

Hazel and Huckleberry Learn How to Build A Fire

YOU MAY NOT HAVE KNOWN THIS, but years ago there lived a family of mice in the closets and walls of Surry School*. There was a mother and father and two children named Hazel and Huckleberry.

One morning after Hazel and Huckleberry had gobbled down their nuts and crumbs from the cafe for breakfast, they got ready to go on an adventure in the woods behind the school. They had been begging their parents to let them go for weeks, and finally they had relented. They wanted to go and find the mysterious grand old grandmother oak tree in the forest that they had heard stories about from the time they were baby mice.

Now that the big day had arrived Hazel and Huckleberry were quivering with excitement.

“Huckleberry, do you have the cheese and bread for lunch?” Hazel called from her room where she was packing a bag of supplies. In went a sketch book, a very large pencil, and a magnifying glass, some rope, and a hammer.

Why did Hazel pack these items? (*ask listeners*)

“Yes!” called Huckleberry from the kitchen, “do you have our gloves and the thermos of hot chocolate?”

Finally they were ready to embark. They put on their hat and gloves, coats and snow pants and tucked in their winter boots, hugging their parents at the door.

“Be home before dark!” their mother called after them.

Because it was day time and humans were about, the mice had to sneak down a secret passageway in the school walls and out a very small crack to make sure that they were not seen by the principal.

Then they ran across the playground, and through the soccer field breathing in the scent of cold fresh morning air. A woodpecker flew past them heading straight for a tall pine tree to get its breakfast of carpenter ants from under the bark. Then they headed onto the nature trail.

Hazel and Huckleberry stopped by the river for lunch and looked out over the water at the beaver dam. A mallard duck went swimming by.

By this time the sun was high in the sky, and it was warming up. Hazel took off her hat and wiped her brow.

“I can’t wait until we get to grandmother oak tree” she exclaimed.

“Me too!” said Huckleberry.

*This version written for Surry School First Graders

They continued on following the tracks of a red squirrel in the snow. Just then Red Squirrel darted out onto a branch over their head and started chattering with a pine cone still in his mouth!

“Excuse me,” said Hazel to Red Squirrel, “we are looking for the mysterious grand old grandmother oak tree near here. Can you help us find our way?”

“Keep going along the nature trail until you come ” said Red Squirrel, and they could only half understand him because of the pine cone in his mouth “But, he raised a paw, “beware that the trail is not well marked. Do not get lost!”

Hazel and Huckleberry thanked Red Squirrel and carried on. They wanted to build a snow fort and make snow angels, but the day was half gone. They needed to hurry if they were going to find grandmother oak tree and then get home before dark!

After trudging through the underbrush for what seemed like hours they stopped again to catch their breath. They then noticed that the woods were growing dark as if the sun had gone behind a cloud.

“Is night coming?” asked Huckleberry.

“Or a storm?” suggested Hazel.

Just then a very large snowflake fell out of the sky and landed on Hazel’s nose. Then came another and another.

“Quick! Run for shelter!” She cried. “A blizzard is coming!” They dove under a brush pile.

Huckleberry’s face was turned to the ground- he was scared - but Hazel lifted her head just in time to hear music floating toward them through the snowflakes. “*eu, euuuu, eu, eu....eu, euuuu, eu, eu.*”

“Huckleberry, listen,” she whispered.

There it was again! A soft flute-like song. “*eu, euuuu, eu, eu....*”

They sat up and noticed a figure moving toward them. They sat closer together on the snow a little worried about who it could be.

The music maker came right up to them and for the first time Hazel and Huckleberry realized she was just as tall as they were! She must be a wood fairy!

“My name is Sylvan,” said the fairy. I live in the woods and survive by collecting wild plants to eat. I live in Grandmother Oak Tree over there.” Hazel and Huckleberry were very excited. Their new friend invited them into the tree.

“I can show you how to start a fire to keep warm,” Sylvan offered, “and we can have tea.” By this time Hazel and Huckleberry’s thermos was empty.

“We need three things to start a fire,” she said.

What are the three things that Sylvan needs to start a fire? (*Ask listeners. Construct a fire triangle as correct answers are made. One stick for fuel, one for heat, and one for oxygen*)

“We also need four different types of fuel,” she said. “And it must be dry and dead. Green wood or live branches will smoke, plus we want to leave the living branches so that they can bloom this spring.”

(*Show listeners examples of birch bark or pine needles, twiggy bits, thin sticks (thick enough for a chickadee to stand on) finger width, (thick enough for a crow to stand on) two finger width thick enough for a porcupine to stand on). You can call them “chickadee sticks” etc. after this when gathering fuel. NOTE: Add wrist width if doing a fire bigger than a Kelly Kettle)*

She showed Hazel and Huckleberry exactly what they needed to collect, and then they all stepped out into the snowy woods to find what dry wood they could.

Before long a warm blaze was burning and pine needle tea was being poured. The three mice sat around chatting and sharing stories. Then Sylvan offered to teach them a song:

Sing fire song:

The fire in the sun makes the fire in the trees, makes the fire that we light today (2x)

Fire fire burning brightly., heal us with your light(2x)

The fire in the sun makes the fire in the trees, makes the fire that we light today (2x)

Fire fire burning brightly., heal us with your light(2x)

By this time night had fallen. As they were taking their last sip of tea, (*make sound effect*) lantern light came through the trees and who should step into the circle of fire light? Hazel and Huckleberry’s parents!

“Mom! Dad!” Hazel and Huckleberry exclaimed together.

Their parents had grown worried and went to look for them. The Surry School mouse family invited their new friend Sylvan to stay with them for a few days, and when she agreed they all returned to the school basement together. The snow storm had stopped and a beautiful golden moon shone over the forest. Sylvan played her flute all the way back to the school and snowy owls came out to fly along with them.

By Landere Naisbitt, BHHT Outreach Coordinator



*This version written for Surry School First Graders