

The Witch Tells Fortunes

"Come in," shouted Father and the boys, standing in a group. As the door opened silently, they saw standing in the doorway a little, old woman, all bent over, a long black cape and hood covering her from head to foot. She carried a cane with a bend in it and leaned very heavily upon it as she walked. Muttering to herself, she crossed the room and took a seat by the fire. Her coarse, grey hair fell in straggly curls about her face, almost hiding it from view.

Suddenly the lights went out, leaving the room in darkness, except for the firelight. "Place the pot before me," she ordered, in a high, broken voice, shaking her stick at Fred.

"Yes, Ma'am," said Fred, hurrying to obey.

"She's got Fred scared to death," giggled Tommy to Ross.

From under her cape she now took a small paper bag and poured the contents into the pot before her. Then, standing up, she hobbled around it three times, waving her arms and humming a strange little tune. Soon, a dull red light glowed from within the pot, getting brighter and brighter. "It's magic," whispered Tommy to Henry.

The old witch now sat down again and took from beneath her cape a small pad, a long quill pen and an unusual little bottle filled with milky white fluid. "If you drink any of that you'll get as small as a flea," said Fred in a low voice. The old witch banged hard on the floor with her cane.

"Henry, come forward," she commanded.

"Go ahead," giggled Ross, giving him a little push and Henry stepped before the witch.

1. Find and copy two adverbs from the first paragraph.

2. What do you think the witch was doing as she circled the pot?

3. Find and copy the phrase which describes how the witch speaks.

4. What do you think the witch might have said to Henry next?

5. What kind of atmosphere does the author create in the first and second paragraphs? Explain your answer.

