

# Comprehension

## Genre

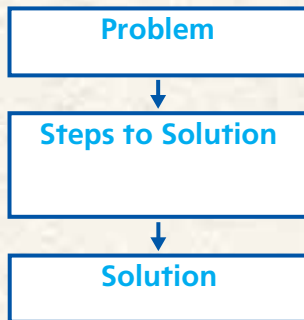
A **Play** is a story that can be acted out.



## Visualize

### Problem and Solution

As you read, use your Problem and Solution Chart.



### Read to Find Out

What is the people's problem? How do they solve it?



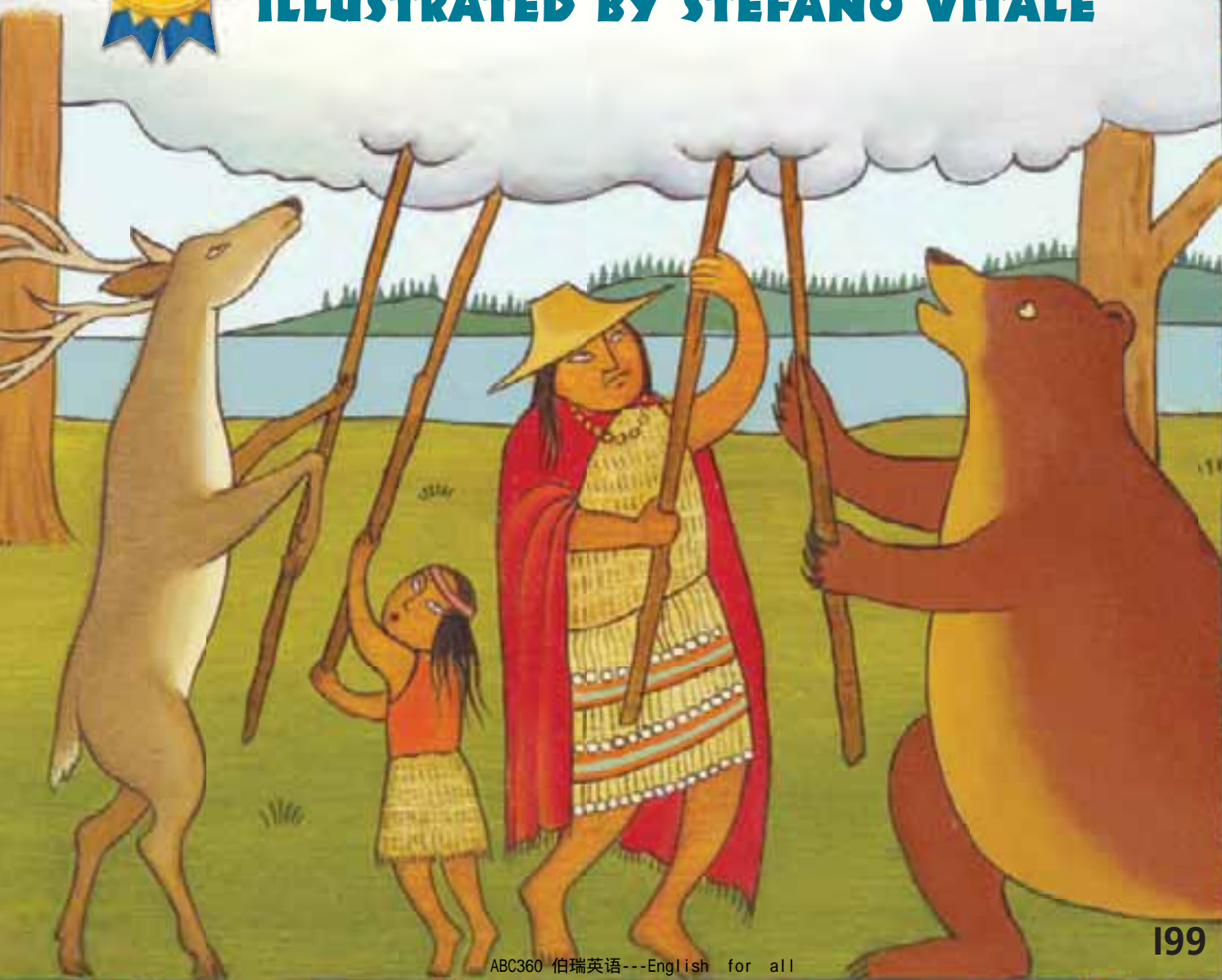
# Pushing Up the sky



Award  
Winning  
Author

**BY JOSEPH BRUCHAC**

**ILLUSTRATED BY STEFANO VITALE**




# SNOHOMISH

The Snohomish people lived in the area of the Northwest that is now known as the state of Washington. They fished in the ocean and **gathered** food from the shore. Their homes and many of the things they used every day, such as bowls and canoe paddles, were carved from the trees.

Like many of the other peoples of the area, they also carved totem poles, which recorded the history and stories of their nation. *Pushing Up the Sky* is a Snohomish story carved into a totem pole in Everett, Washington.



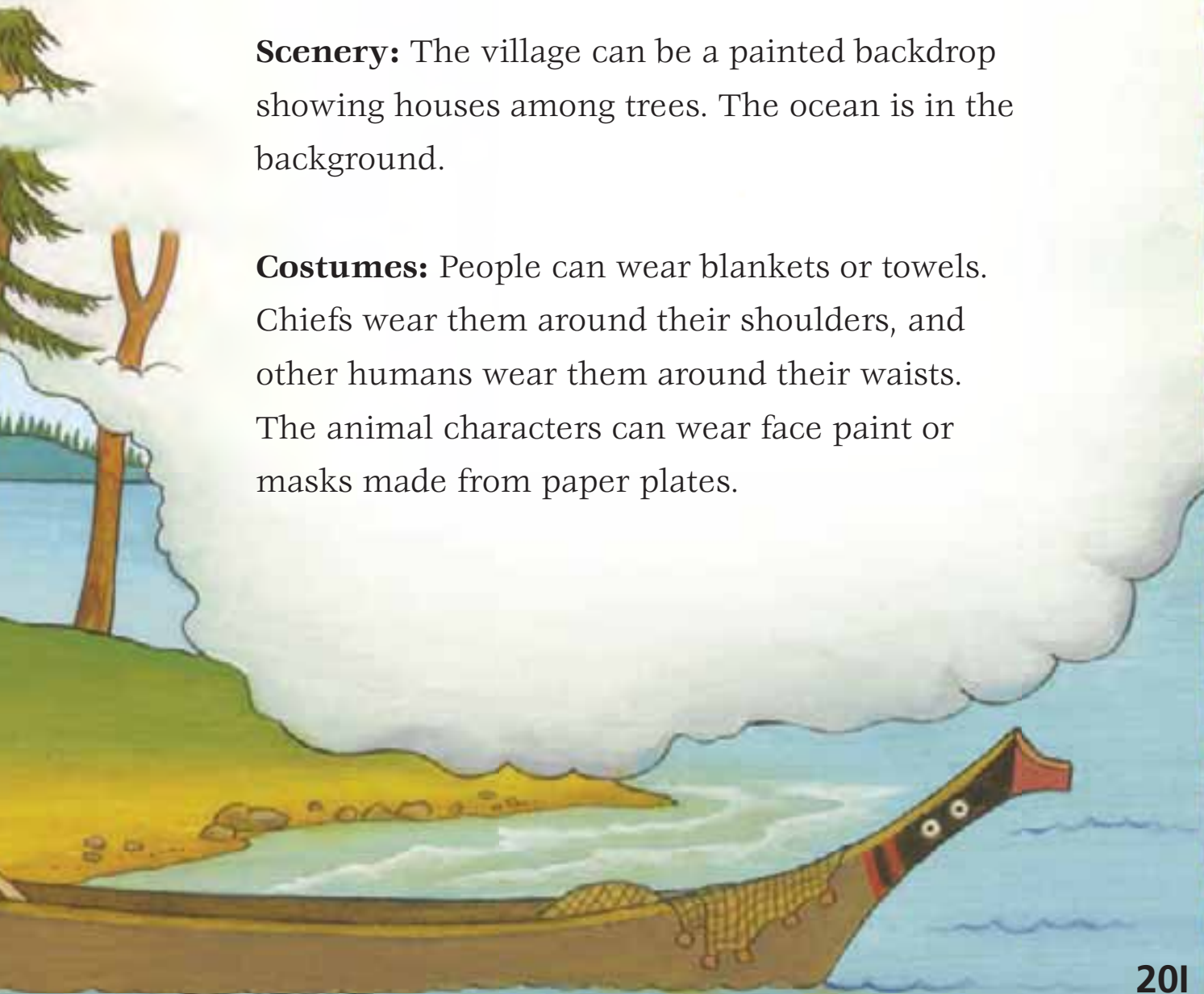


**Speaking Roles:** Narrator, Tall Man, Girl, Mother, Boy, First Chief, Second Chief, Third Chief, Fourth Chief, Fifth Chief, Sixth Chief, and Seventh Chief

**Non-Speaking Roles:** Animals and Birds. They include dog, deer, elk, goat, lion, rabbit, hawk, eagle, and seagull.

**Scenery:** The village can be a painted backdrop showing houses among trees. The ocean is in the background.

**Costumes:** People can wear blankets or towels. Chiefs wear them around their shoulders, and other humans wear them around their waists. The animal characters can wear face paint or masks made from paper plates.



**SCENE 1:** A Village Among Many Tall Trees  
*Tall Man, Girl, Mother, and Boy stand onstage.*

**Narrator:** Long ago the sky was very close to the earth. The sky was so close that some people could jump right into it. Those people who were not good jumpers could climb up the tall fir trees and step into the sky. But people were not happy that the sky was so close to the earth. Tall people kept bumping their heads on the sky. And there were other problems.



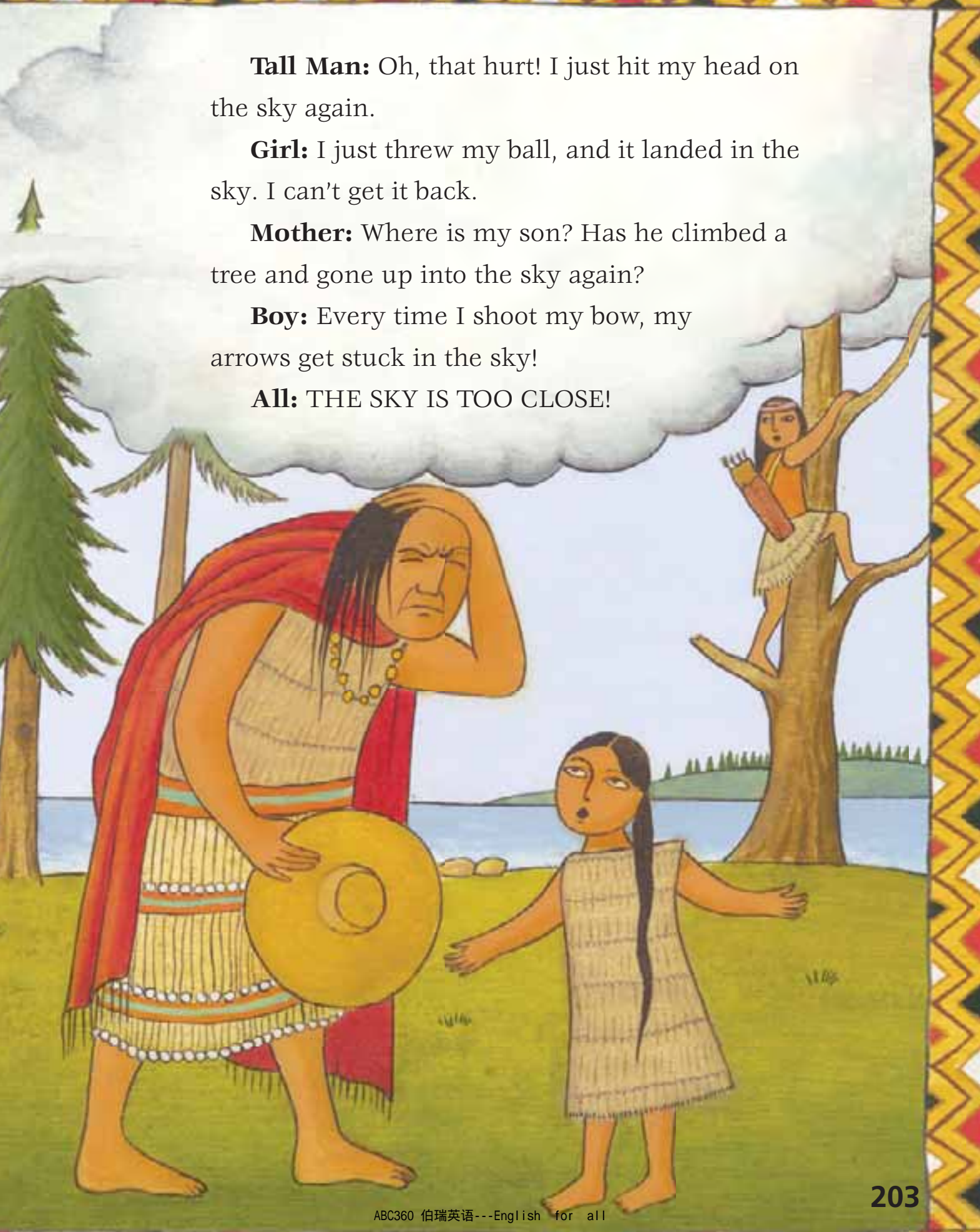
**Tall Man:** Oh, that hurt! I just hit my head on the sky again.

**Girl:** I just threw my ball, and it landed in the sky. I can't get it back.

**Mother:** Where is my son? Has he climbed a tree and gone up into the sky again?

**Boy:** Every time I shoot my bow, my arrows get stuck in the sky!

**All:** THE SKY IS TOO CLOSE!



## **SCENE 2:** The Same Village

*The seven chiefs stand together onstage.*

**Narrator:** So people decided something had to be done. A great meeting was held for all the different nations. The seven wisest chiefs got together to talk about the problem.

**First Chief:** My people all think the sky is too close.

**Second Chief:** A very good job was done of making the world.

**Third Chief:** That is true, but the sky should have been put up higher. My tall son keeps hitting his head on the sky.



**Fourth Chief:** My daughter keeps losing her ball in the sky.

**Fifth Chief:** People keep going up into the sky when they should be staying on the earth to help each other.

**Sixth Chief:** When mothers look for their children, they cannot find them because they are up playing in the sky.

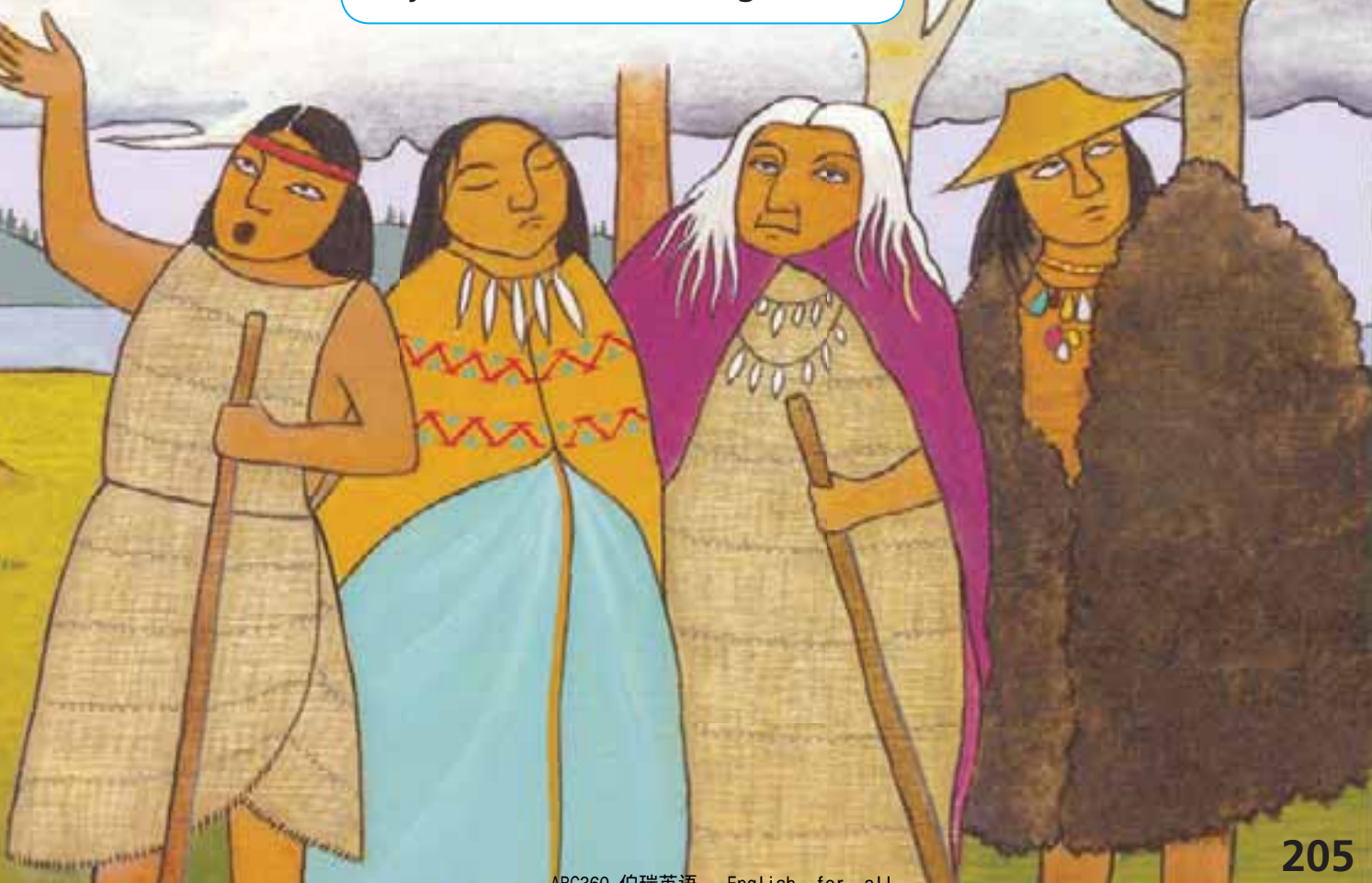
**Seventh Chief:** We are **agreed**, then. The sky is too close.

**All:** WE ARE AGREED.



### Problem and Solution

Why do the chiefs think the sky is too close to the ground?





**Second Chief:** What can we do?

**Seventh Chief:** I have an idea.

Let's push up the sky.

**Third Chief:** The sky is heavy.

**Seventh Chief:** If we all push together,  
we can do it.

**Sixth Chief:** We will ask the birds and  
animals to help. They also do not like it  
that the sky is so close.



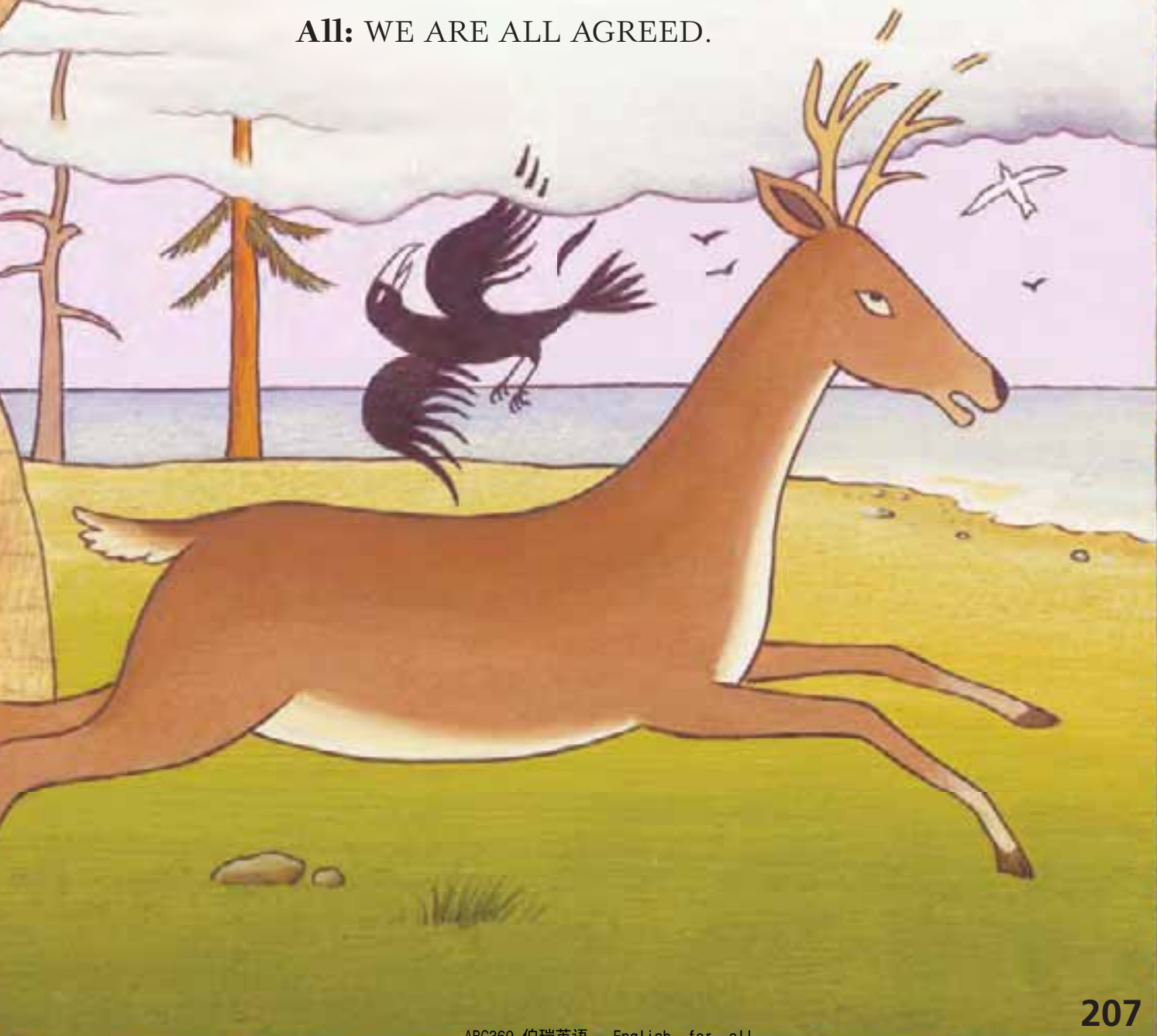
**Second Chief:** The elk are always getting their antlers caught in the sky.

**Fourth Chief:** The birds are always hitting their wings on it.

**First Chief:** We will cut tall trees to make poles. We can use those poles to push up the sky.

**Fifth Chief:** That is a good idea. Are we all agreed?

**All:** WE ARE ALL AGREED.



### **SCENE 3:** The Same Village

All the people, except Seventh Chief, are gathered together. They hold long poles. The Birds and Animals are with them. They all begin pushing **randomly**. They are **jabbing** their poles into the air. (The sky can be imagined as just above them.)

**Girl:** It isn't working!

**Boy:** The sky is still too close.

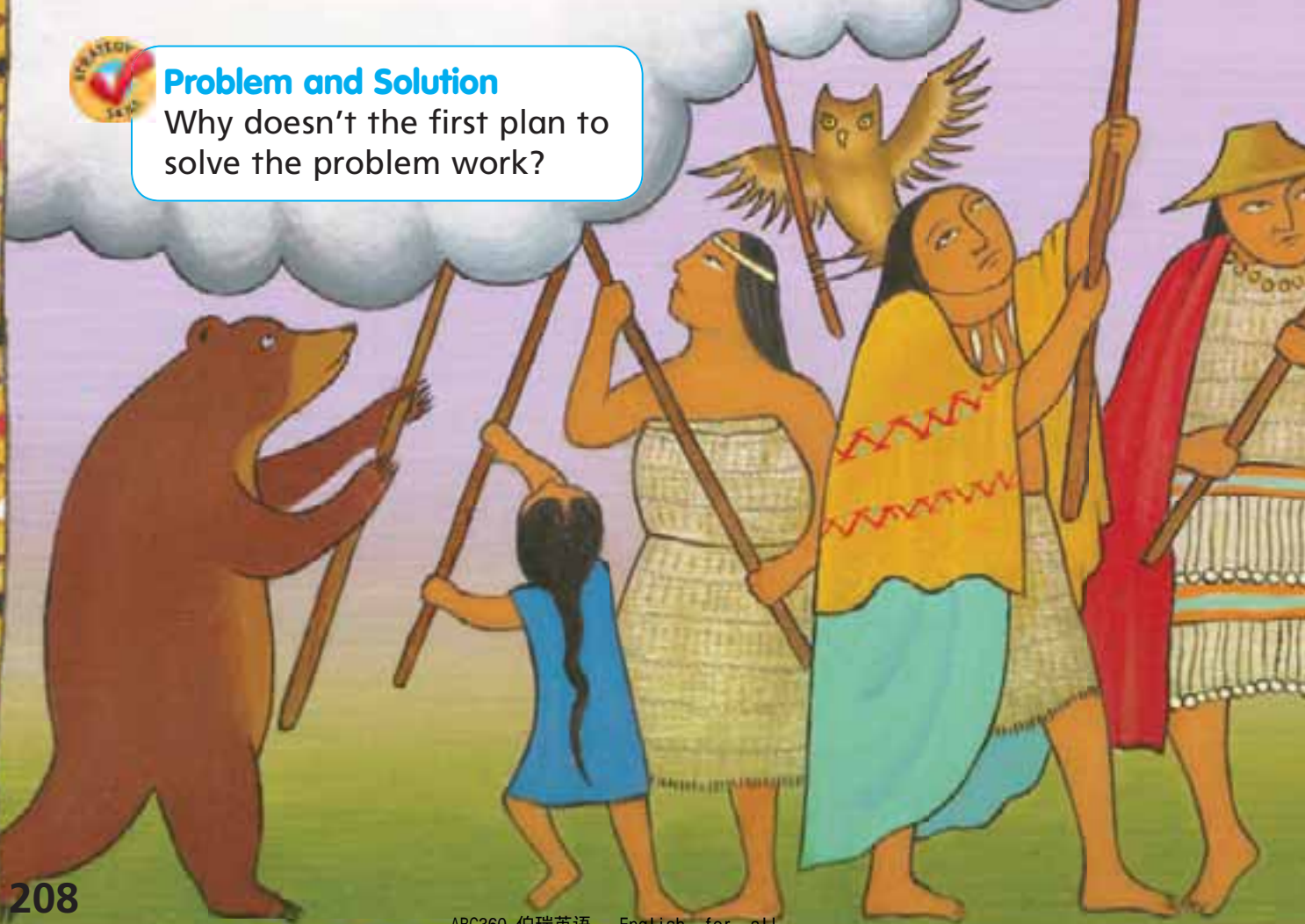
**Fifth Chief:** Where is Seventh Chief? This was his idea!

**Seventh Chief (entering):** Here I am.  
I had to find this long pole.



#### **Problem and Solution**

Why doesn't the first plan to solve the problem work?



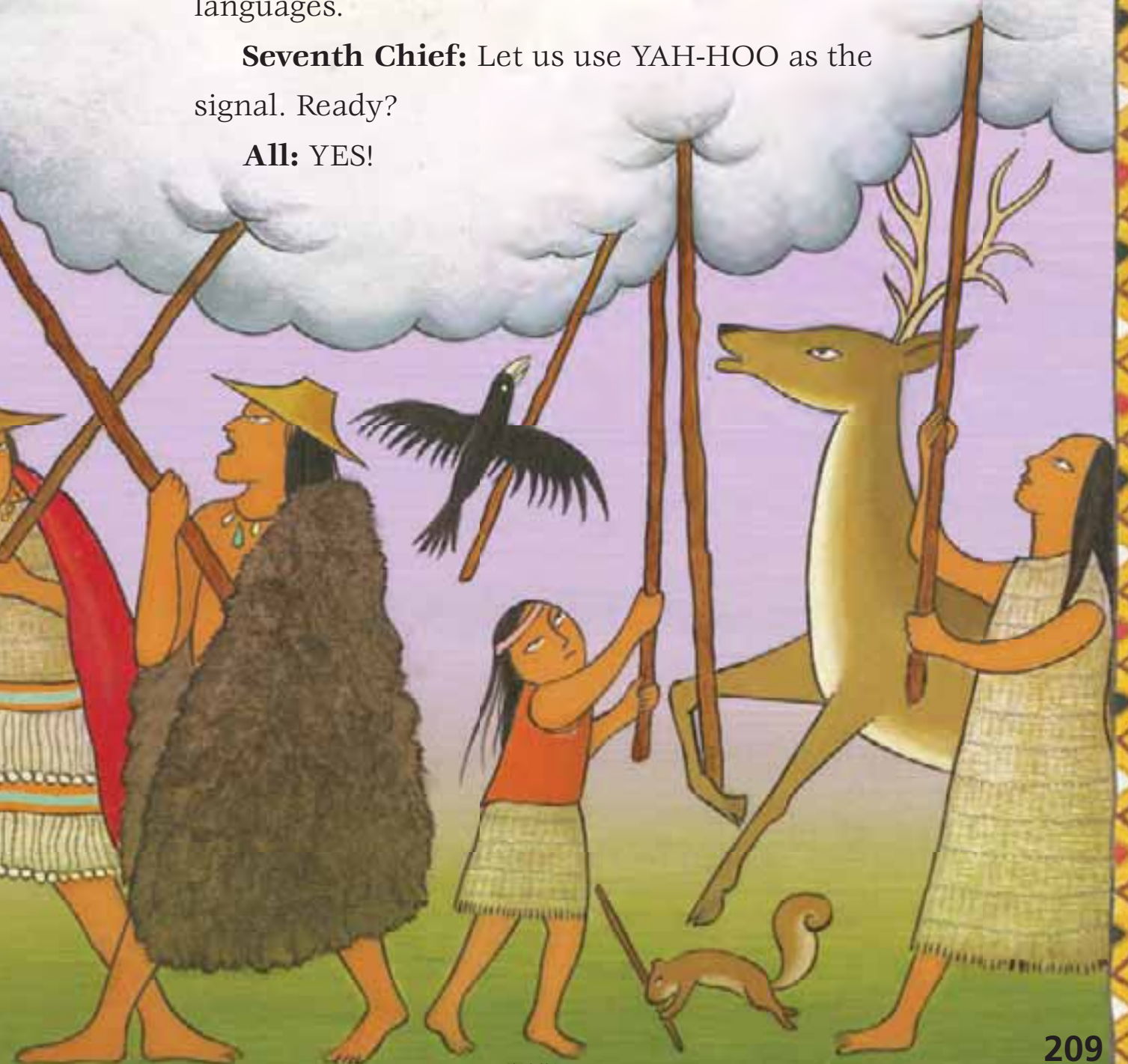
**First Chief:** Your plan is not good! See, we are pushing and the sky is not moving.

**Seventh Chief:** Ah, but I said we must push together.

**Fifth Chief:** We need a **signal** so that all can push together. Our people speak different languages.

**Seventh Chief:** Let us use YAH-HOO as the signal. Ready?

**All:** YES!



**Seventh Chief:** YAH-HOO.

*At the signal everyone pushes together.*

**All:** YAH-HOO!

**Seventh Chief:** YAH-HOO.

*Again everyone pushes together.*

**All:** YAH-HOO!

**Tall Man:** We are doing it!

**Mother:** Now my son won't be able to  
hide in the sky!

**Seventh Chief:** YAH-HOO.

*Again everyone pushes together.*

**All:** YAH-HOO!

**Boy:** It will be too high for my  
arrows to stick into it.

**Seventh Chief:** YAH-HOO.

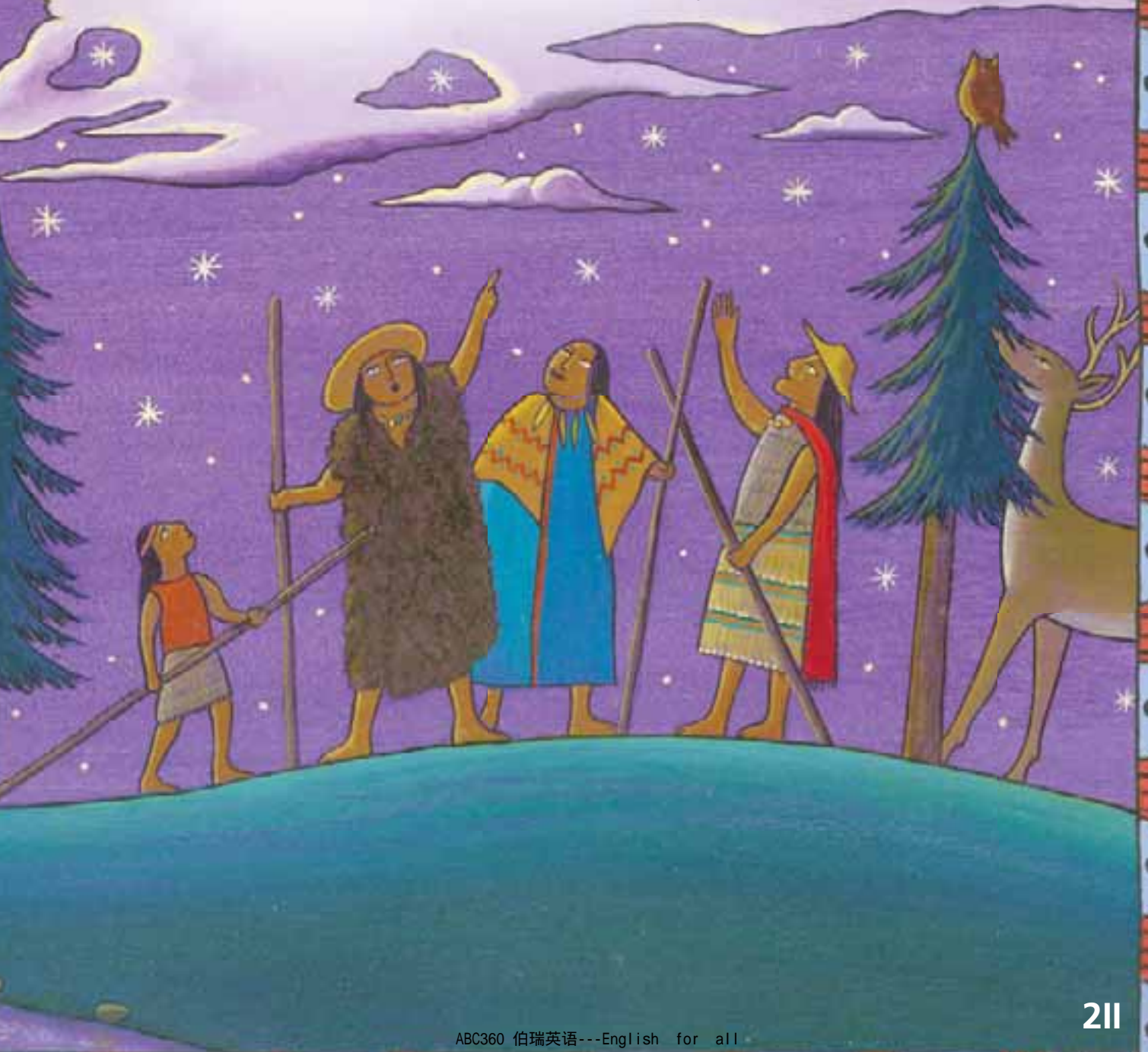
*Again everyone pushes together.*

**All:** YAH-HOOOO!

**First Chief:** We have done it!



**Narrator:** So the sky was pushed up. It was done by everyone working together. That night, when everyone looked overhead, they saw many stars in the sky. The stars were shining through the holes poked into the sky by the poles of everyone who pushed it up higher. No one ever bumped his head on the sky again. And those stars are there to this day.



# MEET THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

**J**oseph Bruchac writes stories, plays, poems, and articles for children and adults. He is also a storyteller and performs around the country. Joseph is an Abenaki Native American. All of his work centers on keeping alive the Abenaki culture and that of other Native American peoples.



**S**tefano Vitale grew up in Italy, where he studied art. Stefano especially likes to create pictures on wood. "There is an ancient quality to wood. It has wisdom and age," he says.

**Other books** written by Joseph Bruchac



Find out more about  
Joseph Bruchac at  
[www.macmillanmh.com](http://www.macmillanmh.com)

## Author's Purpose

Joseph Bruchac wrote about working together to entertain readers. Think about an activity that you do with others. Write about how each person is important.



## Comprehension Check



### Retell the Story

Use the Retelling Cards to retell the story.



Retelling Cards

### Think and Compare



1. What is the problem in this play? How is the problem solved? **Visualize: Problem and Solution**

2. Reread pages 208–209. Why is it important for the people to have a **signal** to push up the sky? **Analyze**

3. Have you ever worked with your friends or classmates to solve a problem? How did you do it? **Apply**

4. What did you learn from this play about working with others? **Synthesize**

5. How is this play like “Why Sun and Moon Live in the Sky” on pages 196–197? **Reading/Writing Across Texts**

