



The Old Woman In The Shoe

Once upon a time, there was an old woman who lived in a shoe. You may say that this was a silly thing to do, but she was very poor and there was nowhere else to live. If you were offered a giant shoe, I think you'd take it too.

Now, this old lady wasn't alone. She shared her home with a dozen children. That's twelve children and herself. It's a good job it was a big shoe. She had a loving husband, but he spent most of his days out in the forest chopping wood to earn money to feed them all.

As you can imagine, with all of those children, the house was often a mess. The youngest child was just a toddler and the oldest nearly ready for work. None of them picked up after themselves and it was often left to the poor old lady to walk around after them tidying up. Her back ached, and her feet were sore.

Sometimes, she would kick them all out into the garden at sunrise and not let them back into the house until the sun was setting. Unfortunately, there were wolves in the woods nearby. There were also rumours of a witch living in a gingerbread cottage. She knew that her greedy children would go looking for it if they knew. This meant that she had to keep them locked up inside most days.

VOCABULARY FOCUS

1. How many are in a dozen?
2. Which word means that her husband is given money to work?
3. What does the word "rumour" mean?
4. What does the word "greedy" tell you about her children?
5. Which word tells you how she gave them their dinner?
6. Write a single word that means the same time as the sun was setting.

It wasn't all boring. They used the thick tongue of the shoe as a slide. The laces made great swings and the smell of leather always put them in a good mood. The sole was tough and never leaked, so they were always dry. But the children still drove the poor woman mad.

One day, she'd had enough. The oldest child had the youngest by the hair and was swinging her around. Little Joe had Big Joe in a headlock, and Alice was talking nonsense about a white rabbit. As soon as dinner time came around, the hungry children headed to the table. They didn't do it without pushing and shoving, though.



On a normal day, the old lady would give them a warm broth and loaves of bread. If they were lucky, they might even have a bit of roast chicken. The old lady looked at their faces as she slammed down their bowls. She hadn't bothered to heat the broth. There was no bread. There certainly wasn't any chicken.

"Now eat it all up, there'll be no fresh bread," the old lady said. "And once it's all gone, it's straight off to bed!"

VIPERS QUESTIONS

- P** Who else do you think might have heard about the gingerbread cottage?
- I** Why was the old woman always so tired?
- E** Do you think the author feels sorry for the lady? What makes you think this?
- R** Who had Big Joe in a headlock?
- S** What was going to happen after the children finished their dinner?

Answers:

1. 12
2. Earn
3. A story or idea - she had heard it
4. They wanted everything for themselves
5. Slammed
6. Sunset

P: Hansel and Gretel

I: She had to tidy up after the naughty children

E: Accept any explanation that shows they understand the author's use of language to paint the old woman in a sympathetic light.

R: Little Joe

S: They were going straight to bed