




The Woodcutter's Gift



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Essential Question

How can we protect the Earth?

Read about a woodcutter who puts a tree to good use.



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On a stormy night, a violent thunderstorm blew in and knocked down the giant mesquite tree that stood in the town square. After the storm, all the neighbors, who **rarely** spoke to each other, came out of their houses and gathered around the **enormous** tree that was blocking the main street.



"That tree is dead. Let's get rid of it," remarked the storekeeper as he poked at it with a stick. He looked up to see what the others thought.

The crowd muttered in agreement.

"Yeah," said the house painter. "I'll bring my saw and cut it into little pieces."

"No. Wait," the gardener said. "Let's ask the woodcutter Tomás what he thinks we should do."



"Tomás," said the gardener, "what should we do with this tree?"

"This rough and ugly mesquite is only good for one thing: firewood," said the grumpy painter.

"No, no," the woodcutter said, moving closer to the tree. "Don't destroy this good tree."



"What are you going to do with it?" the crowd asked.

The woodcutter paused, deep in thought. "This tree *could* belong to everyone."

"How can one tree belong to everyone? Not possible."

The woodcutter just grinned and replied, "It's a surprise. You'll see."



STOP AND CHECK

Make Predictions What do you think the woodcutter's surprise will be? Use the Make Predictions strategy to predict what he will do.



The next day the neighbors watched from a **distance** as the woodcutter split the tree into huge blocks. Then the men helped him haul the large pieces to his home.

Day after day, the townspeople watched as woodchips flew into the air like sparks from a fire as the woodcutter carved and chipped and whittled the wood.

"My dad says that ugly mesquite is only good for barbecues," one young boy said as he watched from the other side of the fence.

"Ah, but he's wrong," the woodcutter replied. "The beauty of this tree is not on the outside but on the inside."





Every day the **curious** neighbors went to watch the woodcutter work. They talked and laughed and wondered what he was doing.

"What are you making?" they kept asking him.

"Be patient," he would say and continue with his work.

One day, the woodcutter moved the chunks of wood inside his woodshed. Children peeked through the knotholes in the wall, but they couldn't see anything. The woodcutter worked every day until the sun went down. And every night, he locked the shed.



Finally, the woodcutter rang the big, rusty bell hanging on his porch. He had never done that before.

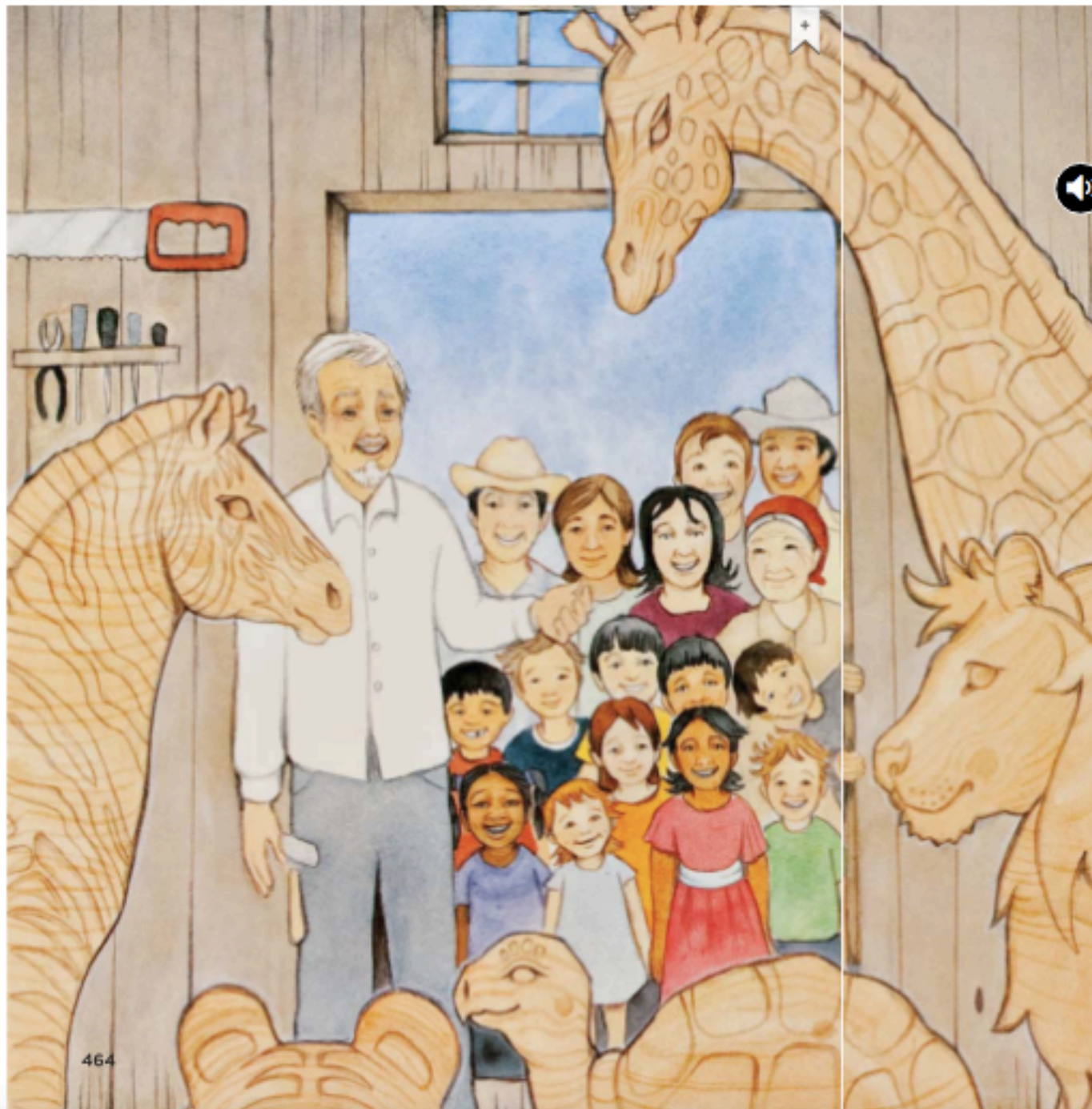
CLANG! CLANG! CLANG!

Everyone rushed over and gathered outside the woodcutter's house.

"What's happening? Why is the bell ringing?" they asked.

"Follow me," the woodcutter said, and he led them to the woodshed. "Now close your eyes and don't open them until I tell you."

The big woodshed door swung open. **CRREEAAK.**



"Open your eyes now," the woodcutter said with joy. The townspeople opened their eyes and gasped.

"You see? I made a zoo for the children to enjoy," the woodcutter said **proudly**.

Life-sized wooden animals stood before them inside the shed.

"Wow! Yeah! Hurray!" the children shouted as they jumped up and down with excitement.



"This is a giraffe," squealed one little girl in delight as she stroked the giraffe's long neck.

"And there's a zebra over there," said another girl.

"Look, a lion and a tiger," one boy said as he ran his hand across the lion's mane.

"A turtle!" a little girl cheered as she counted the squares on the turtle's shell.

Even the painter couldn't believe his eyes.

"Tomás created a spectacular zoo from that dried-up old mesquite tree."



STOP AND CHECK

Summarize What did the woodcutter do to make the zoo? Summarize how he made the tree into his surprise.



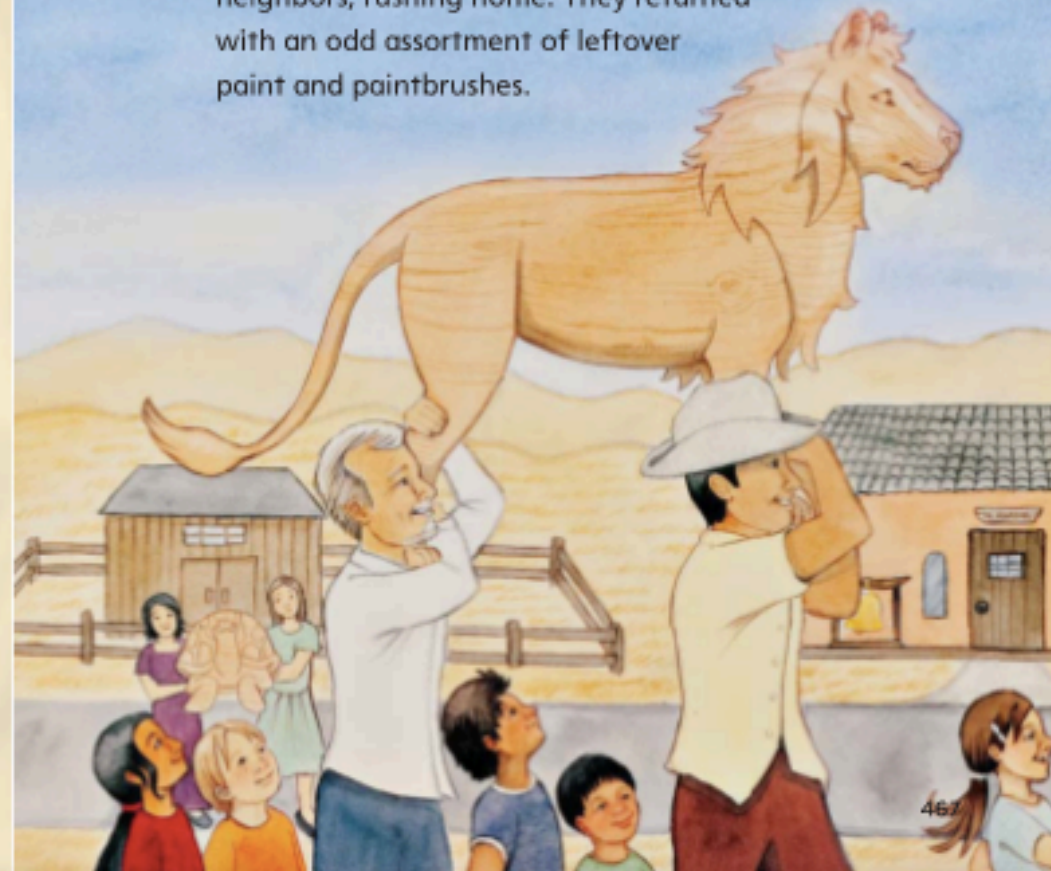
Everyone helped carry the animals one by one to the town square.

"These animals still need a coat of paint," the woodcutter said. "They're not finished yet."

"Can we paint them?" the children begged as they circled around the woodcutter.

"Of course," he replied, scratching his head, "as soon as I get some paint."

"Wait. We'll get the paint," said the neighbors, rushing home. They returned with an odd assortment of leftover paint and paintbrushes.





Everyone gathered in the square to paint the animals. When they finally finished, they giggled at the orange giraffe with the brown spots, cherry red lips, long black eyelashes, and bright blue hooves. They laughed at the turtle with the pink and green squares on its shell. They pointed to the yellow and purple stripes on the zebra.

"I couldn't have done a better job myself," said the woodcutter, smiling.

To celebrate, the townspeople had a big party in the square. The adults watched the children play in the zoo. They painted brightly colored booths and decorated them with giant paper flowers in red, blue, green, yellow, and purple. Everyone enjoyed snow cones in rainbow colors.



A few days later, men dressed in suits and ties came to talk to the woodcutter. The curious neighbors gathered outside his house. A short while later, the woodcutter came out and addressed the crowd.

"These gentlemen from the city want to buy the zoo for the museum. They say it's a work of art," he said, smiling sheepishly. Tomás had never thought of himself as an artist.



Everyone was quiet. Then a little boy asked sadly, "Does that mean we'll lose our zoo?"

The children were ready to cry. Would their zoo be taken away?

The woodcutter looked at the crowd. "Look at how our zoo has brought us all together," he told the men in suits. "The zoo belongs here. It's not for sale. But I will donate one piece to the museum so others can enjoy it, too."

All the people cheered. The children jumped up and down. Everyone formed a circle around the woodcutter. They celebrated. They danced.



By the time it got dark, everyone was exhausted. That night, the children slept so soundly that they did not see Mr. Giraffe stretch his long neck and snap a leaf from the tree. They did not catch Mr. Lion's curly mane blowing **gently** in the breeze as he yawned. They missed seeing Mr. Zebra's purple and yellow stripes swirl as he pranced around the yard. And no one saw Mr. Tiger's tail swish back and forth as he swatted a fly. No, no one saw the special magic that filled the air that night. They were just happy knowing that the woodcutter's gift would still be there in the morning.

