

The Inept Magician

Sproggit was a magician. Or at least he was trying his hardest to be a magician. He had all of the equipment: a cloak, a wand, a white rabbit and even his dad's old, battered top hat. True, the rabbit kept escaping from its hutch, and the cloak was an old sheet dyed black, but he really was trying.

His friend Derm had been attending the Curious League of Conjurers (or CLoC for short) for nearly a year now, and Sproggit was desperate to join him. Derm was amazing. His parents were wealthy cabbage farmers and could afford the best equipment. He had a cloak made of actual stardust, or so he said. Sproggit suspected it was probably just silk with some glitter sprinkled over it. He hadn't said anything.

Derm had tried to teach Sproggit the magic he'd been learning. He made it seem so easy: just utter a few words and wiggle your wand. Sproggit had even practised his Scottish accent so that he could sound exactly like Derm, in case that was the problem.

"Vanishus Lepus," he'd shouted, waving his wand at his poor rabbit. Instead of disappearing, it just looked at him with a hurt expression, before going to the toilet in the hat.

Sproggit sat back on the wooden bench at the top of his garden and sighed. "It's no use," he said to Derm, who was busy sawing a goat in half on the other side of the patio. The goat didn't seem particularly bothered by what was going on. "I'll never be any good."

Derm looked up from his work and gave a half-hearted "Ta-da!". The goat bleated its approval. Derm waved his wand, and the goat joined back together. Not wanting to stick around for anything further, it bolted into the field next door. "Listen," Derm said as he sat down next to his friend, "we're not supposed to do this but..."

Sproggit looked down at his friend's wand. Derm gave it a conspiratorial wiggle. "Go on," Derm instructed him. "Try my wand, see if it makes a difference."

Blood drained from Sproggit's face. Could he really do it? Was it just a case of using a proper wand? His had been a plastic prop from a joke store, after all. Derm had told him that *his* wand had been made from the tooth of a dragon bathed in the tears of a mermaid. Derm said a lot of stuff like that, though. Sproggit took most of it with a pinch of salt.

Tentatively, he reached out and grasped the wand. For a moment, he thought a halo of light had fallen upon him until he realised it was just the sun coming out from behind a cloud. "W-w-what shall I do with it?" he stammered. If he was going to perform real magic, he wanted it to be impressive.

Derm reached down and picked up a seed from a crack in the patio. He placed it on the lawn and stepped back. "Point the wand at the seed and say '*Magnus Maximus*'."

Sproggit gulped, pointed the wand at the seed, and muttered the words.



Comprehension Questions for 'The Inept Magician':

Questions for Everyone:

RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. What does CLoC stand for?
2. What colour is Sproggit's rabbit?
3. What did Sproggit think Derm's cloak was actually made of?
4. Where did they sit in the garden?
5. What had been used to make Derm's wand?

For your additional questions, choose your challenge:

Challenge One:

6. What does tentatively mean?
7. Why do you think Sproggit 'gulped' before pointing the wand?
8. Which country do you think iDerm came from, and why?
9. What is another name for 'conjuror'?
10. What had Derm's wand been dipped in to make it magical?

Challenge Two/Three:

6. What does the author's use of language tell you about Sproggit's hat?
7. Why didn't Sproggit tell Derm what he thought of his cloak?
8. Why did the rabbit look hurt? What do you think the spell was supposed to do?
9. What does the word "conspiratorial" mean?
10. Why is the story called "The Inept Magician"?