Focus on the Genre

Pourquoi Tales

What is a pourquoi tale?

What is the purpose of pourquoi tales?

How do you read a pourquoi tale?

Who invented pourquoi tales?

Features of a Pourquoi Tale

The setting is often a key part of the story.

The story is brief. The title is about something in nature.

The main characters are usually animals or objects in nature.

The story presents a problem and a solution that explains why things in nature are a certain way.

One character has a flaw.

The characters’ actions cause something to occur, or happen, in nature.
Long ago, in old Australia, a mother kangaroo hopped across the wide-open grasslands. “Stay close to me,” she told her son. “There are many dangers on the plains.”

A wheezing sound came from under a tree not far away. Curious, mother and son hopped to the tree. A wombat lay under the tree in the shade.

“Please don’t eat me,” the wombat said. “I just escaped from a dingo who wanted to eat me.”

“We’re not going to eat you,” the mother kangaroo said, lifting the wombat onto her tail. “We’ll help you get a drink at the watering hole.”

“I’ll meet you there!” her son shouted and hopped away.

His mother jumped as fast as she could after him. The wombat held on to her tail for dear life.

Soon they saw hunters with spears and boomerangs chase the young kangaroo. But he was fast and lost them in the brush.

Later the young kangaroo met his worried mother at the watering hole.

The wombat transformed himself into the creator. “Because you were kind to me,” the creator said, stripping bark from a eucalyptus tree and wrapping it around the mother kangaroo, “I give you this pouch to keep your children safe inside.” That’s how the kangaroo got its pouch.
Why the Fly Bites the Moose

Long ago in a magical time, a strong river rushed across the Chippewa plains. Rabbits, deer, muskrats, and redbirds all drank along the river when the sun was hot, joking and laughing and splashing each other with the cool running water. They all drank their fill and no animal was ever thirsty.

One day a bizarre, gigantic animal came to the bubbling river and started to slurp the cool fresh water.

“Is that a moose?” a beaver asked.

“That’s the biggest moose I’ve ever seen and it’s drinking the entire river! I can’t build a dam anymore.”

“Hey, that big moose is drinking our home,” a fish complained. “Soon we won’t have anywhere to live.”

A fly worried about her friends. She thought she was too small to do anything about the big moose, but then she had an idea. She flew to the river and waited for the moose.

The next time the moose came to drink, the fly bit the moose on its nose. The moose didn’t like that. The fly bit the moose on its leg. The moose didn’t like that either. The fly bit the moose on its neck. The moose had enough and left the river to the littler animals.

And to this day, a fly will bite a moose that gets too close to the river.
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