

Reading comprehension: The Tinder Box by Hans Christian Anderson

A soldier came marching along the high road: "Left, right—left, right." He had his knapsack on his back, and a sword at his side; he had been to the wars, and was now returning home.

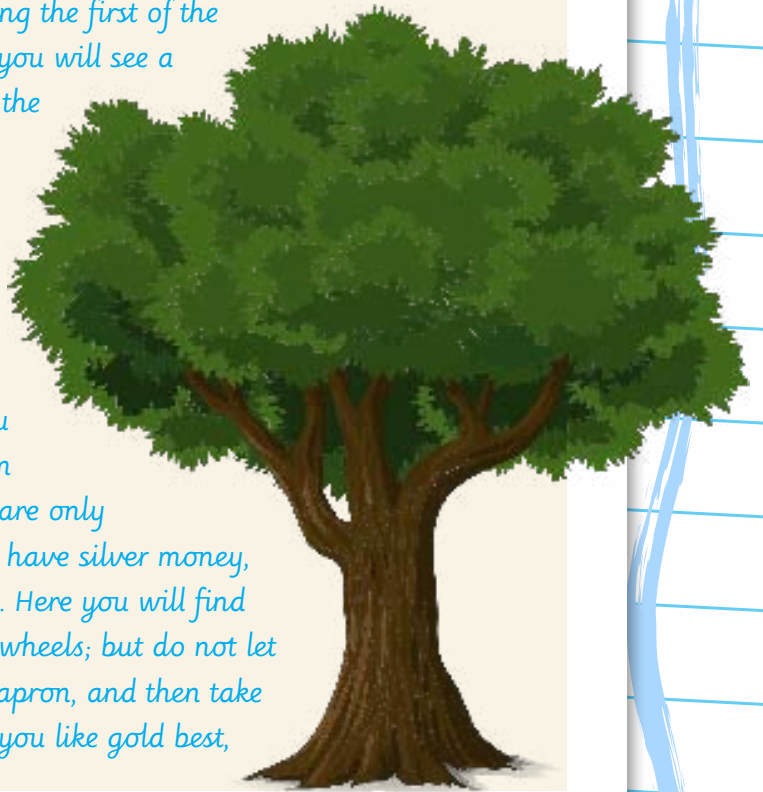
As he walked on, he met a very frightful-looking old witch in the road. Her under-lip hung quite down on her breast, and she stopped and said, "Good evening, soldier; you have a very fine sword, and a large knapsack, and you are a real soldier; so you shall have as much money as ever you like."

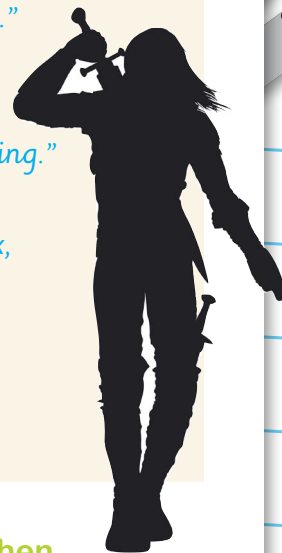
"Thank you, old witch," said the soldier.

"Do you see that large tree?" said the witch, pointing to a tree which stood beside them. "Well, it is quite hollow inside, and you must climb to the top, when you will see a hole, through which you can let yourself down into the tree to a great depth. I will tie a rope round your body, so that I can pull you up again when you call out to me."

"But what am I to do, down there in the tree?" asked the soldier.

"Get money," she replied; "for you must know that when you reach the ground under the tree, you will find yourself in a large hall, lighted up by three hundred lamps; you will then see three doors, which can be easily opened, for the keys are in all the locks. On entering the first of the chambers, to which these doors lead, you will see a large chest, standing in the middle of the floor, and upon it a dog seated, with a pair of eyes as large as teacups. But you need not be at all afraid of him; I will give you my blue checked apron, which you must spread upon the floor, and then boldly seize hold of the dog, and place him upon it. You can then open the chest, and take from it as many pence as you please, they are only copper pence; but if you would rather have silver money, you must go into the second chamber. Here you will find another dog, with eyes as big as mill-wheels; but do not let that trouble you. Place him upon my apron, and then take what money you please. If, however, you like gold best,





enter the third chamber, where there is another chest full of it. The dog who sits on this chest is very dreadful; his eyes are as big as a tower, but do not mind him. If he also is placed upon my apron, he cannot hurt you, and you may take from the chest what gold you will."

"This is not a bad story," said the soldier; "but what am I to give you, you old witch? For, of course, you do not mean to tell me all this for nothing."

"No," said the witch; "but I do not ask for a single penny. Only promise to bring me an old tinder-box, which my grandmother left behind the last time she went down there."

"Very well; I promise. Now tie the rope round my body."

1. Why might the soldier have been scared of the witch when he first saw her?

2. How is the soldier going to get out from the tree after he has carried out the task?

3. Why do you think the witch chooses a soldier to carry out the task, rather than any other person?

4. When the witch is explaining what the soldier will find in the tree, she uses three similes. Write them here:

5. What will both the witch and the soldier gain once the soldier carries out the task?

6. There is an adverb in the witch's description of the soldier's task. Write it here:



Answers: 1) She was 'frightful-looking' / Her lip hung down on her breast. 2) The witch will tie a rope around his waist and pull him out. 3) Example answers: He has a sword, therefore he will be able to defend himself. OR She thinks a soldier will be brave and therefore more likely to carry out the task. 4) a) The first dog has eyes as big as teacups. b) The second dog has eyes as big as mill-wheels. c) The third dog has eyes as big as a tower. 5) The witch will get a tinder-box and the soldier will get the money. 6) boldly