narrator 1: Brer Rabbit does not have to cross a raging river. It is just a little creek. But the water is higher than usual, and it is still raining hard.

Brer Rabbit: *(He speaks 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 water and looks around. Then he puts his hand to his ear and listens.)* He shakes off the water and looks around. Then he puts his hand to his ear and listens. *(He rubs his hands together with excitement.)* A party! A party means dancing, and dancing means food to feed the dancers. That means everyone has a fine time. *(He heads offstage with a hop, a skip, and a jump.)*

Narrator 2: Everyone does have a fine time. Brer Rabbit does not think about the weather. He dances every dance and tries every dish. He thinks they are all very fine.

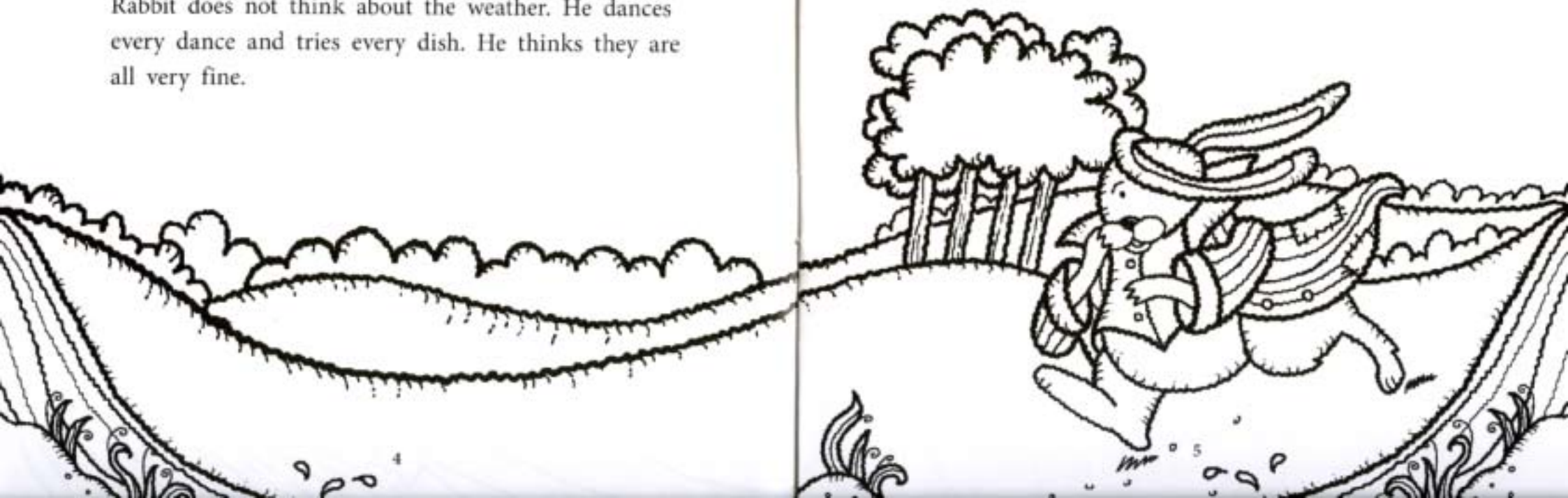
Scene 2

Setting: *The setting is the same as Scene 1, but the ropes are farther apart and the log is gone.*

Brer Rabbit: *(Appears onstage and pantomimes, or gestures with his hands, the actions the Narrator describes.)*

Narrator 1: But even the best party in the world has to end sometime. Now Brer Rabbit comes back to the place where he has to cross the river. He barely recognizes the river. It has changed a lot.

I told you that this is not a big river. But it sure is acting like one. The log is gone. How can Brer Rabbit get home?



Brer Rabbit: Oh, no! How am I ever going to get home? *(He walks back and forth, holding his head and trying to think.)* I need help. *(He stops and begins to call.)* Brer Bear! . . . Brer Fox! . . . Hello! . . . *(He stops and begins to call.)* . . . Help!

Narrator 2: Brer Rabbit calls everyone he can think of. He calls them many times. It does not matter. Nobody seems to hear. Well, nobody except for Brer Gator. He is sleeping in a muddy bed nearby. Brer Gator hears him.

Brer Gator: *(Brer Gator walks in on the opposite riverbank. He is slowly and sleepily rubbing his eyes.)* Who's making all that noise?

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

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

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

alarm: sudden fear

Act 2

An Opportunity

Narrator 2: Brer Rabbit sees Brer Gator's big eyes looking at him hungrily. Brer Rabbit is quite alarmed. But Brer Rabbit needs to find a way to get across the river right now. He remembers that Brer Gator has a soft spot for Lapina, the Rabbit family's oldest daughter.

Brer Rabbit: *(He puts his hands together and shakes his head)* Oh, thank goodness it's you, Brer Gator. I was just saying to myself, "If anyone can help you, Brer Rabbit, it is Brer Gator." Let me express my appreciation in advance. I know Lapina will be grateful, too.

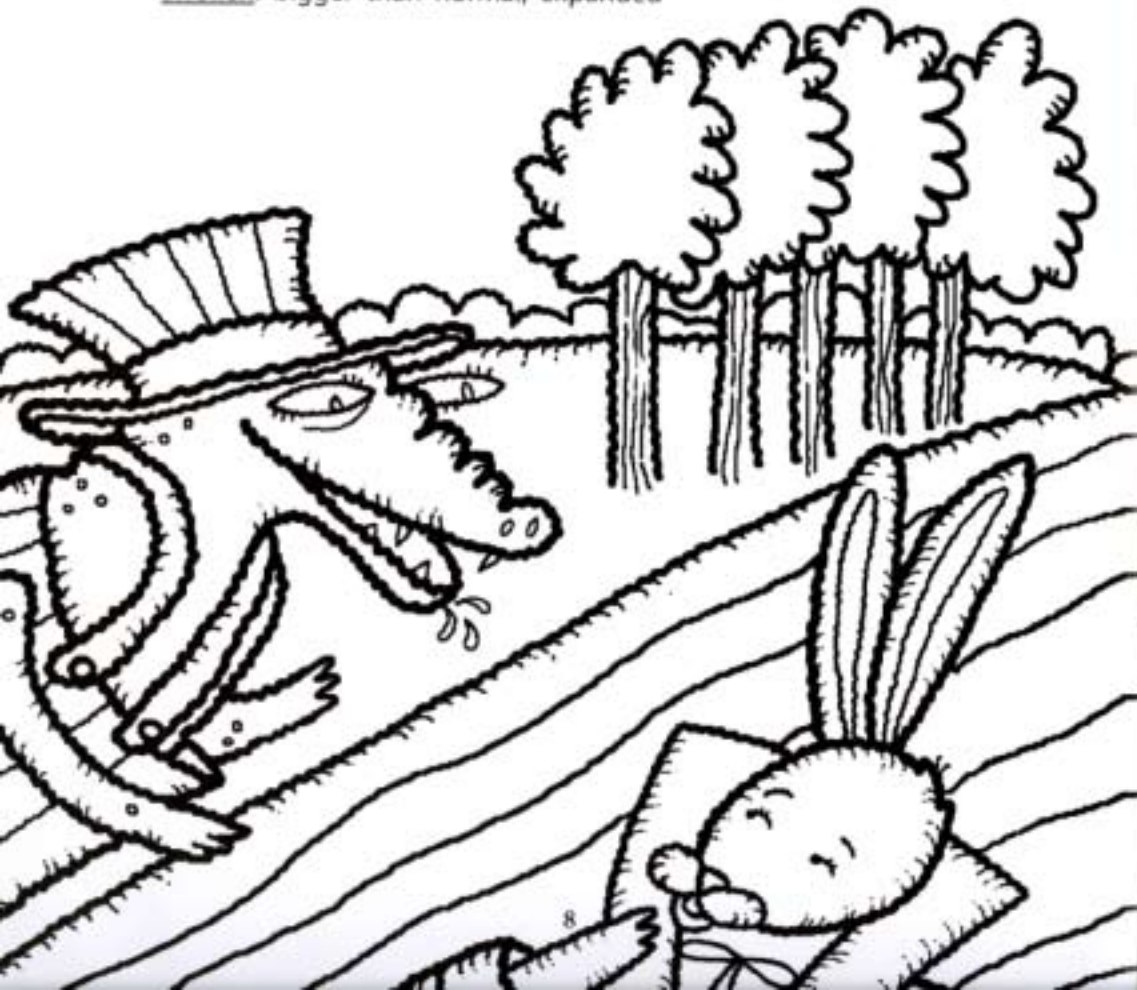
Brer Gator: *(Brer Gator has a silly half-smile, which on an alligator is still pretty wide)* How is your charming daughter?

have a soft spot for: to like or care for someone or something

Brer Rabbit: You are so kind to ask. She's not well. Her head was swollen when I left home. Brer Fox's children were outside throwing rocks this way and that, and one of their rocks hit Lapina between her ears. She has the worst headache. I had to run to the doctor to get some pills.

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

swollen: bigger than normal, expanded

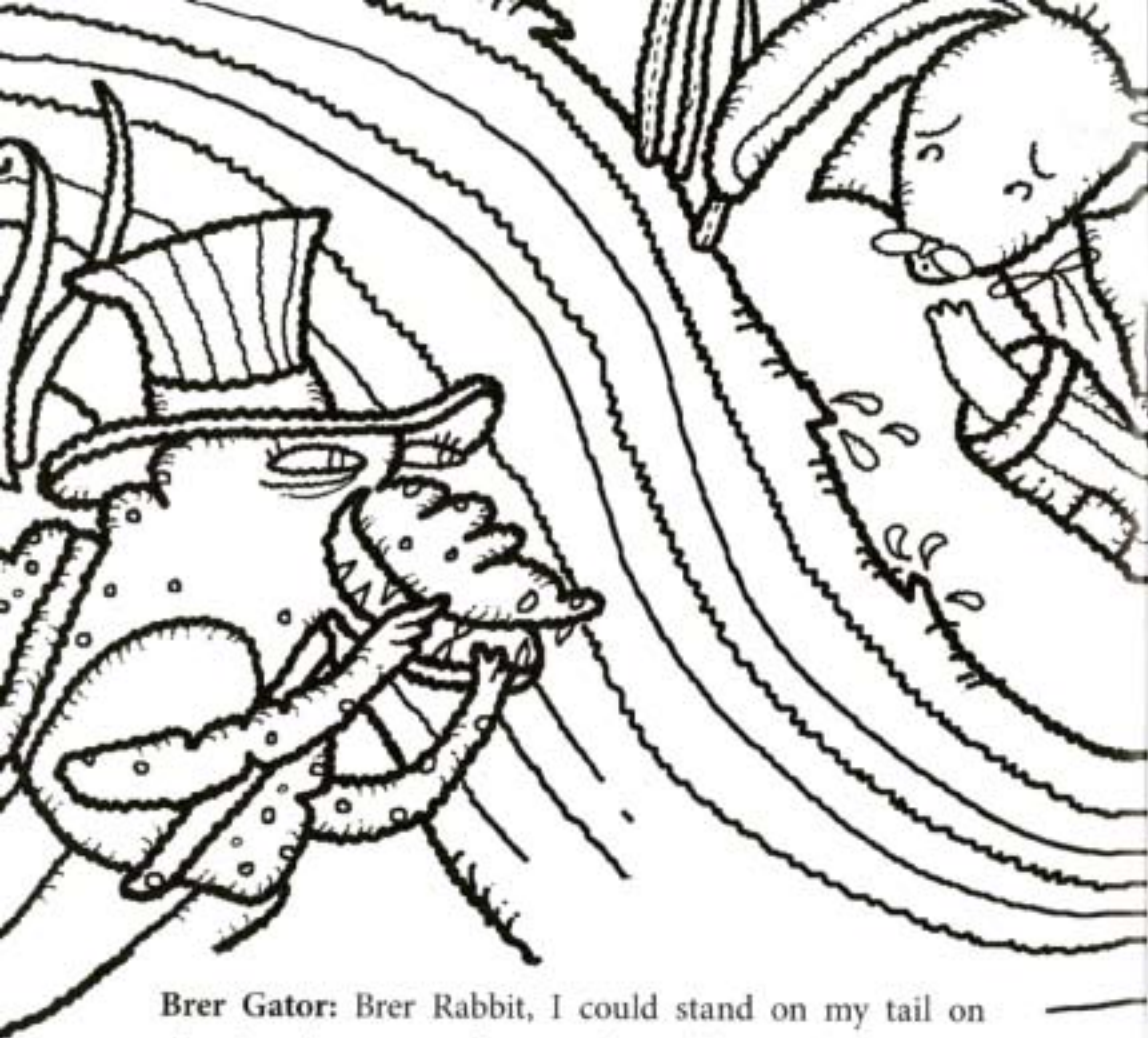


Brer Rabbit: I don't know, Brer Gator. I don't know. I left to get the doctor as soon as I could. The doctor looked through all his wares until he found some pills to help Lapina's head. But when I came back to the river, it was all swollen. It was swollen more than Lapina's sore head. And now I am on this side, and my poor daughter is on that side. If I try to cross I might get this medicine wet. Then all the pills will melt. That won't do Lapina any good.

Brer Gator: Well, Brer Rabbit, that is a very sad story. Things have not been good between us lately, but I will try to get you across this creek.

Narrator 1: Of course, that is what Brer Rabbit wants and what he needs. But Brer Gator mentioned their recent troubles, so Brer Rabbit begins to worry.

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



Brer Gator: Brer Rabbit, I could stand on my tail on the river bottom, and my wife could stand on my head. If all five of our children were on top of us, we still would not reach the surface.

Narrator 2: Brer Rabbit feels as though he will faint when he hears the bad news.

Brer Rabbit: *(He speaks to the audience.)* Now what have I gotten myself into? *(Now he speaks to Brer Gator.)* No, no, I will not trouble you. Anyway, how would you get me across?

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

Brer Rabbit: Well, I guess what you say might be true. I will go with you, because I've got to get this medicine to poor Lapina.

Narrator 1: Brer Gator is moving left and right all the time Brer Rabbit is talking. His head is moving around as though he's looking for a way to cross the rushing water. Well, he must have found a way. He is coming straight toward Brer Rabbit.

Act 3

The Ride

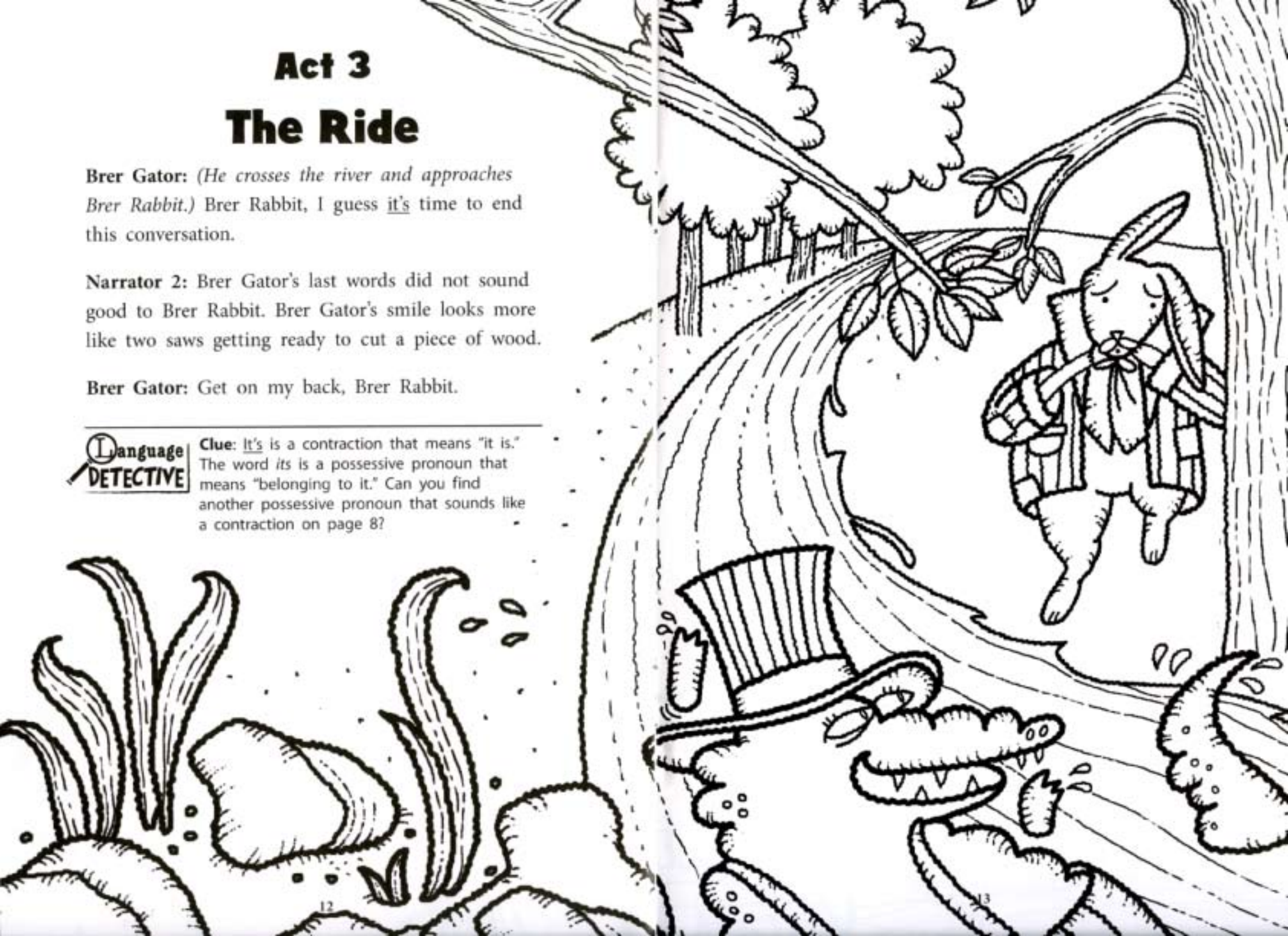
Brer Gator: (*He crosses the river and approaches Brer Rabbit.*) Brer Rabbit, I guess it's time to end this conversation.

Narrator 2: Brer Gator's last words did not sound good to Brer Rabbit. Brer Gator's smile looks more like two saws getting ready to cut a piece of wood.

Brer Gator: Get on my back, Brer Rabbit.

Language DETECTIVE

Clue: It's is a contraction that means "it is." The word *its* is a possessive pronoun that means "belonging to it." Can you find another possessive pronoun that sounds like a contraction on page 8?



Brer Rabbit: *(He backs up as Brer Gator moves closer.)* I don't know, Brer Gator. I don't know. I am so chilled already, and I might just get more wet and more cold if I ride on your back.

Narrator 1: Brer Rabbit really is shaking as though he has a chill. But it's terror that is causing the shaking. Brer Gator does not say anything. He just moves a little closer to the rabbit. Brer Rabbit looks all around to find some help. But there is no one around.

Brer Rabbit: Well, now, how can I ride on your back? Your back is so rough.

Brer Gator: Sitting on my back will not be any harder than sitting on a rocking chair. Just hold on.

Narrator 2: There is no one else to help him, so Brer Rabbit climbs onto Brer Gator's back.

Brer Rabbit: *(He 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 when the starting gun goes off. All Brer Rabbit can do is hold on. When he sees that the alligator is not going toward his home, he knows he's been tricked.

Brer Rabbit: Brer Gator, I don't want to bother you. But you don't seem to be heading toward my home.

Brer Gator: You are quite right, Brer Rabbit. You see, I have not forgotten that day when you set fire to the dry grass near where I was resting. You thought that was so funny. That fire scared me, and half the swamp heard me cry like a baby. I have waited and waited for this day. Now the joke is on you. *(He shakes with laughter.)*





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

Brer Gator: I'm going to do 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: (*He grins a big grin.*) I need rabbit gizzard. I am going to fill up my insides with your insides. Of course, to eat your insides, I will have to eat your outsides, too.

gizzard: part of an animal that grinds up food

Act 4

Fast Thinking

Narrator 2: Brer Gator is moving fast, but Brer Rabbit's mind is moving faster. Brer Rabbit is thinking about how many times he has managed to trick Brer Gator. Brer Gator's mind moves a lot slower than Brer Gator's body.

Brer Rabbit: Well, what a lucky day this is for both of us, Brer Gator. Yes, indeed. You see, I've been looking everywhere for a gizzard eater. I have been sick for some time now. I finally had to call a doctor, someone who could educate me about my problem. The doctor watched me roll and moan and groan for hours. Then he said he'd never seen anyone with my problem.

Narrator 1: Brer Gator does not say anything. He just keeps moving through the water while he tries to understand what Brer Rabbit is saying. He does this like a treasurer with numbers that he's checking twice.



Clue: Like a treasurer is an analogy. Can you find another analogy on page 15? What do you think it might mean?

Brer Rabbit: That doctor talked to another doctor. The next day he told me that all my trouble comes from having a double gizzard. He said that all I have to do is find a gizzard eater. I asked where I could find one. He said, "You will know a gizzard eater when you see him. Or he'll make himself known to you." Until then, I am supposed to stay away from water, because a double gizzard can't stand being close to water. It swells up.

Brer Gator: Then why are you on the water right now?

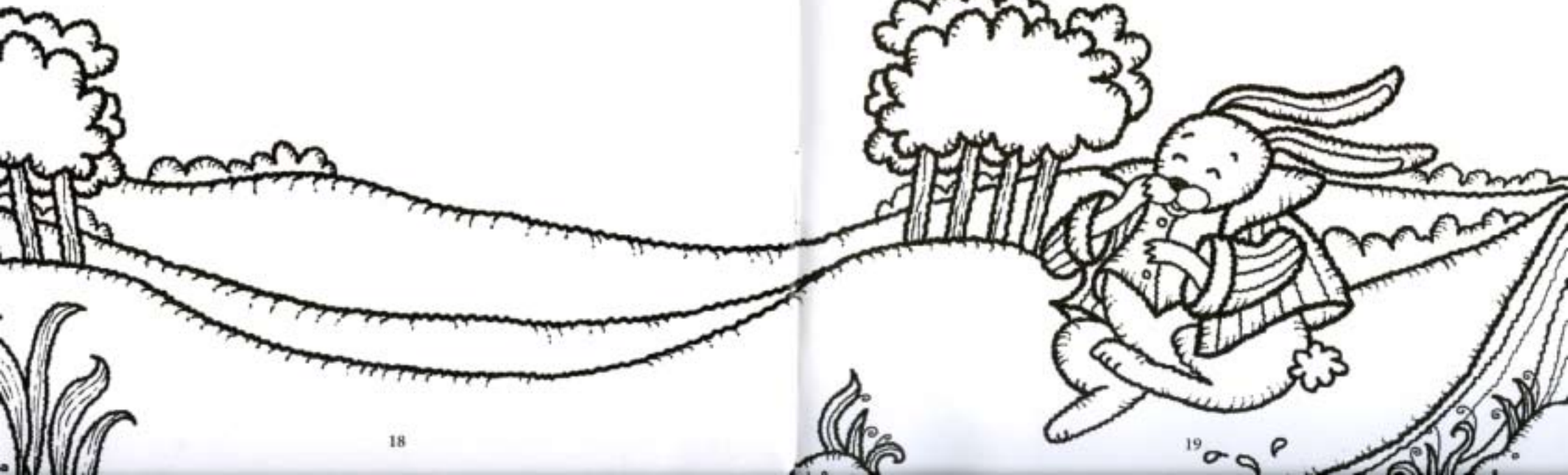
Brer Rabbit: I left my double gizzard in a hollow log before I left home. If you are the gizzard eater I am supposed to meet, you should take me back to that log.

Brer Gator: I see. *(He thinks for a moment.)* So where is that log?

Narrator 2: The rabbit points the way toward his own home. Brer Gator turns around. He swims to the very place Brer Rabbit wants to go. Brer Rabbit jumps off Brer Gator's back and onto solid ground. Then he turns around and sings.

Brer Rabbit: You poor old Gator, you silly lizard. You should know by now that I'll keep my gizzard.

Narrator 1: And with that final insult, Brer Rabbit is gone.



Comprehension Check

Summarize

Complete the Author's Purpose Map with the class. Summarize the story. You can use the chart to help you organize your ideas.

| Clues | Author's Purpose |
|-------|------------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

Think and Compare

1. Why does the author compare Brer Gator's thinking to a treasurer adding up numbers?
(Evaluate Author's Purpose)
2. Pretend you are Brer Rabbit or Brer Gator. How do you feel about the trick the other character plays on you? **(Apply)**
3. You read that Brer Rabbit set fire to the grass around Brer Gator. Did that change your feelings about the two characters? Why or why not?
(Analyze)

Literacy Activities



A Trickster's Conversation

People who play tricks often think they are smart. They like to tell about the tricks they play on others. Work with a partner. Write what Brer Rabbit might tell his wife about fooling Brer Gator.



Character Analogies

An example of an analogy is *bird is to nest as ant is to anthill*. Another example is *turtle is to slow as horse is to fast*. Work with a partner. Think of the characters in the play. Use analogies to describe the characters. Start with this sentence. *Brer Rabbit is to _____ as Brer Gator is to _____.*

Brer Rabbit's Ride

Brer Rabbit thinks that he can trick everyone, but will he fool Brer Gator? A hungry alligator can be tricky, too!



5.4 Week 5

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