

Comprehension - 45 minutes

Sabryna and the River Spirit

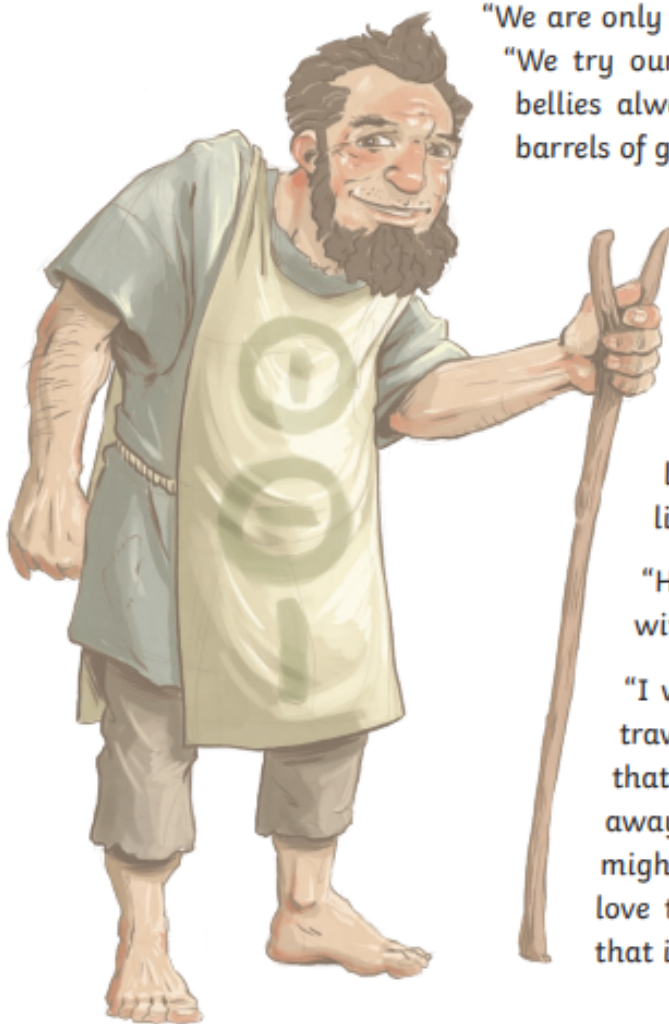
The day began as usual. The little ones scampered about while Pa complained of the aches in his back and the tingles in his toes.

Sabryna heated bread and pottage over the fire in their old iron pot. The family didn't have the money for a new alchemical stove like other families in the village, but Sabryna didn't mind. She liked the smell of a real fire better. It smelt honest.

Before the family ate breakfast, they stood before the shrine: three clay figures, nestled in the nook above the fireplace. Their paint was flaky and their limbs cracked but, since Pa had injured his back and lost his job on Strongarm's farm, there was no money for repairs. Sabryna nudged the little ones to remind them to bow their heads as Pa cleared his throat.

"Thank you, Barl, for the grain and the beans. Thank you, Sana, for light to bless the leaves. Thank you, Dia, for water to bless the roots."

Sabryna broke off breadcrumbs to give to each of the figurines: stout Barl, tall Sana and dainty Dia with her long, flowing hair.



"We are only a poor family – a lowly family," Pa went on. "We try our best but we are cold and hungry and our bellies always rumble. Please bless us, spirits. Send us barrels of grain, baskets of fruit and lots and lots of fish."

Recently, Pa's pleas had become more and more desperate, and Sabryna had become more and more certain that the spirits weren't listening.

After breakfast, Sabryna tied on her apron and filled her pocket with salt for a day's luck. "Time for school," she said, leading the little ones outside.

"Have a good day," said Pa, "and don't run off with a passing merchant!"

"I won't," Sabryna promised. Sabryna had never travelled further than the next village but she knew that the merchants came from towns and cities far away. They brought tales of temples and domes, mighty machines and magic shows. Sabryna would love to see all that they described, but she knew that it was impossible. Her family depended on her.

The village school only cost a penny each for the morning and taught sums and letters. Alongside this, the children were taught about alchemy; lessons involved mixing simple formulas and drawing diagrams of alchemical contraptions. It was only the basics, but it was a start. Sabryna hoped that her brothers and sisters would achieve great things one day.

It was a long walk from their cottage, high on the hillside, to the schoolhouse in the valley below. As usual, they were the last to arrive and Sabryna, who was already fourteen, hurried her siblings through the gate as the bell rang.

“Work hard – and don’t upset the teacher!” she called, before heading into the village to collect the day’s laundry work.

The village bustled. Farmhands jostled and gossiped as they headed to the fields. Apparently, the river was low, but the farmhands said that there was no need to worry because Mr Strongarm had bought a new alchemical fertiliser and it made the grain pop up like a rabbit from a hole.

The farmhands might not have been worried about the low river but Sabryna was – she could hardly make a living as a laundress without water.

In the village square, the blacksmith’s iron hissed as he plunged hot metal into a liquid that turned the outside bright gold. A cart bounced down the street, delivering wool to the dyers. In the alley stood great vats of dye in every colour the alchemists could dream up.

More and more people were moving to the village. Some came to work on the farms, which grew bigger each year, while others came to profit from passing merchant trade as ever more alchemical wares were transported up and down the land by boat.

Sabryna bowed her head to disguise her gaze as the merchants’ daughters bustled past in their jewel-bright gowns, showing off the latest fashions. Sabryna wished that she could afford a colourful gown, too, but all she had to wear was a beige smock. Every new alchemist invention seemed like magic – Sabryna just wished that she had a little more magic in her own life.

She knocked on the door of the low, thatched building that belonged to the Strongarms. Mr and Mrs Strongarm ran the biggest farm in the village.



"Oh, Sabryna! There you are," said Mrs Strongarm, standing in the doorway. Her necklace hung with expensive wards against hardship and hunger. "How is your Pa? Is his leg still troubling him?"

"It's his back, really," said Sabryna, holding out her arms for Mrs Strongarm's basket of laundry. "It troubles him worse each winter." Even from the doorway, Sabryna could see that the Strongarms' shrine was five times as elaborate as the one that Sabryna's family had at home. There had to be at least twenty statuettes of every colour and shape: some human, some animal, some dressed in jewels or fur or flames.

"Oh, the poor man. He always worked so hard and he's had such bad luck. Still, good thing he's got you to help look after the family. Here you go." Mrs Strongarm deposited a large pile of dyed cloth into Sabryna's basket.

As Sabryna thanked her and turned to leave, Mrs Strongarm caught her elbow. "One moment, Sabryna. Don't use that old soap; you'll spoil the colours. Here." She held out a bar of alchemical soap, indigo-coloured with swirls of glittering green and black.

"Thank you," gasped Sabryna as Mrs Strongarm plonked the soap on top of the laundry. Sabryna couldn't stop staring. It looked more like a precious stone than something you used to wash clothes. "I've never used alchemical soap before. I can't wait to try it."

"And if your Pa ever needs anything..." said Mrs Strongarm, waving Sabryna goodbye.

Answer the questions below.

24. Look at the first three paragraphs. Find evidence from **two different paragraphs** to show that Pa is suffering from poor health.



25. Look at the paragraph beginning 'The village school...'.
Find and copy a word which means 'machines' or 'inventions'.



26. Which word is closest in meaning to 'wares'?

clothes		battles	
goods		food	

2 marks

1 mark

1 mark

27. In what ways does Sabryna take responsibility for her family?
Give evidence to support your answer.

28. Tick to show which statements are true and which are false.

Statement	True	False
Sabryna had never travelled to the next village.		
The children learned about alchemy at school.		
Sabryna wished that she could wear a colourful gown.		

.....

29. Number these events (1-5) from the story to order them chronologically.

The family ate breakfast.	
Pa said a prayer before they ate.	
Sabryna walked her brothers and sisters to school.	
Farmhands and blacksmiths worked in the village.	
Sabryna heated bread and pottage for the family for breakfast.	

.....

30. How do you think Sabryna feels towards the merchants' daughters?
Support your answer with evidence.

32. **Find** and **copy** one phrase which suggests that Mrs Strongarm has more money than Sabryna does.

1 mark

33. Look at the paragraph beginning 'The village bustled'.
What does the word 'bustled' tell you about the village?

1 mark

34. 'Sabryna broke off breadcrumbs to give to each of the figurines'.
Why do you think Sabryna did this?

1 mark

Spelling - 20 minutes

Find the Year 6 spellings for this week on our class webpage.

Today, you are going to write an acrostic poem using one of your spellings.

An acrostic poem uses each letter of the spelling to begin each line.

For example, if the spelling was 'balloon', your poem might be:

Ball of air

Attached to a string

Light as a feather

Loud when it pops

Orange, green or red

Or maybe blue

Not easy to tie knots!

Choose a spelling to try this for! Feel free to do so for as many of them as you want!

Reading - 30 minutes

Enjoy spending half an hour doing some reading. You could read to yourself or to somebody else, or perhaps a mixture of both!

Try to read a range of different texts, see what you can find in your house.

Some ideas include:

- Chapter books
- Factual texts
- Poems
- Magazines
- Recipe books

Illustrations 30-45 minutes

We are all wonderful writers and it is lovely to be able to complement your writing with pictures. Today, we will be creating our own illustrations and thinking carefully about character design. It is important to think about your character's stand out features. What is important to your story? How do you want them to look?

It is also crucial to think about your character's facial expressions. Are they menacing and plotting something evil? Or are they kind and considerate?

Below are some videos from illustrators who guide you through some examples.

With the guidance of an adult, you can access the videos below to assist your drawing.

Cartoon character design for beginners.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=61qUZgdH-aI>

Draw with Jim Field. He is the illustrator of some of our favourite books such as Oi Frog and The Koala Who Could. He takes you through

<https://www.jimfield.me/draw>

Challenge: Spend some time designing your own character. If you have written a story recently, maybe use one of your characters as a starting point.