How Turtle Flew South for the Winter

Story adapted by Wendie Old
Illustrations by Scott Mattern
Green Words and *Challenge Words:

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Red Words to practice every day:

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<th>chief</th>
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One fine spring morning Storm Cloud sat outside his teepee. Red Fox went to him and said, “Dad, I want to hunt buffalo.”

Storm Cloud said, “We cannot hunt buffalo. Now is the time when they raise their babies. We must wait for the hunting season in the fall.”

But Red Fox kept asking and asking.

Finally, Storm Cloud said, “You need to hear the story about Turtle.”

And this is the story that Storm Cloud told.
It was fall. Leaves floated down on top of Turtle.
Turtle saw more and more birds land in the trees. They
chirped and chirped.

Turtle yelled up at the birds, “What’s happening?
Why are there so many of you? Why are you chirping
so much?”
Chief Bird said, “We are going to fly south.”
Turtle asked, “Why fly there?”
Chief Bird said, “I thought everyone knew why we fly south for the winter.”
But Turtle did not know.
So Chief Bird explained, “Soon, it will start to get cold. There will not be much food. We must fly to a warm place.”
Turtle was upset that soon there would not be much food. He was very fond of food!

Turtle asked, “May I go with you?”

Chief Bird chirped, “You cannot go. You are a turtle. Turtles cannot fly.”

But Turtle would not give up. “Please, please, may I go?” he begged. “I want to go. I need to go. How will I eat if there is no food? Is the south very far?”
At last, Chief Bird agreed to take Turtle. He ordered Turtle to put a stick in his mouth and bite it hard. Chief Bird said, “Do not forget to keep your mouth shut.”

Turtle nodded. He kept his mouth shut while two large birds grasped the stick with their beaks. They flapped their wings and lifted Turtle. Turtle was flying! An army of birds flew beside him.
Turtle had never been so high before. He looked down. Everything seemed so small. A horse seemed smaller than a dog. A lake looked like a pond. At first, Turtle was very happy. He swayed back and forth.

He looked down and thought about all the good food in the south.
Turtle wanted to ask, “Where are we? What is the name of that lake? How far have we gone? Are we almost there yet?”

Turtle could not say a word. He had to keep a firm grip on the stick.
So Turtle rolled his eyes. The birds did not see him roll his eyes. They just flew on.

Then Turtle waved his legs. The birds did not see him wave his legs. They just flew on.

Turtle tried to say, “Mmmmmmmmmmmmm!”

The birds still did not hear him. They just flew on.
At last, Turtle lost his temper. He forgot to keep his mouth closed.

Turtle yelled, “Tell me where we . . .”

When he yelled, the stick fell out of his mouth. Oooops!
Turtle fell from the sky. He saw the land rushing up at him. He pulled his legs inside his shell. Poor Turtle hit the dirt hard.

Crash! He rolled and rolled and rolled.
Turtle shook. He peeked out of his shell. He hurt all over. His shell had cracked. There would be no more flying for him! From now on he would stay in the north. He crawled into a pond to rest in the mud.

Turtle said, “I will not stir from this spot until spring.”
Then Storm Cloud finished the story: “That is why today turtles have cracked shells. And that is why they do NOT fly south with the birds in winter. But the most important thing is, that is why they no longer keep asking to do something. They have learned there is a time to talk and a time to stop talking.”

And Storm Cloud gave Red Fox a big hug.
1. Why did Turtle want to go with the birds?

2. Circle the right answer.

   Turtle heard the birds chirping. Here chirp means:
   A. a dog’s sound   B. a bird’s sound   C. a turtle’s sound

1. Why couldn’t Turtle say a word?

2. Circle the right answer.

   Turtle had to keep a firm grip on the stick. Here grip means:
   A. hold   B. handle   C. understand

1. Why did Turtle let go of the stick?

2. Circle the right answer.

   Turtle said, “I will not stir from this spot until spring.” Here stir means:
   A. mix   B. spin   C. move
Reading Roots, Level 4
How Turtle Flew South for the Winter

“ir,” “or,” “ar,” “er,” “ur”