

Early★Reader

The Hopping Hex

Martha is a witch who has trouble
with her powers; her spells always
go wrong! How will she fix them?

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By Jenny Jinks



Illustrated by
Ariana
Padron

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'The Hopping Hex'

An original concept by Jenny Jinks

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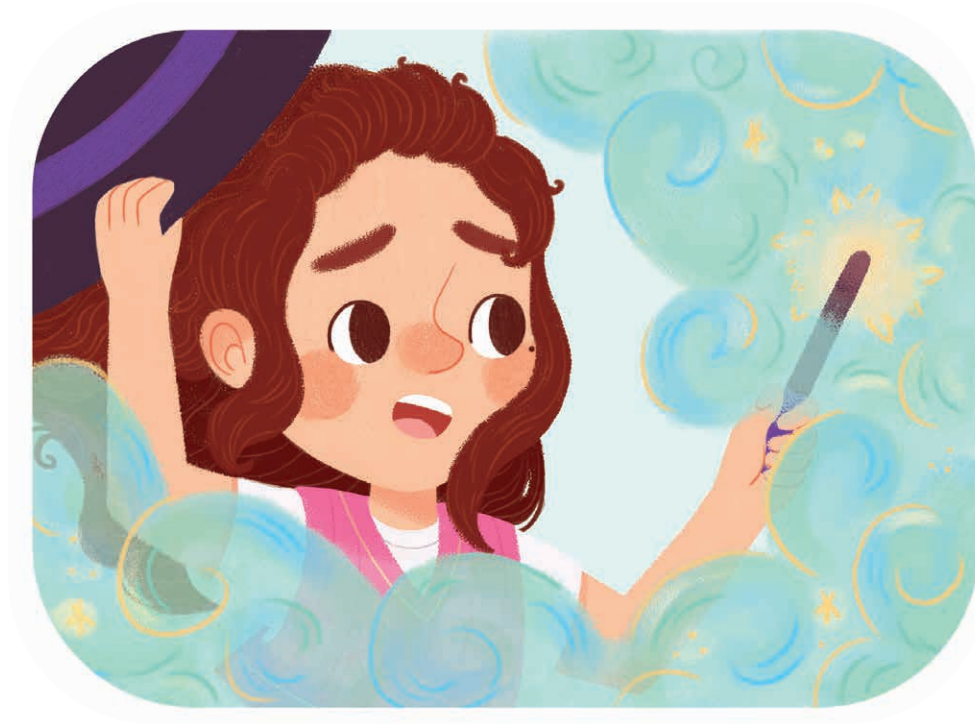
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Martha was a witch. She loved to paddle in her pond, and watch the frogs hopping happily on their lily pads. But all she really wanted was a friend.



The problem was, Martha was a bad witch. She wasn't wicked. She just wasn't very good at magic. In fact, every time she tried to cast a spell it went wrong. Very wrong.

When a new neighbour moved in next door,
Martha thought it was the perfect time to
make a new friend.

Her neighbour was out in his garden,
pulling up weeds.



“I can help,” Martha said, rushing outside.

“Oh no, I’ve heard about you,” he cried.



“It’s no trouble,” Martha said kindly.

And before her neighbour could stop her,
Martha had cast a spell.

POOF!

“Ribbit!” croaked Martha’s neighbour. He was now a frog hopping around in the long grass.



“Not again,” moaned Martha. “Come on, you can live with the others until I find out how to turn you all back.”

Martha picked up the frog and took him to her garden. He hopped into the pond and swam around with all the other frogs that used to be people. Martha had only tried to help them, but they all turned into frogs.

At this rate, Martha was going to have to build a bigger pond.



Martha was fed up. She had tried and tried,
but she couldn't reverse the spell. If only she
could do just one spell that didn't turn people
into frogs. Then maybe she would have friends.

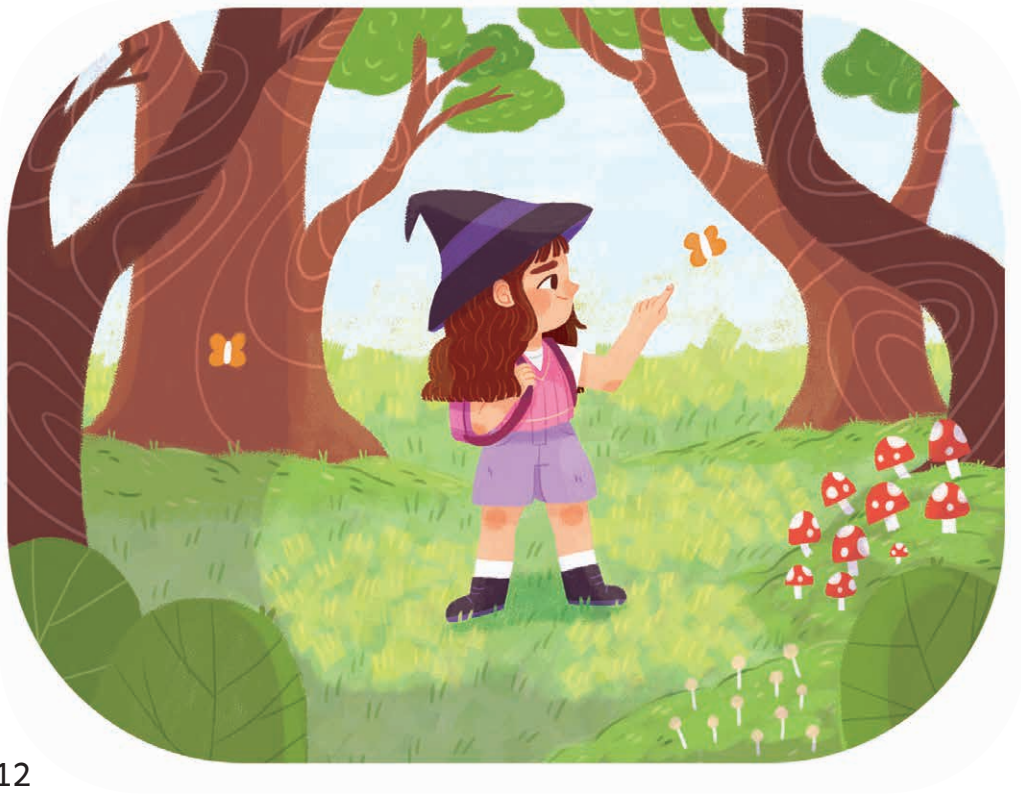
She had to find a way to fix the problem,
and there was only one thing she could do.

Martha packed up her bags, said goodbye
to all her frogs and went off to see the
Grand High Wizard.



The Grand High Wizard was the most powerful wizard in the whole world. Everyone had heard of him, though not many had ever seen him. If anyone could fix Martha's magic, it was him.

Martha went all the way to the mysterious forest where the Grand High Wizard lived.



She stopped in a clearing.

“Hello?” Martha called out. “Grand High Wizard? I need your help.”



There was a puff of smoke, and there suddenly appeared... a very short, round, little man.

“Can I help you?” asked the man.

Martha blinked. “Are you the Grand High Wizard?”

He didn’t look the way she had imagined him.

“I am,” he said. “What can I do for you?”

“I need your help to fix my magic,” Martha said.

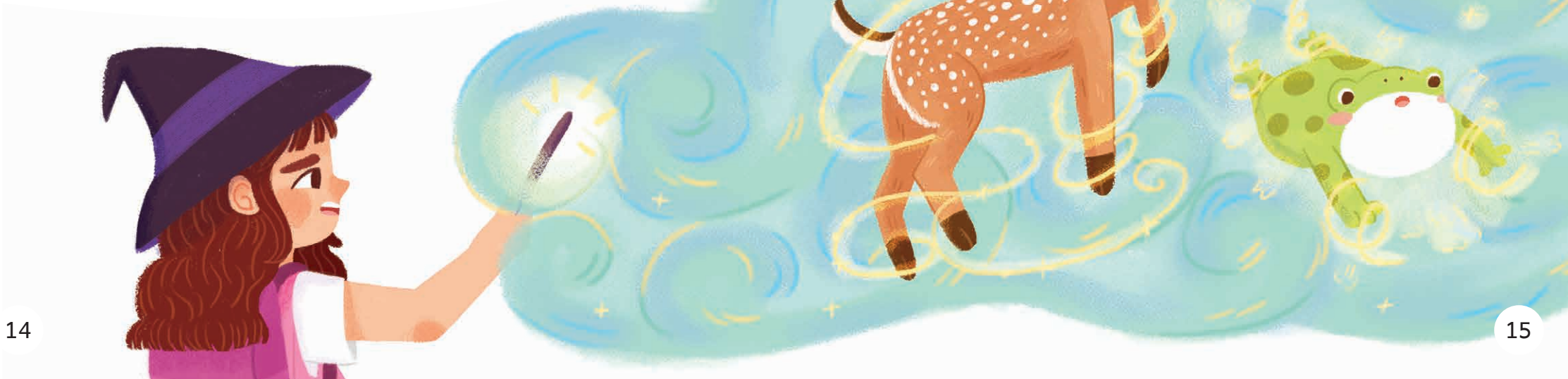
She explained how every time she cast a spell,
all she did was turn things into frogs.

To demonstrate, Martha cast a spell on a deer.

It turned into a frog and hopped around on a log.

“Hmmm,” said the Grand High Wizard.

“You’ve got a serious case of the Hopping Hex.”



“Can you fix it?” Martha asked.

The Grand High Wizard pulled a purple potion out of his sleeve.

“Try this Mend-it Medicine,” he said.



Martha took a sip. She tried to cast a growing spell on a rabbit. The rabbit grew bigger. Martha thought the spell might have worked.

But then the huge rabbit began to ribbit. It turned green. And then turned into a giant frog.



“Hmmm,” the Grand High Wizard said.

“Getting better.”

Martha wasn't sure that a giant frog was any better than a normal-sized one.

The Grand High Wizard pulled a green potion out of his shoe.

“Try this Undo Goo,” he said.



Martha tried a tiny taste. She cast a spell to turn a mouse's fur blue. The mouse turned blue. But then it hopped and turned into a frog. Martha had never seen a blue, furry frog before.

“Not bad,” said the wizard.

“Not bad?” Martha cried. “At this rate I’ll never be able to turn everyone back!”

“Hmmm,” said the Grand High Wizard.

“Have you ever tried to turn something into a frog on purpose? It might confuse your magic so it goes back to normal.”

Martha shrugged. It was worth a try.

She turned to a big shiny rock and cast her spell to turn it into a frog.

The spell hit the shiny rock, bounced off and flew through the air.



Martha wasn't sure what had happened.
Then the rabbit hopped past. It was back
to being a rabbit. The deer was a deer,
and the mouse was a mouse again too.



"It worked!" Martha croaked.

...Croaked?

Martha looked at her reflection in the stream.



"Oh no!" croaked Martha. Now she was a frog!

But where was the wizard?

A short, round frog hopped up.
It looked oddly familiar. Martha gasped.
“Grand High Wizard!” she cried.



“It worked!” cried the wizard, jumping up
and down with excitement.

“Not really,” Martha said, looking at her
webbed feet. “Now I’m a frog.”



“Yes! That’s what your magic has been
trying to tell you, you’re meant to be a frog,”
said the wizard. “And now you’re a frog,
everything is fixed.”

A frog? Martha couldn't be a frog, could she?

She hopped over to the wizard.

"Will my magic really work?" Martha asked.

"Try it and see!" said the wizard.

Martha cast a spell to make a lily pad, and it worked.

She bounced up and down with excitement. This was

fun! Maybe she really was meant to be a frog.



"What about you?" Martha asked. "Shall I turn you back into a wizard?"

"I think I might stay like this for a while," said the wizard. "Being a frog is quite fun!" And with that, he hopped away into the forest.



Martha cast a spell and was back in her garden, by her beautiful pond. The first thing she did was turn all her frogs back into people.



She used her magic to whip up a big meal to apologise, and they all sat down together for the feast. Finally, Martha felt like she might be making some friends.

Luckily, none of them really remembered their time as a frog. But they did still enjoy hopping by Martha's pond for a quick swim!



Quiz

1. The problem was, Martha was a ...

- a) sad witch
- b) bad witch
- c) mad witch

2. Who does Martha want to help when she sees them pulling up weeds?

- a) Her friend
- b) Her neighbour
- c) Her aunt

3. What happens when Martha tries to cast a spell?

- a) She turns things into frogs
- b) She turns frogs into grass
- c) She turns mice into rabbits

4. Who might be able to help fix Martha's problem?

- a) The Spell Queen
- b) The Master of Magic
- c) The Grand High Wizard

5. What does Martha turn herself into?

- a) A frog
- b) A pig
- c) A sheep



Book Bands for Guided Reading

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