

Name: _____

The Witch Who Couldn't Spell

By Neal Levin

Bonabelle was the most charming young witch in school. That is, except for one problem. She could read. She could write. But she couldn't spell! And spelling was the most important class for young witches. If you couldn't pass spelling, you couldn't cast spells.

Oh, sure—in the olden days, it didn't matter. All you had to do was say spells out loud. Nowadays, spells were sent electronically. They had to be typed into a mobile bewitching device. Bonabelle had trouble spelling regular words. Spelling spells was ten times worse!

One morning, she had to turn a toad into a troll. She tried typing *Abracadabra*. What she ended up typing was a jumble of letters. It made no sense whatsoever. Nothing happened.

"What you need is a spell-checker," the toad said.

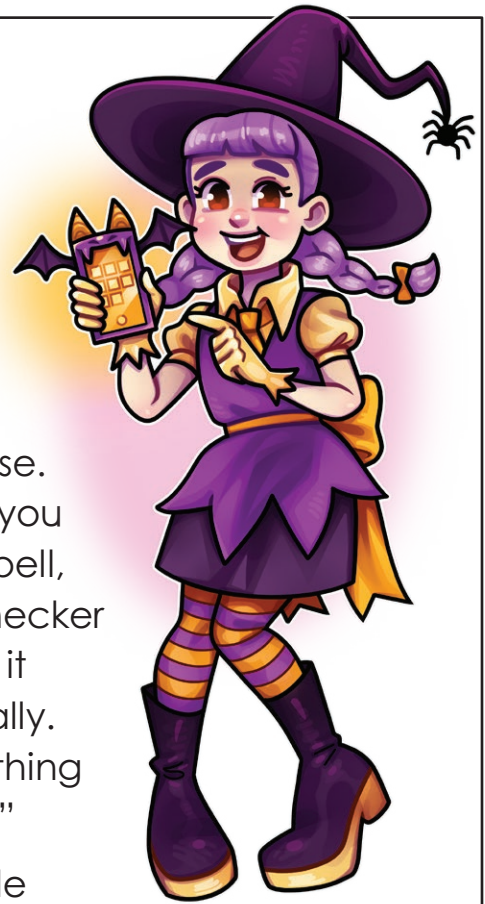
"I do?" said Bonabelle.

"Of course. That way if you misspell a spell, the spell-checker will correct it automatically. Then everything will be fine."

Bonabelle downloaded a spell-checker. She smiled. "I'll turn you into a troll at last."

She tried typing *Abracadabra* again. Her spell-checker changed it into *African opera*. The toad turned into a lion singing at the top of its lungs.

"Dear me," Bonabelle cried. "That didn't turn out right." She tried typing *Presto-chango* this time. Before she could finish, the spell-checker rewrote it as *western banjo*. Now the lion was strumming an instrument and singing a country song. Bonabelle slapped her forehead. "This one had better



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work," she said. She tried to type *Double, double, toil and trouble*. Again, her spell-checker changed the words.

"Yikes! Now there's a toilet in trouble," Bonabelle screamed.

"Somebody grab a plunger!" the lion roared.

"This will never do." Bonabelle put her face in her hands and wept. "I have no more control over my spells than I had before. How will I ever clean up this mess?"

She decided to give it one more shot. She tried typing *Hocus pocus*,

which seemed easy enough to spell. But she didn't have time to get all the letters in order. The spell-checker went right ahead and changed it into *okey-dokey*.

Suddenly the toilet cleared up. The lion turned back into a toad. Then the toad turned into a troll.

"Yes!" Bonabelle pumped her fist in the air. "The spell worked perfectly. Everything is okey-dokey."

"Maybe for you," the troll said. "But next time, could you turn me into a prince?"

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1. What is Bonabelle trying to do?

- a. become the greatest witch
- b. teach a lion to sing
- c. learn to use a bewitching device
- d. turn a toad into a troll

2. A **pun** uses words that have more than one meaning or that sound alike. What makes the story title a pun?

3. Reread the following sentences from the story.

"Of course. That way if you misspell a spell, the spell-checker will correct it automatically. Then everything will be fine."

Based on context and what happens in the story, what must the word automatically mean?

- a. on its own, without Bonabelle doing anything else
- b. after a few seconds, once Bonabelle has time to check it
- c. in big letters, so it's easy for Bonabelle to see and read it
- d. with no mistakes, so it always knows what Bonabelle wants

4. Why did the lion ask someone to grab a plunger?

- a. He was a plumber.
- b. A clogged toilet appeared.
- c. He had no hands to hold it.
- d. It made a funny instrument.

5. Bonabelle never casts a spell she wants, but what she wanted to do still happens in the end. How?

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The scrambled words below are vocabulary words from the story. Unscramble each word and write it on the line. Please be sure each word is spelled correctly.

1. _____ m a r c h g i n
clue: very nice or pleasant
2. _____ n a j o b
clue: kind of stringed instrument
3. _____ t a u m o a t c i l l a y
clue: done by itself, without needing a person to think or act
4. _____ s n e e s
clue: an understandable meaning
5. _____ v e d c i e
clue: an object that does something, especially an electronic one
6. _____ a r o p e
clue: musical show where people speak only by singing
7. _____ o m i b e l
clue: able to be moved
8. _____ m u j l e b
clue: a mess of things scrambled together
9. _____ e r l u g a r
clue: normal; common
10. _____ n o w d a l o d
clue: how you add apps to a device

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In the story, “The Witch Who Couldn’t Spell,” you read about a witch who was bad at spelling and wanted a way to fix it.

Think of something you are not very good at yet, but which you would like to get better at. What is it? What about it is hard? Tell why you want to get better, then think of some ways that might help you do that.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

ANSWER KEY

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By Neal Levin



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- b. teach a lion to sing
- c. learn to use a bewitching device
- d. turn a toad into a troll**

2. A **pun** uses words that have more than one meaning or that sound alike. What makes the story title a pun?

Bonabelle cannot spell words, which means she also cannot cast spells.

3. Reread the following sentences from the story.

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The spell-checker changes *Hocus pocus* into okey-dokey, which makes everything okay for Bonabelle.

ANSWER KEY

The Witch Who Couldn't Spell



The scrambled words below are vocabulary words from the story. Unscramble each word and write it on the line. Please be sure each word is spelled correctly.

1. charming m a r c h g i n
clue: very nice or pleasant
2. banjo n a j o b
clue: kind of stringed instrument
3. automatically t a u m o a t c i l l a y
clue: done by itself, without needing a person to think or act
4. sense s n e e s
clue: an understandable meaning
5. device v e d c i e
clue: an object that does something, especially an electronic one
6. opera a r o p e
clue: musical show where people speak only by singing
7. mobile o m i b e l
clue: able to be moved
8. jumble m u j l e b
clue: a mess of things scrambled together
9. regular e r l u g a r
clue: normal; common
10. download n o w d a l o d
clue: how you add apps to a device