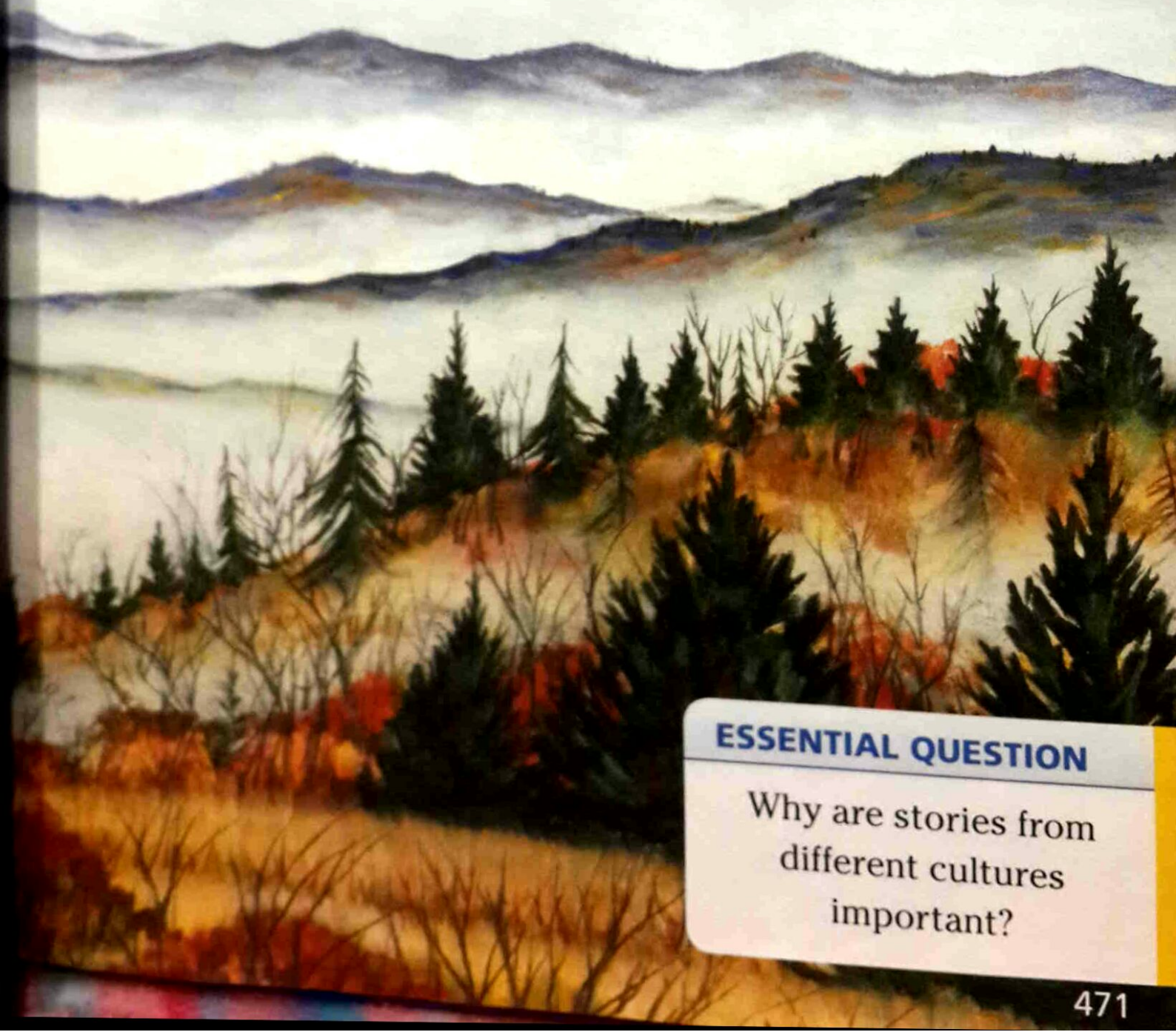


Yonder Mountain

A Cherokee Legend

by Robert H. Bushyhead
illustrated by Kristina Rodanas



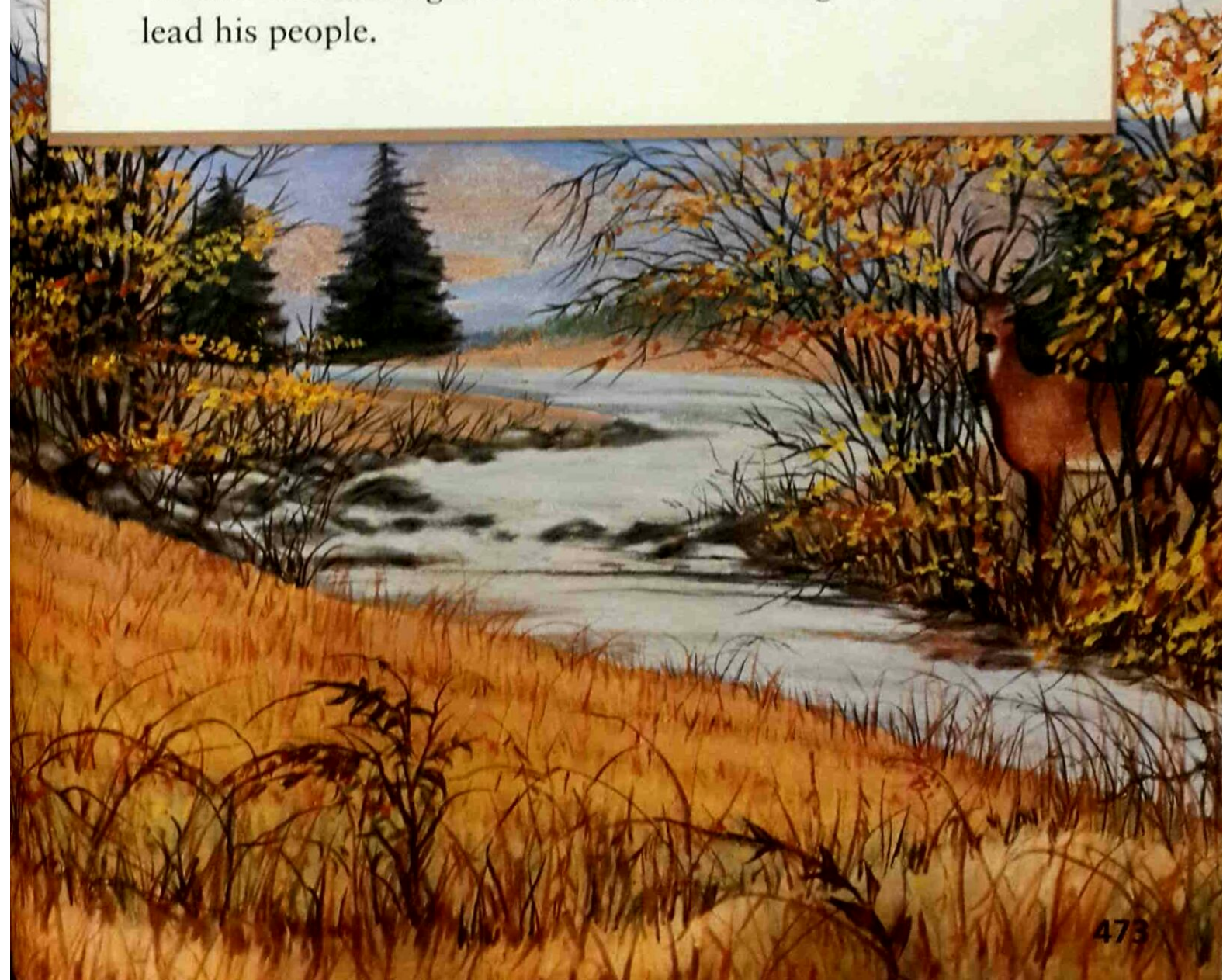
ESSENTIAL QUESTION

Why are stories from different cultures important?



Chief Sky has grown too old to lead his people, and he's looking for someone to replace him. What is he looking for in a new chief? Find out by reading this Cherokee legend.

Once in the land of the Cherokee people, there lived a beloved chief called Sky. Chief Sky had seen many summers and winters. He had led his people through long seasons of peace. He had seen their warriors go through great battles with enemies. But now his step was slow, and his hand trembled on the bow. He could no longer spot brother deer among the trees. He was no longer able to lead his people.



One day in the season of falling leaves, the chief called three young men to him and said, "One of you will take my place and become chief and lead our people. But first, I must put you to the test."

Chief Sky turned slowly, looking into the distance. "Do you see yonder mountain?"



The first young man called Black Bear quickly started up the side of the mountain. After the sun reached the middle of the day, Black Bear came to a wide place in the trail where he stopped to rest. He leaned his head upon a rock, and his eyes grew heavy. Just as his eyes were closing, he caught sight of a thousand lights twinkling in the sun. Black Bear sat up straight and saw stones of great beauty lining each side of the trail. They sparkled and glowed in the sunlight. Black Bear **examined** a stone, carefully turning it over and over in his hand and watching the sun dance on each surface. "If my people had these stones, they would never be hungry again," he said. "We could trade them for food and our lives would be better."





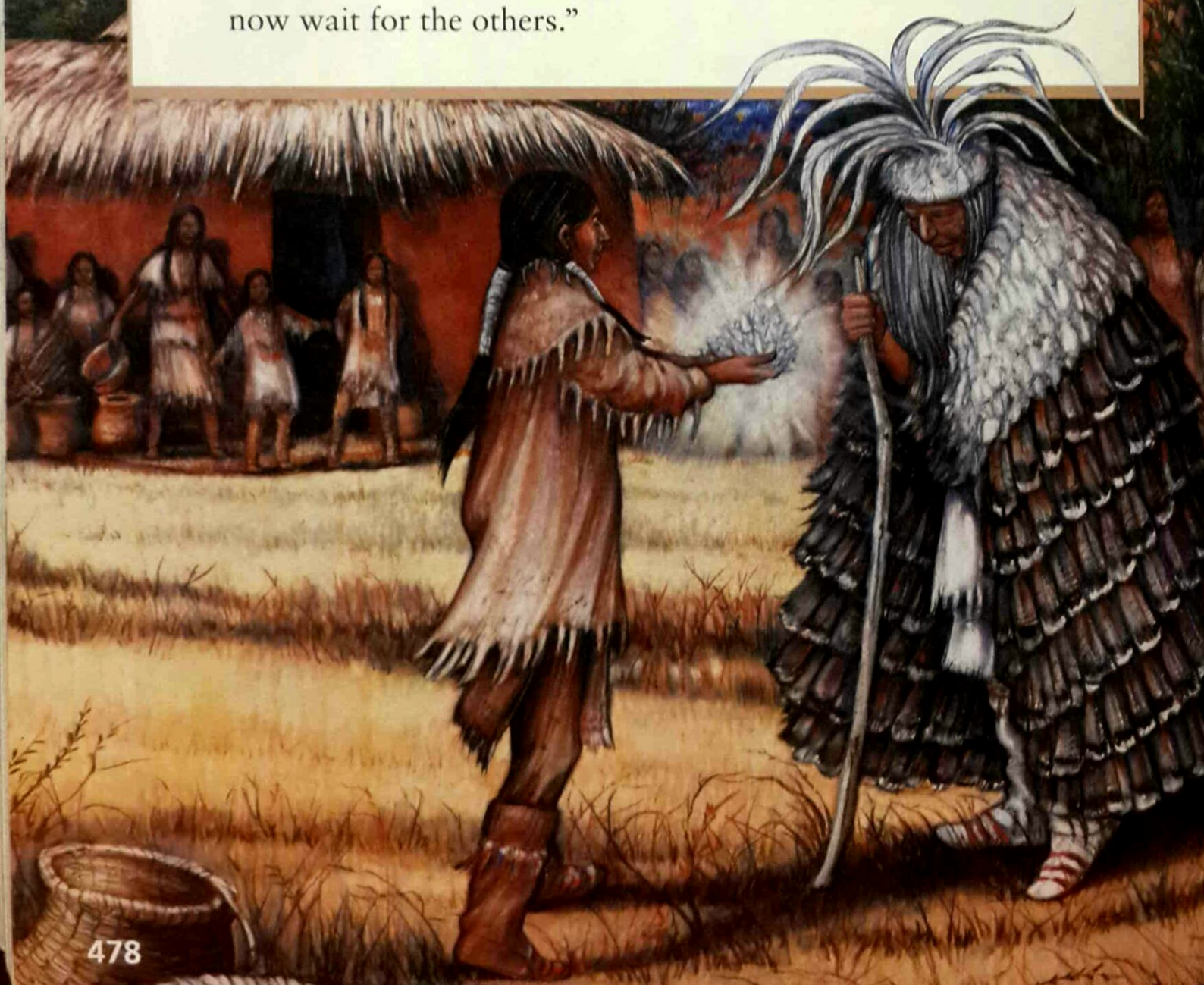
The three young men followed the gaze of their chief and saw a great mountain rising out of the mist in the distance. "Yes," they answered. "We see the mountain."

Chief Sky pointed toward the highest peak. "I want you to go to the mountaintop. Bring back to me what you find there."



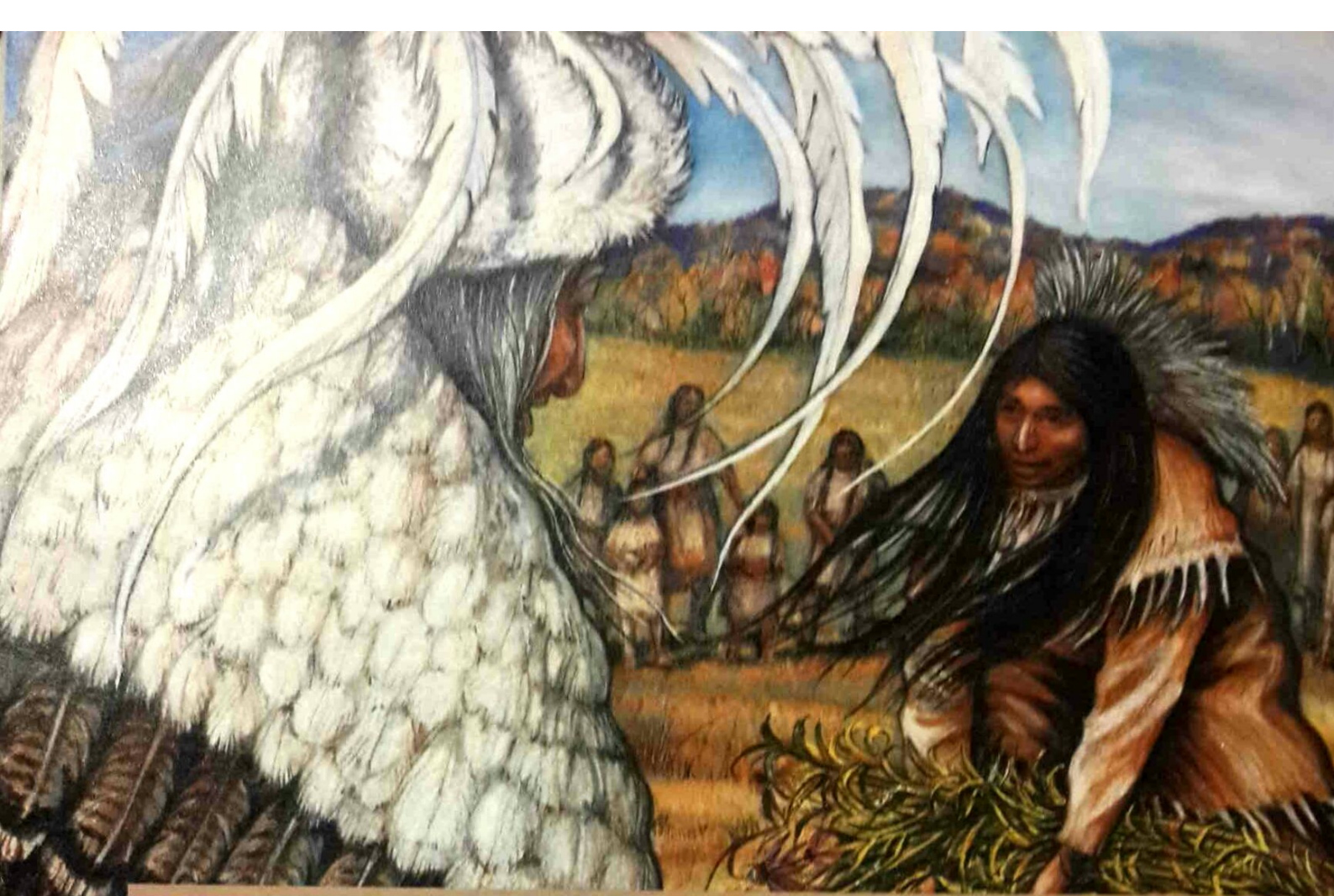
Black Bear gathered many sparkling stones and ran down the mountain and back to his village. The people saw him coming and lined the path as he entered the village. The children pointed to the sparkling stones and said, “See the pretty stones Black Bear has found.” Black Bear handed the stones to Chief Sky and said, “My chief, look what I have found—beautiful stones! We can trade them for food and will never go hungry. We will be safe through many winters.”

The chief smiled **fondly** upon the young man and said, “You have done well, my son. You have done well. Let us now wait for the others.”



The second young man called Gray Wolf climbed the mountain and went past the place of the sparkling stones. He climbed higher and higher. The trail became **steep** and **rugged**. Finally, he came to an open place where he rested beside the trail. He picked an herb, looking closely at its pointed leaves and long roots. "These are the healing plants of our medicine man," he said. "If my people have these herbs and roots, they will no longer be sick and suffer. We could be healed with these plants." Gray Wolf gathered one of each of the plants and hurried down the mountain.





The people saw him coming and lined the pathway. The children waved and the elders said, “See all the herbs Gray Wolf has found. We will never be sick again!”

Gray Wolf ran to his chief and spread the plants before him. “Look, my chief, what I have found. We no longer need to suffer. I have found all kinds of herbs, and we can be healed.”

The old chief smiled fondly on Gray Wolf and said, “You have done well, my son. You have done well. Now let us wait for Soaring Eagle, our last young man.”

They waited. Days went by and Soaring Eagle did not return. Still the village waited. After six days, the people began to murmur. "Something must have happened to Soaring Eagle. Why wait any longer?" But Chief Sky said to his people, "We will wait one day longer." And so they waited.

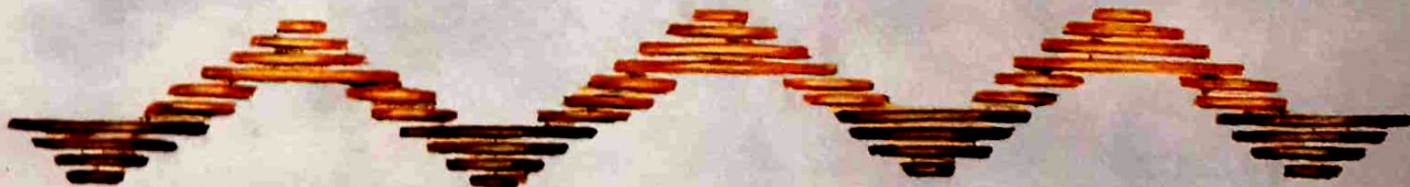
On the seventh day, as the sun cast its long shadow over the village, the people saw Soaring Eagle coming. He stumbled with bleeding feet. His clothes were ripped and torn. He held nothing in his hands.

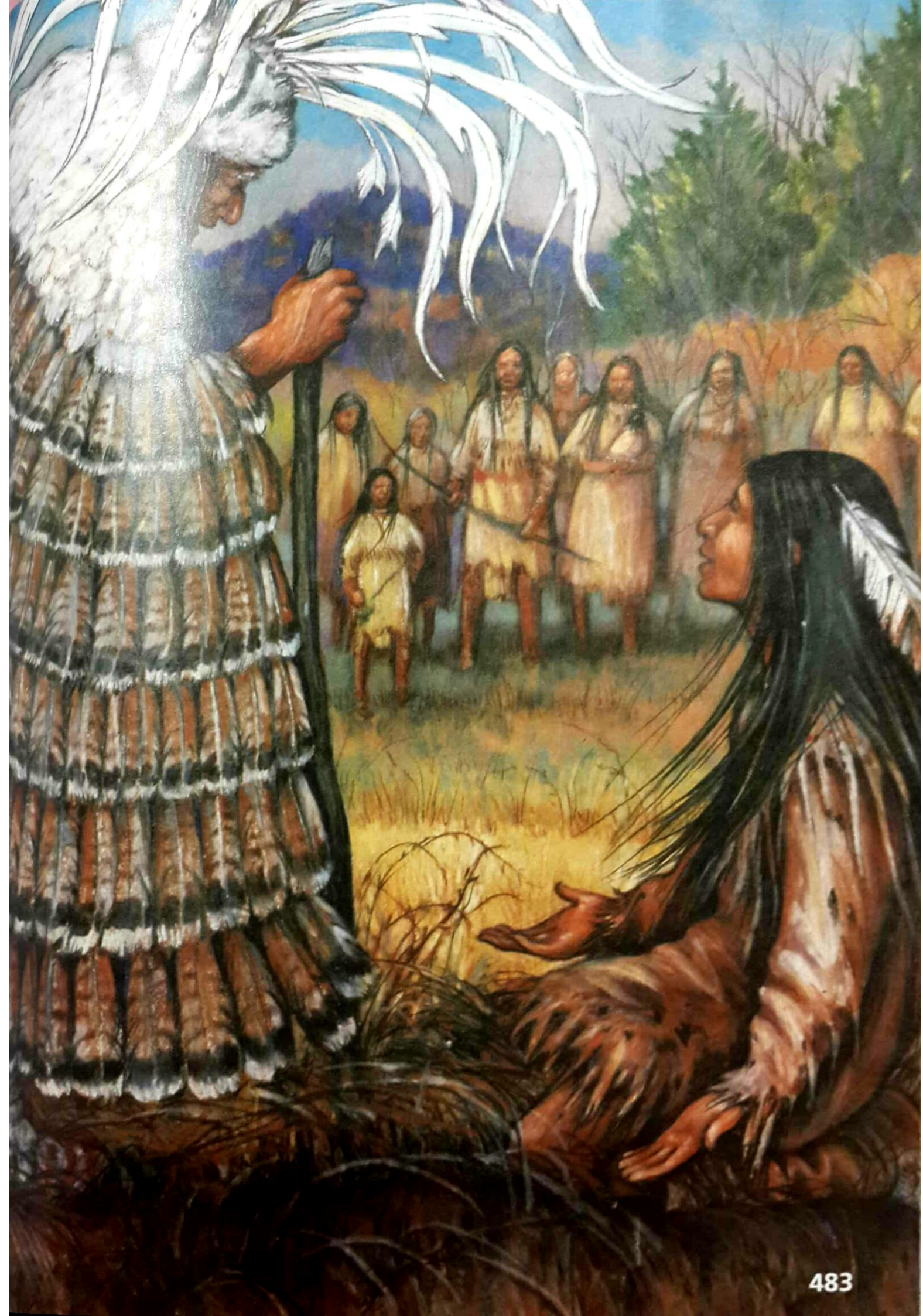


The people were quiet as Soaring Eagle fell at the feet of his chief. Soaring Eagle spoke softly to Chief Sky. "I went to the top of the mountain, my chief. But I bring back nothing in my hands. I passed a place where there were sparkling stones, but I remembered you said go to the top of the mountain. I passed a place where all sorts of herbs grew, but I remembered your words. The path was rough. There were great cliffs and sharp rocks. I have nothing in my hands to show you, but I bring back a story from the top of the mountain."

ANALYZE THE TEXT

Compare and Contrast How are the journeys of the three young men the same? How are they different? Compare and contrast how each man's actions affect the story's events.

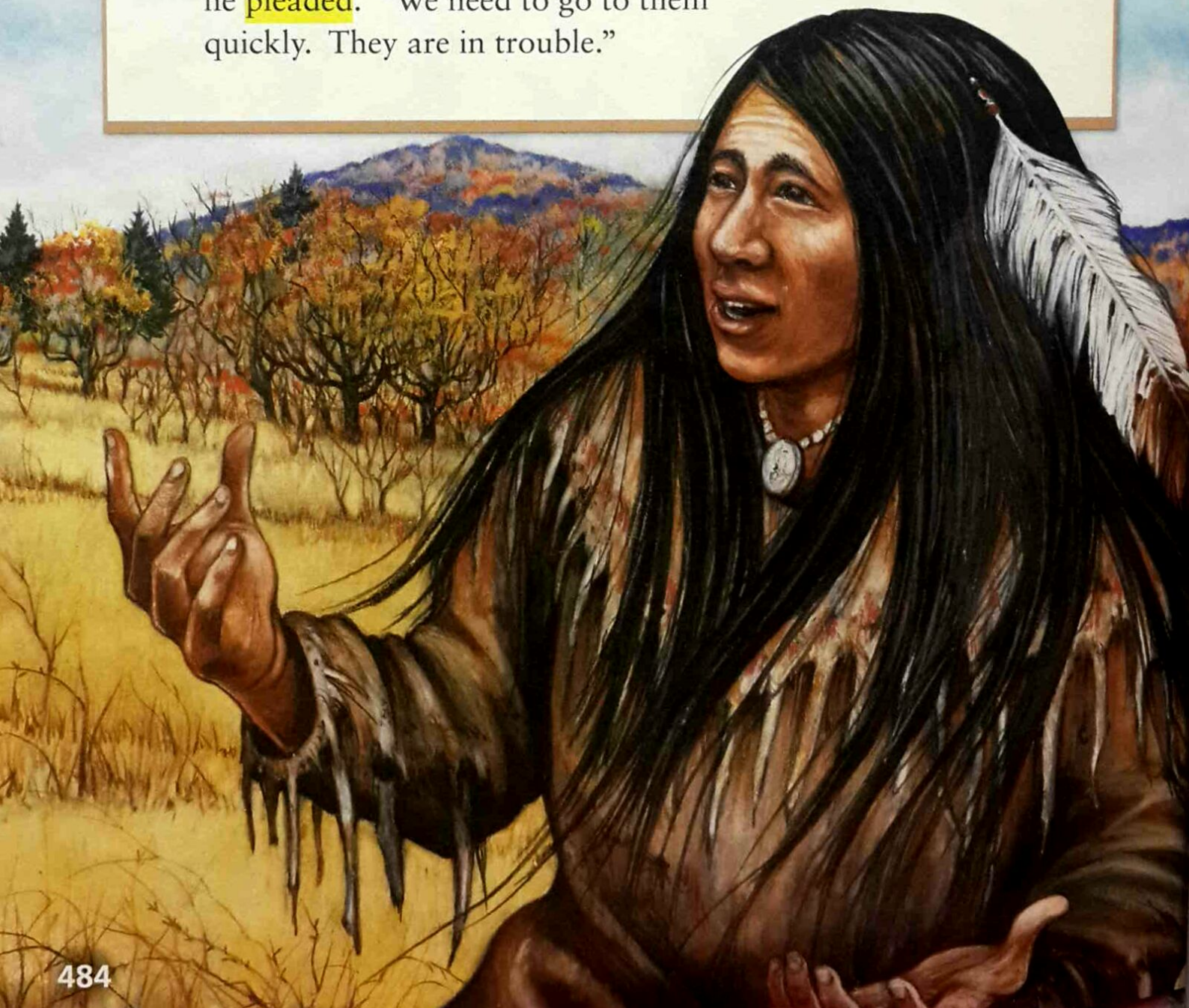




The old chief put his hand on the shoulder of the young man. "Tell us your story, my son."

Soaring Eagle began. "As I stood on yonder mountain and looked across the valley and beyond the farthest mountain, I saw a smoke signal. It was a signal calling for help. The signal said 'We are dying,' and then 'Come and help us.'"

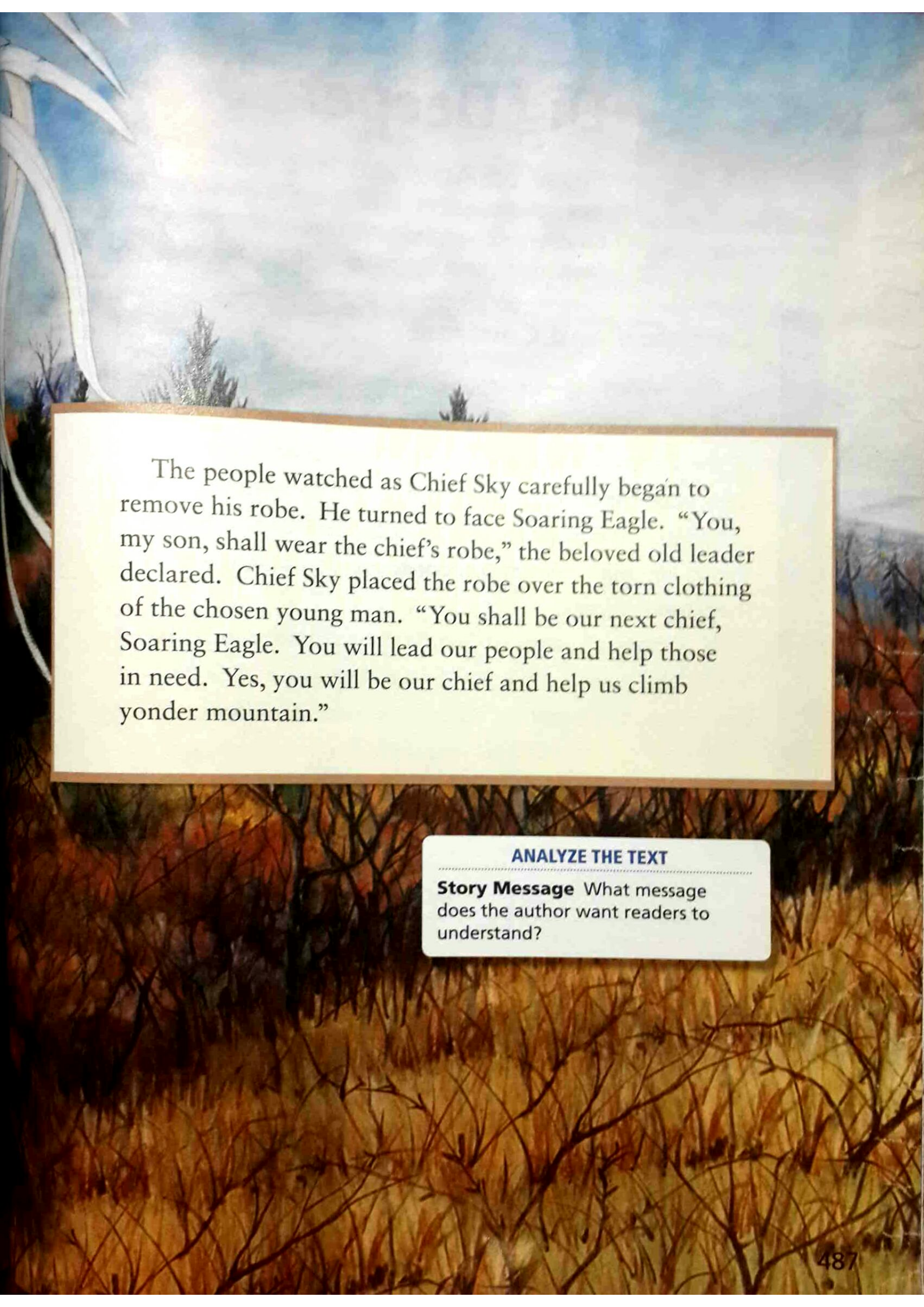
Soaring Eagle rose to his feet. "Chief Sky," he **pleaded**. "We need to go to them quickly. They are in trouble."



Chief Sky stood straight before his people and the three young men. **Pausing** for a time, he lifted his eyes to the mountains and watched the **mist** settle on the peaks. He then turned to his people and spoke. “We need a leader who has climbed to the top of the mountain. We need one who has seen beyond the mountain to other people who are in need.”







The people watched as Chief Sky carefully began to remove his robe. He turned to face Soaring Eagle. "You, my son, shall wear the chief's robe," the beloved old leader declared. Chief Sky placed the robe over the torn clothing of the chosen young man. "You shall be our next chief, Soaring Eagle. You will lead our people and help those in need. Yes, you will be our chief and help us climb yonder mountain."

ANALYZE THE TEXT

Story Message What message does the author want readers to understand?