

Royal Fireworks Language Arts by Michael Clay Thompson

Book 4 of the Poodle Series

Poodle and the Blue Desert Dunes



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Illustrations by Christopher Tice



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Dramatis Personae

Poodle A chicken

What? A beagle

Sidney A snail

Maybe A mouse (the director)

Bizzie A mouse (Maybe's assistant)

Dickinson A wind monster

Burgull A consonant monster

+ Gawk An indignant desert bird

Polaris The North Star

+
Author Unknown





Act One: Prepositions

The desert. Sunset.

Poodle and What? stood still,
staring at vast blue dunes
that stretched far across the page.

Darkness darkened.
Stars woke, wiggled, clicked on their lights,
blinked, started their *stk* songs,
and sparked showers
on the glimmering sand.

The deep night sky
rose high, ascended,
and the desert was immense,
and the galaxy wheeled, wisely,
saying galaxy words.





“You know what we have to do,”
said Poodle.

What? asked, “What?”

“Prepositions,” said Poodle.
“We have to find prepositions.”

“I’ll help,” said the author **from** somewhere.
(Authors are always somewhere.)

“I can make prepositions blue
on the page. I can use a blue hue.”

“What are you doing here?” asked Poodle.
“Please don’t talk **to** us. Stay out **of** this.
You’re not a character.”

“What-what-what-what,” grffed What?.

“Oh, right,” said the author,
and the rhymes rippled as he poofed.
(He gets carried away.)





Poodle conned the cold distance.

“Prepositions are that way,
I think,” he said, pointing
to blue dunes below Polaris.

She was watching them,
guiding them north.

“Let’s go then, what.
What-what,” said What?.

“Yes,” Poodle agreed. “All right.”
And they began their trek.
(*All right* is two words;
there is no such word as *alright*.)



As they walked, the sand crunched cold,
and their steps made soft concussions.

“What are we searching for?” asked What?
“What are prepositions?”

“Relationships,” answered Poodle.

“Each preposition starts a phrase
(a group of words), such as *in* in *in the sky*.
In is the **pre-position**, the first word.

“Each preposition shows a relationship,
such as space, or time, or something else.

You can be *in* the desert (space),
or you can move *toward* the moon (direction).

You can wake *before* the dawn (time),
or you can be *like* a camel (similarity).

There are lots of great relationships.”



“I hide **behind** the desert,” said What?.

“**Behind**? How can you be
behind a desert?” asked Poodle.
“That’s not the right preposition.”

“Oh,” said What?.
“Then I’m **inside** the desert.”

“**Inside** the desert?” asked Poodle.
“You mean you’re **under** the sand?”

What? was silly sometimes,
Poodle thought.





As Poodle and What? walked
through the deep desert night
over blue billows of dunes,
they talked about relationships,
and their prepositions turned blue,
as the author had promised,
and the words were pretty.

The desert had been hot
during the day, but now it was cold,
and a narrow wind complained,
and cold crawled up the dunes.

They shivered.
Poodle pulled his feathers close
over his chicken-shoulders,
and What? pulled his ears down
against the night.

Something scritchky skittered
with a click behind a rock.
They were not alone.



They trudged **for** a long time,
and their steps sank **in** soft sand,
and as they wended north,
a slow silver sliver crescent **of** moon
rose **over** the dunes **to** the east,
bright **at** the side **of** the night,
and the dunes' dark shadows
leaned west, tilting together,
like lunar choreography.

The shadows loved to dance **with** the moon.

Polaris watched Poodle and What?
from her northern perch, winking, thinking,
sprinkling them **with** twinkles
as stars circled her
in the deep desert night.





The two friends came
to the foot of a high dune
and began to ascend the sand slope,
but as they climbed,
the dune began to sing.

Softly.

Sing? Yes. Dunes sing.
You'd sing, too, under stars like that.

The dune began to sing in the night,
a soft song, a star song, slightly sad,
full of oooooo's and mmmmm's,
growing to mrrrrrrrrrrrrmmmmm
and then to wwwoooooooooo.

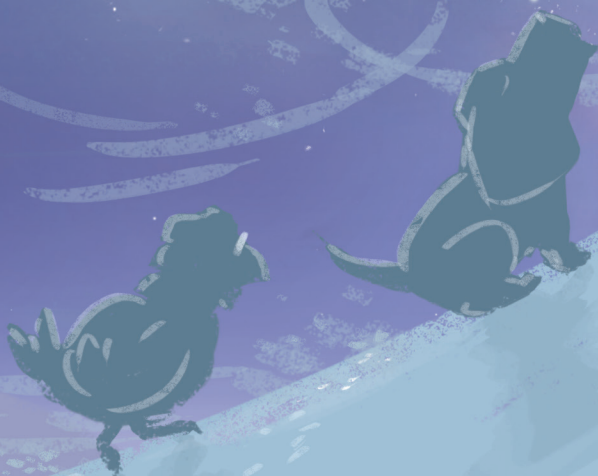
You know, a dune tune.

It was a beautiful sand song, clear, blue, cold,
broken-hearted, a sad sand-hearted song,
a song of the lonely desert stars,
and it filled the sky with notes and tones,
and a quick meteor streaked the sky—
for punctuation.

“Dunes don’t sing,” thought Poodle,
but the dune heard his thought.
(Dunes hear thoughts.)

“Ooooooh, I siiiiiiiiing,”
came a low moan **from** below.
“I sing **of** the sand and the stars and the sky,
and I know why you’re here, too,
oooooooooooooooooooo.
You’re searching **for** prepositions.
You’re a searcher.”

“Roooooroooooroo-grff,” crooned What?,
pointing his nose **at** Polaris
and joining **in** the song.
“Rarroooooooooo! What-what!”
What? liked that hummy dune.





“CUT!” cried Maybe, the play’s director,
as she stormed **onto** the stage
from the curtain stage right,
with her stage assistant, Bizzie,
rushing behind.
Maybe always *storms*.

“CUT! LIGHTS!”

And the desert became a wooden stage.

“Poodle, you and What? must
face north, **toward** Polaris.
Bizzie, dim the moon; it’s too bright.
Let’s do it again, **with** feeling!
ACTION!”



And off she stormed stage right,
and Joe restarted the wind machine,
Bizzie dimmed the moon,
Susie lowered the lights,
and everything got blue again,
and someone **in** the audience coughed,
and a child high above wiggled her nose.

