

Lila added a handful of dry moss. Fred blew again. The fire seemed to breathe in, and then exhaled a cough of flames. Max whooped. Lila held out a sheaf of twigs. The fire caught at them, made five burning fingers, then ate them whole. It belched upwards.

‘More!’ said Max. He was dancing in a tight circle, slapping at his ribs. ‘Feed it more!’

Fred added a handful of bone-dry leaves, and another and another. The fire made a noise like an idea being born, a crackle that sounded like hope, and sent up a column of flames.

1. Pick out any words or phrases that describe the fire as if it were a person.
2. Pick out any words or phrases that show how the fire represents the characters’ emotions.

Katherine Rundell uses a technique in this extract called personification. Choose water, fire or shelter. Imagine that your chosen thing is a person. Think about the following questions:

1. What sort of personality would it have?
2. How would it behave?
3. What would it say?
4. How would people feel about it?

He gestured to the trees around them, which were thinner than those circling the city and a lighter shade of green.

“We’ll get wood here, for the trap. See this?” He pointed to a branch as thick as Fred’s wrist.

“Cut me two branches like that. They should be as straight as possible. That’s a good tree over there. Here.” He handed Fred the machete and began stripping down a vine into a thin rope.

The explorer selected a springy sapling tree, four feet tall, its trunk barely thicker than Fred’s thumb. “Tie the rope round the tip of the sapling,” he said.

Fred did so while the explorer searched around the ground and located a Y-shaped branch the size of a catapult.

“Good. Hand me the machete.” He held out his hand, a surgeon mid-operation. Carefully, using the handle of the machete, he knocked the Y-shaped branch into the ground near the sapling so that only the Y was showing.

“Now, tie the other end of the rope around your green branch-in the middle, yes - but leave the end free. The end needs to be a noose - a loop knot. We’re building a spring snare. “

Fumbling, Fred followed the man’s instructions. He had practised knot-tying in his bedroom. The explorer nodded approval and Fred felt a surge of pride prick in his fingers.

“Now, watch.” The man pulled down the rope and the sapling bent forward as if saluting. He wedged the green branch into the Y, the rope stretched taut.

“The slightest movement will make the green branch spring free. So an animal puts its foot in the noose, the sapling springs up, the slipknot tightens - and you have dinner. “

1. Why does the explorer want to show Fred how to set a trap?
2. Predict what the trap might catch.
3. What is a sapling?
4. Why does the sapling need to be springy?
5. Why was Fred proud of himself?
6. Why is the explorer compared to a surgeon?