

Squirrel in a What?

by Dr. Wesley A. Young and Gloria D. Miklowitz



¹ The telephone rang at the Animal Rescue League one busy Saturday morning. I was putting a splint on a dog's leg, so Harry, one of our staff assistants, took the call. He listened carefully, wrote down an address, and then went out.

² About an hour later Harry telephoned. "Say, Doc, I'm in Brookline, and I've got a problem. Some people out here have a son

who plays the tuba and this afternoon he's supposed to play in the school band. But a squirrel crawled into the instrument and I can't get it out. I've done everything I could think of. I've blown into the tuba, hollered into it, shaken it, reached into the bell with sticks and wires, but the squirrel won't budge. It's nearly noon, Doc, and we're running out of time. What should I do?"

3 "Oh, come on, now," I said. "What would a squirrel be doing in a tuba? There's probably something wrong with the instrument."

4 "No, Doc, it's a squirrel, all right. This boy, Skip, found a baby squirrel and adopted it. He takes good care of it and carries it everywhere with him. He even keeps it in his pocket when he practices the tuba."

5 "What makes everyone so sure the squirrel's in the tuba?" I asked.

6 "They can't find it anywhere in the house," Harry answered.

7 "Well, a squirrel isn't likely to stay in a house now, is it? Maybe something's wrong with the tuba," I argued.

8 Harry insisted patiently, "It's a squirrel, Doc. I can feel it."

9 "What?"

10 "Well, the squirrel must have entered the bell opening and crawled a few rounds into the tuba. Then the instrument became too narrow for it to continue. If you feel the metal from the bell up, there's a warm spot where the animal must be stuck," Harry explained.

11 I could imagine the tuba—several feet of metal tubing winding round and round from the bell to the mouthpiece. Somewhere in those coils was a poor, confused squirrel, too large to move forward and too afraid to move backward.

12 "Bring the tuba into the office," I told Harry. "I don't know what we'll do, but we'll try."

13 Twenty minutes later Harry arrived, with the tuba around his neck and a small army behind him. There was Skip, the tuba player, ruddy-faced, plump, and frightened. His mother and father came next, glancing nervously at their watches. They were followed by some of Skip's friends who were carrying band instruments.

14 Harry and Skip moved my hand over the tuba until we located the warm spot. There was no doubt that there was something alive inside the horn.

15 I began to work. I shook the instrument, blew it, and did the same things that Harry had done, but nothing happened.

16 Then Skip's parents removed the valves and mouthpiece of the tuba. We gently pushed wires through the openings, but still nothing happened. I replaced the mouthpiece and blew

a few sour notes, gently at first, then loudly. The squirrel didn't budge. I ran the scale, hoping that changing the pitch might get it back out, but nothing succeeded.

17 During all this time the office had filled with spectators. All kinds of people had crowded into the room. Some watched, while others gave advice on how to remove the squirrel.

18 Skip stood by in tears, first on one side of me, then on the other. He was afraid that his pet might be injured by the things that were being pushed into the bell.

19 Skip's musician friends shifted from one foot to the other. They kept looking at the clock, but they didn't want to leave before the squirrel came out.

20 Then I had an idea. I put a few drops of chloroform into the mouthpiece. I hoped that the strong odor would make the squirrel back out. Then I blew softly into the tuba. The room was silent as everyone listened, but not a sound was heard.

21 I puffed more chloroform into the mouthpiece. This time there was the sound of urgent scratching. When I shook the tuba, out came a small brown squirrel! It was a bit woozy from the chloroform, but it was free.

22 A cheer went up from the spectators. Everyone laughed and clapped. Skip scooped up his pet and hugged it to him.

23 "Gee, thanks, Doc," Skip said. Then, glancing at the clock, alarmed, he put the squirrel under one arm, grabbed the tuba, and headed for the door.

24 I last saw Skip when he took part in the parade. He marched along confidently, blowing deep, mellow tones on his tuba. Harry and I stood at the curb, cheering as he passed. Skip looked fine in his uniform that was all red and gold, except for one brown spot. As we looked more carefully, we saw that it was the little brown squirrel, peeping out of a pocket!

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COMPREHENSION

A Choose the best ending for each sentence.
Write *a*, *b*, or *c*.

- 1 The narrator of this story can best be described as someone who
 - a** has no patience.
 - b** doesn't give up easily.
 - c** doesn't understand animals.
- 2 You know the doctor is telling this story because
 - a** everything is told from his point of view.
 - b** he uses *I* to tell about himself.
 - c** Both **a** and **b**
- 3 People kept looking at their watches because they
 - a** were afraid the squirrel would die.
 - b** didn't want to miss the movie.
 - c** didn't want to miss the parade.

4 In paragraph 13, the phrase "a small army" is another way of saying

- a** a group of soldiers.
 - b** a large number of people.
 - c** Neither **a** nor **b**
- 5 You know the squirrel was all right at the end of this story because he
- a** was in the parade with Skip.
 - b** got woozy from the chloroform.
 - c** tried to climb into the tuba again.

LEARN ABOUT WORDS

B Often you can find out the meaning of a word by seeing how it is used in a story. The other words in the story give you clues.

Find the word in the story that best fits each meaning. (A paragraph number tells you where to look.) Write the word.

- 1 helpers (1)
- 2 bewildered; mixed up (11)
- 3 found (14)
- 4 turned out well; worked as planned (16)
- 5 onlookers; bystanders; observers (17)
- 6 changed position; moved (19)
- 7 smell; stench (20)

C A word may have more than one meaning. Its meaning will depend on how it is used.

The *fly* buzzed around the room.

The bird will *fly* to its nest.

Look at each word in **bold type** below. Note the paragraph number. Look back at the paragraph. Which meaning does the word have there? Write *a* or *b*.

8 **band** (2)

- a** thin, flat piece of material
- b** musical group

9 **warm** (10)

- a** friendly; interested
- b** more hot than cold

10 **scale** (16)

- a** series of musical sounds
- b** part of a fish's skin

THINK ABOUT IT

- D** Skip's tuba wouldn't *toot*.
The little squirrel *squeaked*.

Some words imitate the sounds they refer to. *Toot* and *squeaked* are two such words.

Read each sentence. Which word imitates a sound? Write the word.

- 1 The telephone jingled constantly in the busy office.
- 2 The doctor hooted when he heard about the squirrel.
- 3 The squirrel was so scared that his teeth chattered.
- 4 Skip's friends roared when the squirrel was freed.
- 5 At the parade Skip boomed a happy tune on his tuba.

- E** A writer chooses words carefully to help the reader understand the story.

Skip *picked* at his lunch.

This tells you Skip didn't like his lunch.

Skip *devoured* his lunch.

This tells you Skip liked his lunch a lot.

Skip *ate* his lunch.

This doesn't tell you whether Skip liked his lunch or not.

Read each question. Write *a*, *b*, or *c*.

- 6 Which sentence means, "Do it and don't argue!"
 - a He insisted that we stop talking.
 - b He suggested that we stop talking.
 - c He said that we should stop talking.
- 7 Which sentence tells you that the squirrel went quickly across the lawn?
 - a The squirrel limped across the lawn.
 - b The squirrel walked across the lawn.
 - c The squirrel scurried across the lawn.

- 8 Which sentence tells you that the doctor treated the squirrel kindly?
 - a The doctor pinched the squirrel.
 - b The doctor touched the squirrel.
 - c The doctor petted the squirrel.

- 9 Which sentence tells you that Skip helped an animal in trouble?
 - a Yesterday Skip trapped a squirrel.
 - b Yesterday Skip caught a squirrel.
 - c Yesterday Skip rescued a squirrel.

- 10 Which sentence makes you think that the bandmaster might have been angry?
 - a The bandmaster shouted Skip's name.
 - b The bandmaster whispered Skip's name.
 - c The bandmaster spoke Skip's name.

- F** Skip found a *young* baby squirrel.
Skip found a baby squirrel.

When writers or speakers are careless, they sometimes use an unnecessary word and say the same thing twice.

Read each sentence. Which word in **bold type** is not needed because the same idea is expressed elsewhere in the sentence? Write the word.

- 11 The **trapped** squirrel could not move **backward** or forward.
- 12 When the doctor first heard the **animal** story, he thought it was a **false** lie.
- 13 Then the doctor hurried **quickly** to help the **poor** animal.
- 14 Some of Skip's friends followed **behind** him to the **doctor's** office.
- 15 The **busy** doctor tried to get the squirrel out by shouting **loudly** into the tuba.