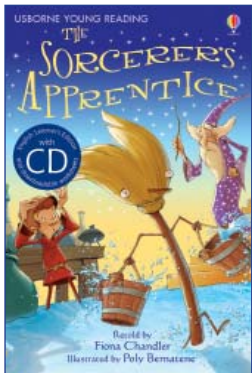


The Sorcerer's Apprentice • Teacher's notes



Author: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, retold by Fiona Chandler

Reader level: Upper Intermediate

Word count: 1326

Lexile level: 420

Text type: Folk tale

About the story

A stern old sorcerer announces that he's leaving his apprentice, Max, alone in the workshop. Max's delight at the prospect of a free afternoon soon gives way to dismay at the chores he's supposed to do. First he must fill the water tank, a job that would take hours... unless he uses a little of his master's magic. Max knows he shouldn't try any spells, but he can't resist enchanting a broomstick to carry the water for him. The sorcerer's toad, Tabitha, looks on disapprovingly as the broomstick comes to life and starts filling the tank in record time. Feeling smug, Max decides to take a nap.

He wakes to find water flooding the workshop. What's worse, he doesn't know how to stop the broomstick or reverse the spell. Tabitha helpfully suggests chopping the broom up, but Max is horrified to see the two broomstick halves coming to life and working twice as fast. In the nick of time, the sorcerer returns and casts a spell to undo the mischief. Max is a wand's flick away from being turned into a tadpole, until Tabitha points out that he might make a good sorcerer himself one day. On reflection, the sorcerer decides to give Max a second chance and he becomes a star pupil.

About the author

The story originally formed part of a longer tale, written down by a Greek named Lucian of Samosata, nearly 2,000 years ago. Lucian was known for his caustic wit, both in his writings and in his speeches. He trained as a rhetorician, studying the art of pleading, arguing and persuasion. He then went from city to city, earning his fame and considerable fortune by giving amusing lectures.

Lucian's story inspired the German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) to compose his own version in verse, in 1797. Goethe had trained as a lawyer, but was always more interested in literature. His first anthology of poems was published in 1770, and he went on to become a world famous poet, playwright and novelist, the author of classic German Romantic works such as *Faust* and *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. His work inspired numerous composers including Beethoven, Schubert and Schumann.

Key words

Your students might not be familiar with some of these words in the story.

sorcerer	explore	p11 flash	snooze	p35 flung
apprentice	dungeons	puff	p21 mumbled	pails
p3 task	moat	p12 croaked	p22 overflowing	p37 spluttered
workshop	p8 scrub	p13 crossly	sloshing	p38 desperately
polish	toadstool	broomstick	clattering	p39 rescue
p4 moaned	p9 groaned	p15 concentrating	p24 stuttering	p42 vanished
p5 announced	fetch	p16 spoilsport	puzzled	drain
p6 goblin	p10 spells	harm	p27 flicked	p43 nervously
tube	frowned	p18 twitch	p29 hatchet	glared
pixies	tadpole	shuddered	p32 glumly	p44 meddle
earwax	threatened	skinny	p33 tripping	p46 disobey
p7 astonished	bristling	p20 flopped	p34 dashing	frogspawn

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Key phrases

p3	to be fed up with	p13	Hop it!	p20	fast asleep
p4	Back to work	p14	to come to life	p23	to take no notice
p8	could do with	p15	How hard can it be?	p29	Good thinking
p9	Rats! [as exclamation of annoyance]	p16	to be up to something	p30	That was close
	There goes...	p18	all at once	p43	to be in for it
p9	to keep [someone] out of mischief	p19	in no time		What have you got to say for yourself?
		p20	to feel pleased with yourself	p47	perfect pupil

Before reading

Ask the class if they know what an apprentice is. Explain the concept if they're not sure. Do we have apprentices today? Can the students name some people who are likely to take on an apprentice [e.g. plumber, electrician, builder]? Why might an apprenticeship be a good way to learn these jobs, rather than going to classes? [They involve practical skills which are more easily learned through experience.]

Does anyone know what a sorcerer is? [Students might be more familiar with the word "wizard" or "magician".] What skills might a sorcerer's apprentice need to learn? You could write a list on the board.

Reading or listening

You can listen to the story on CD or read it aloud to the students, take turns to read or read together silently. Each double page spread in the book is one track on the CD, so that you can pause between tracks or repeat tracks if your students need it. The first reading is in a British English accent, and it is followed by an American English reading. The words are exactly the same. After the story, there is a short selection of key phrases that can be used for pronunciation practice.

During reading: you might like to ask some of these questions.

p3	What does the speech bubble tell us about how Sticklewick treats Max? Does it tell us something about Max, too?	p23	Why do you think the broom takes no notice of Max?
p6	Sticklewick's shopping list is rather unusual. What do you think the items are for?	p27	Which of the spells in Sticklewick's book would you like to try?
p9	What does Max think about being an apprentice? And what does the sorcerer think of his apprentice?	p29	Do you think this is a good idea?
p10	Why does Sticklewick tell Max not to try any spells?	p34	Why is Max wondering what it's like to be a tadpole?
p16	Why doesn't Max listen to Tabitha?	p39	Is Sticklewick surprised at what's happened?
		p46	Why does Sticklewick decide to give Max a second chance?

After reading

Ask the class what jobs they'd like to do apprenticeships for. Encourage them to be inventive.

This version of the story is based on a poem by Goethe, but his poem doesn't have a toad in it. Why do you think Fiona Chandler added one? What other animals might there be in a sorcerer's workshop? Encourage the class to think up interesting characters, e.g. Bronwen the black cat, Drusilla the dragon.

The Sorcerer's Apprentice is one of eight animated shorts in the 1940 Disney movie *Fantasia*, set to the music of Paul Dukas. Mickey Mouse plays the part of the apprentice and there is no dialogue. If you have a copy of the movie, or you can borrow one, you may like to play it to your class at the end of the day or for an end-of-week treat.

