Name: _____ Date: _____

The Sun's Night Journey

Reading level 7 (3rd grade) · 321 words

Long ago, people in Egypt looked up at the sun. They asked, "Where does it go at night?" So they invented a story.

In the story, the sun was a golden boat. A sailor named Ra steered it. Every morning, it rose over the great river Nile.

All day, Ra sailed across the blue sky. His light warmed the fields and the river. Farmers and fishers smiled up at him.

At sunset, the sky turned red. The boat slid down behind the western hills. Soon the whole land was dark.

Under the earth, there was a dark river. The story called it the Duat. Ra's boat sailed into the Duat every night.

There was no wind there. So helpers took a long rope and pulled the boat. It glided along, slowly and steadily.

The golden boat was the only light in the Duat. It shone on the cave walls. Sleepers woke up and smiled.

Then they closed their eyes again. Ra sailed on, and the dark closed in behind him. The night was long.

In the deepest dark, a huge snake was waiting. His name was Apep. He did not like the light.

Apep coiled across the water. The boat could not pass. "I will stop the sun!" he hissed.

The helpers stood still. The golden glow grew dim. Everyone in the boat held their breath and waited.

Then Ra stood up tall at the front. His light blazed bright. The whole crew shouted together.

Apep could not bear the glare. He slid back into the darkness. The snake was driven off, safe and unhurt.

The helpers took up the rope again. A gate opened, and gray light came in. The last hour of the night had come.

The boat rose out of the darkness. The sky turned pink, then gold. The sun was back again!

People in Egypt cheered. The night was long, they said. But the morning always came.

Questions

1. Where did Ra's boat go at night?

A. Up to the moon
B. Into a dark river under the earth
C. Back to the Nile

2. How did the boat move in the Duat?

A. The wind pushed it
B. Ra rowed it alone
C. Helpers pulled it with a rope

3. What did Apep want?

A. To stop the sun from rising
B. To buy the boat
C. To help the crew

4. Why did Apep slide away?

A. He was hungry
B. He could not bear the bright light
C. He was called home

5. The story says the boat "glided." What does glided mean?

A. Sank fast
B. Stood still
C. Moved smoothly

Words to know

Duat: the dark river
glide: move smoothly
coil: curl in rings
glare: strong, bright light

Answer key: The Sun's Night Journey

1. B. Into a dark river under the earth
2. C. Helpers pulled it with a rope
3. A. To stop the sun from rising
4. B. He could not bear the bright light
5. C. Moved smoothly