

Comprehension

Genre

A **Legend** is a story that has been handed down by a people for many years, and that often has some basis in fact.



Summarize

Sequence As you read, fill in your Sequence Chart.

Event
↓
↓
↓

Read to Find Out

What gift does the mystic horse give to the boy and his tribe?

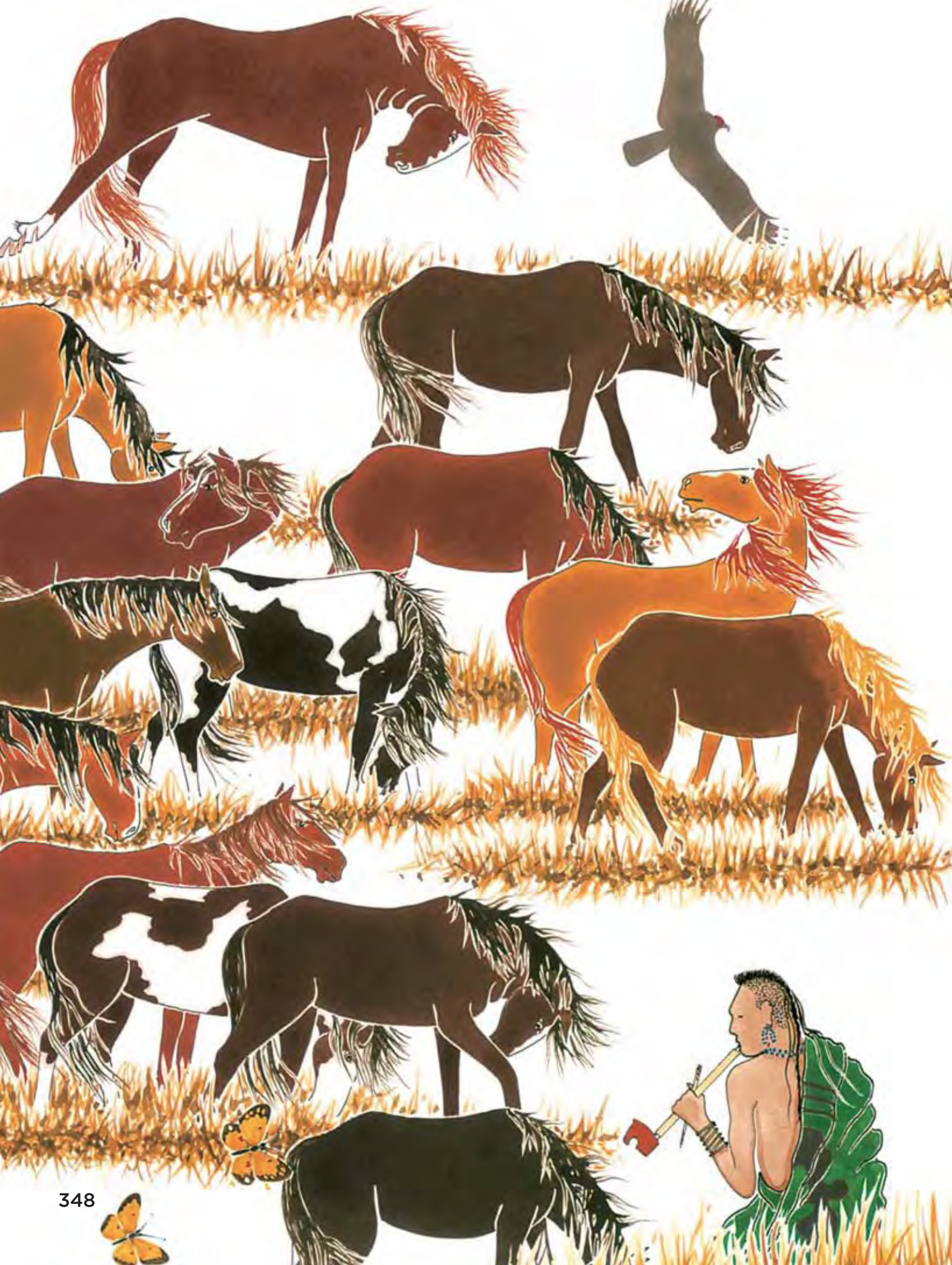


Award
Winning
Author



Mystic Horse

written and illustrated by **PAUL GOBLE**





IN THOSE LONG AGO DAYS, when the Pawnee people had harvested their crops of corn and squash, they would leave their earth-lodge villages and travel out on the Great Plains to hunt buffalo. They had horses to ride and to carry their tipis and belongings when they went great distances in search of the wandering herds.

When they were not traveling, and the tipis were pitched, it was the **responsibility** of the older boys, the young men, to look after the herds of horses, and to guard the village. They would stay with the horses at pasture throughout the day, often far away from the camp. All the while they would keep a good lookout for enemies.





Traveling with the people were an old woman and her grandson. They were poor, living alone without any relatives at the edge of the village. Their only shelter was made of sticks and a **patchwork** of pieces of old tipi covers which people had thrown away. Nobody took much notice of them.

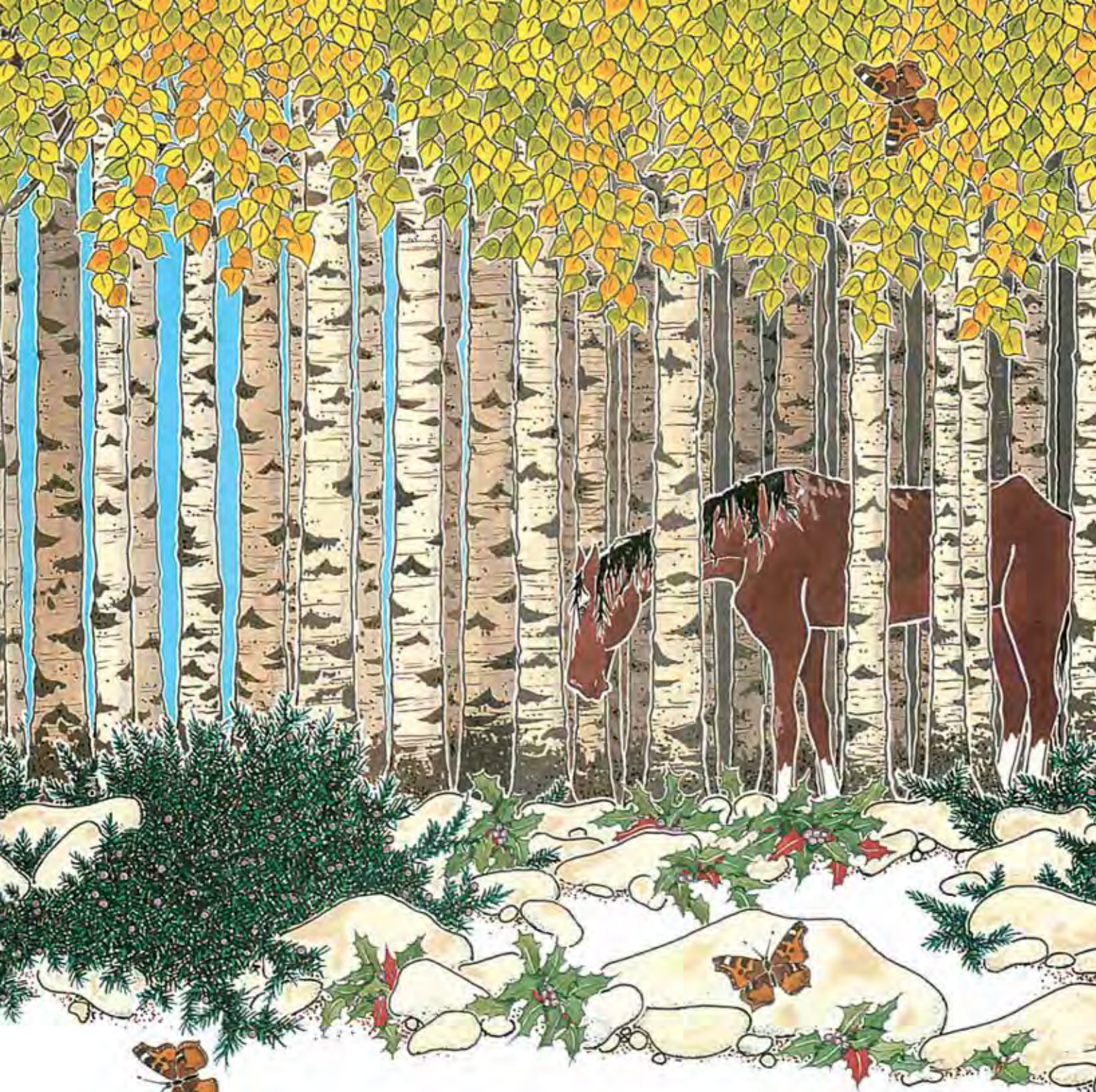
When the people moved from one camping place to another, the old woman and her grandson would stay behind to look for scraps of food, and to pick up discarded clothes. They had no horse. They walked, and what their dogs could not carry, they packed on their own backs. Their life was hard, but they were happy.





One day, as they followed far behind the village, they came upon a sad and sickly worn-out horse standing in the trail. He was terribly thin, with **sores** on his back.

“Grandmother,” the boy said, “nobody wants this poor old horse. If we are kind and look after him, he will get well again. He will help us carry our packs! Then I will be able to join the buffalo hunt, and we will have meat, and fresh skins as well!”



And so they led the old horse, limping along behind them. People laughed: “You’ve got yourself a great warhorse, boy! How will we keep up with you now?” But the boy loved his horse, and looked after him well.



Sequence

What is the first thing the boy does when he finds the horse?



After some days had passed, the boys who were out on the hills looking after the horses spotted enemies approaching on horseback. They quickly drove the herds back to the safety of the camp. The men grabbed their weapons, mounted their fastest horses, and rode out to meet the enemy.

The boy, riding the poor old horse, followed shyly at a distance. But the men pointed at the horse and laughed: “Look! Here’s the one who’ll leave us all behind! Boy, that’s an old good-for-nothing half-starved horse. You’ll be killed. Go back home!”

The boy was ashamed, and rode off to one side where he could not hear their unkind remarks. The horse turned his head and spoke to the boy: “Listen to me! Take me down to the river and cover me with mud.” The boy was alarmed to hear him speak, but without hesitation he rode to the river and daubed mud all over his horse.





Then the horse spoke again: “Don’t take your bow and arrows. Cut a long willow stick instead. Then ride me, as hard as you can, right into the enemy’s **midst** and strike their leader with the stick, and ride back again. Do it four times, and the enemy will be afraid; but do not do it more than four times!”

While the horse was speaking, he was tossing his head, stamping and prancing this way and that, until the boy could hardly hold him back. He **loosened** the reins, and the horse galloped toward the enemy. He was no longer an old sickly worn-out horse! He flew like a hawk, right to where the enemy riders were formed up in line of battle. The boy struck their leader with his willow stick, turned, and rode back to his people with arrows flying past him like angry wasps.

He turned again without stopping, and the horse carried him back to strike another enemy rider. By then his people were cheering loudly. Four times the boy charged back and forth, and each time he hit one of the enemy, just as his horse had told him.



Sequence

Retell the horse’s instructions, using sequence words.









The men watched the boy with **amazement**. Now they, too, felt brave enough to follow his example, and they drove the enemy in full retreat from the village. It was like chasing buffalo.

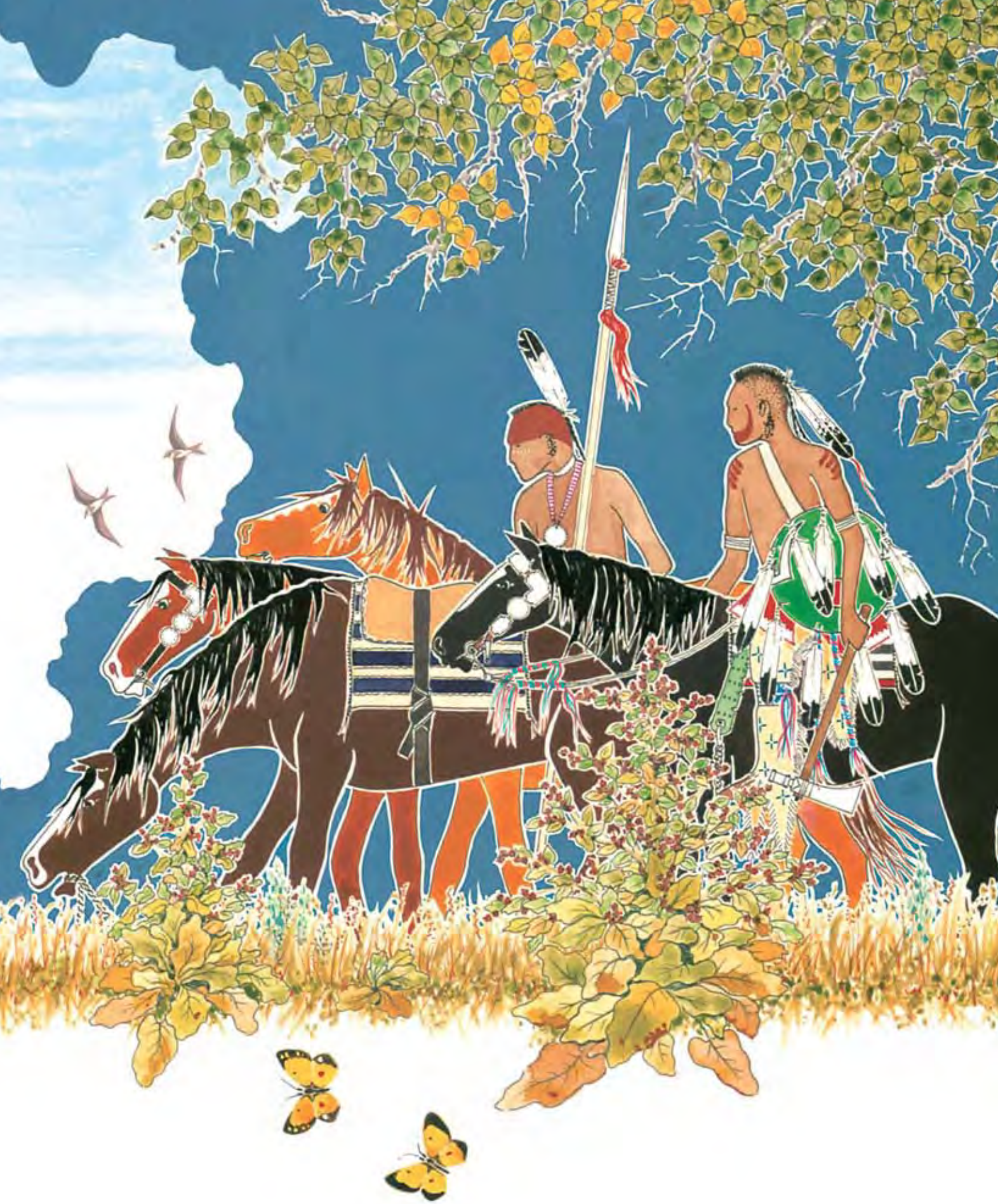
The boy was eager to join the chase. He said to himself: "I have struck four times, and I have not been hurt. I will do it once more." And so, again, he rode after the retreating enemy riders. He whipped another with his stick, but at that very instant his horse was pierced by an arrow, and fell. The horse tried to stand, but he could not.

When the enemy had fled, the men returned and gathered round the boy. His horse was dead. They wanted to touch the horse, for they knew he had been no ordinary one, but a horse with mystic powers.

The leader spoke: "Today this boy has shown that he is braver than all of us. From now on we will call him Piraski Resaru, Boy Chief."

But the boy cried. He was sad for his horse, and angry with himself that he had not done what the **mysterious** horse had told him. He untied the lariat, pulled out the arrow, and carefully wiped away the blood.





He climbed to the top of a nearby hill to mourn. He sat on a rock and pulled his blanket over his head. While he sat there crying, fearsome dark clouds closed across the sky, and it grew dark as if night was falling. Lightning flashed! Thunder shook the hilltop, and it rained with a terrific downpour.

Looking through the downpour, he imagined he saw the dead horse move his legs a little, and that he even tried to lift his head. He wondered if something strange and wonderful was happening. And then he knew it was true: the horse slowly stretched out his front legs, and then stood up!

The boy was a little afraid, but he ran down from the hilltop and clasped his arms round the horse's neck, crying with joy that he was alive again.



The horse spoke softly to him: “Tirawahat, Our Father Above, is good! He has forgiven you. He has let me come back to you.”

The storm passed; the rain stopped. All was still and fresh, and the sun shone brilliantly on his beautiful living horse. “Now take me up into the hills, far away from people,” the horse told him. “Leave me there for four days, and then come for me.”





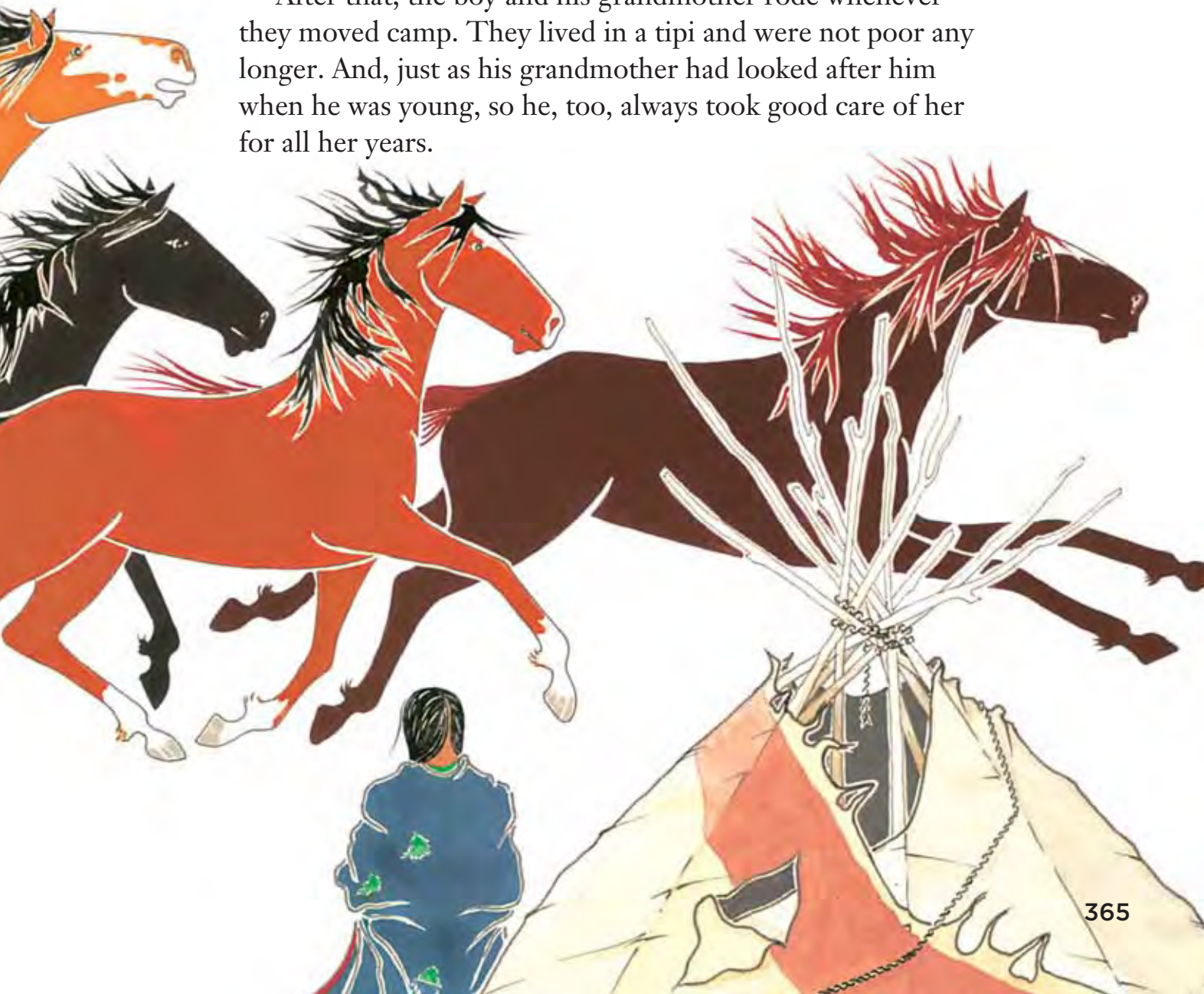
When the four days had passed, Boy Chief left the village and climbed into the pine tree hills.

A horse neighed, and the mysterious horse appeared, followed by a herd of spirited horses. They surrounded Boy Chief, snorting and stamping excitedly, horses of every color—beautiful bays, chestnuts, shiny blacks, whites, grays, and paints.

Mounted on his mysterious horse, Boy Chief drove the horses round and round the village. He stopped in front of his grandmother's shelter.

“Grandmother,” he said, “now you will always have horses! You need never walk again! Choose the ones you want, and give the rest to those who need them most.” And so it was done.

After that, the boy and his grandmother rode whenever they moved camp. They lived in a tipi and were not poor any longer. And, just as his grandmother had looked after him when he was young, so he, too, always took good care of her for all her years.

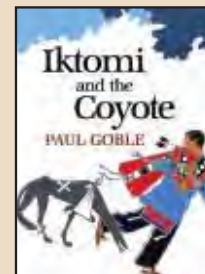


Meet Paul Goble



Paul Goble first became interested in Native Americans when he was a boy growing up in England. He thought their beliefs, art, and tales were wonderful. When Paul grew up, he moved to the western United States to live and learn among the Native Americans. Paul began to write and illustrate books that retold traditional tales. Before writing each book, he carefully researches Native American customs and clothing. He also likes his books to show how people and nature are connected.

Other books by Paul Goble



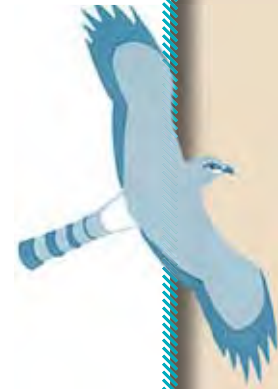
Find out more about Paul Goble at www.macmillanmh.com

Author's Purpose

Legends often have some basis in fact. Why did Paul Goble write *Mystic Horse*? Was it mainly to explain, inform, entertain, or persuade?



Comprehension Check



Summarize

Use your Sequence Chart to help you as you summarize *Mystic Horse*. Tell the events of the story in the order in which they happened.

Event
↓
↓
↓



Think and Compare

1. What **mysterious** change happened to the old horse after the boy covered it with mud? Use story details to support your answer. **Summarize: Sequence**
2. Use story details to examine the relationship between the boy and the horse. Why did they trust each other? **Analyze**
3. Suppose you lost a friendship because you made a foolish mistake. How would you correct your mistake and repair your friendship? **Apply**
4. Based on what you know, how would you explain the boy's actions in battle? **Evaluate**
5. Read "Who Were the Pawnee?" on pages 344-345, and pages 349-350 of *Mystic Horse*. What did you learn about Pawnee life? **Reading/Writing Across Texts**

