

The Failed Potion



Purple smoke filled the cave, followed by a disgusting smell. Something had gone wrong. Badly wrong. As Witch Wizzlekin peered into the enormous, black cauldron her eyes began to water unpleasantly. A nasty, yellow sludge sizzled at the bottom of the cauldron. Her face turned grey and she sat down heavily on a wobbly stool.

'The spell!' she gasped in horror, clasping her head in her hands, 'it's ruined!' Frantically she waved her wand. Nothing happened. 'Oh no! What do I do now?' Her reputation as a brilliant young witch depended on that spell. It was vital that it worked. She'd spent days of careful work on it only to have this happen.

'Blast!' she thought angrily. 'What a waste of perfectly good ingredients.' She tried not to think about the expensive piece of unicorn horn and the toadstool powder. And as for the fairy tears ... Witch Wizzlekin almost started to cry herself as she thought of the fairy tears. They were virtually irreplaceable.

She waved her wand at the cauldron and muttered a few magic words. Instantly the cave filled with the smell of sweet roses and cut grass, the smoke vanished, and the cauldron gleamed as good as new. Witch Wizzlekin sighed, and collapsed wearily into her enormous armchair by the fire. The situation looked utterly hopeless. Instead of impressing all her colleagues at the magicians' conference tomorrow, the witches would all just laugh at her. Worse, her name would be struck from the Grand Witch's Almanac of Eminent Witches. It was a hideous prospect.

'I'll have to run away,' she thought desperately. 'I'll have to hide where no one will find me until this mess has sorted itself out!' The trouble was ... where?

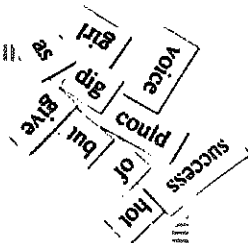


Questions

Answer the following questions with a full sentence:

1. Why is Witch Wizzlekin upset?
2. Which ruined ingredients is the witch especially upset about?
3. Will it be easy or difficult to replace these ingredients?
4. At the start of the passage, what filled the cave?
5. Where had the witch planned to be the next morning?
6. Does she still plan to go there, now her potion has failed?
7. How does the witch clean up the mess in her cave?
8. The passage has many short, punchy sentences. Why do you think this is and what effect does this create for the reader?
9. What do you notice about the ending? Why do you think the writer did this?

Word work



1. Give the meaning of the following words:

cauldron

irreplaceable

collapsed

conference

colleague

hideous

2. Rewrite this part of the passage using words of your own which mean the same as the ones in *italics*.

As Witch Wizzlekin *peered* into the *enormous*, black cauldron her eyes began to water unpleasantly. A *nasty*, yellow *sludge* sizzled at the bottom of the cauldron.

3. What do you think it means to have her name struck from the Grand Witch's Almanac?
4. What do you think an almanac is?

Extension work

1. Imagine you are Witch Wizzlekin. What was this potion going to do?
2. List the other ingredients in the potion, apart from unicorn horn, toadstool powder and fairy tears.
3. If you were the witch, now that your potion is ruined, what would you do next?
4. Do you think Witch Wizzlekin should go to the conference anyway? Why?
5. Write a story about how the witch got the unicorn horn, the toadstool powder or the fairy tears.
6. Imagine you and the other witches are going to vote in a new Grand Witch. What type of person would you choose?

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