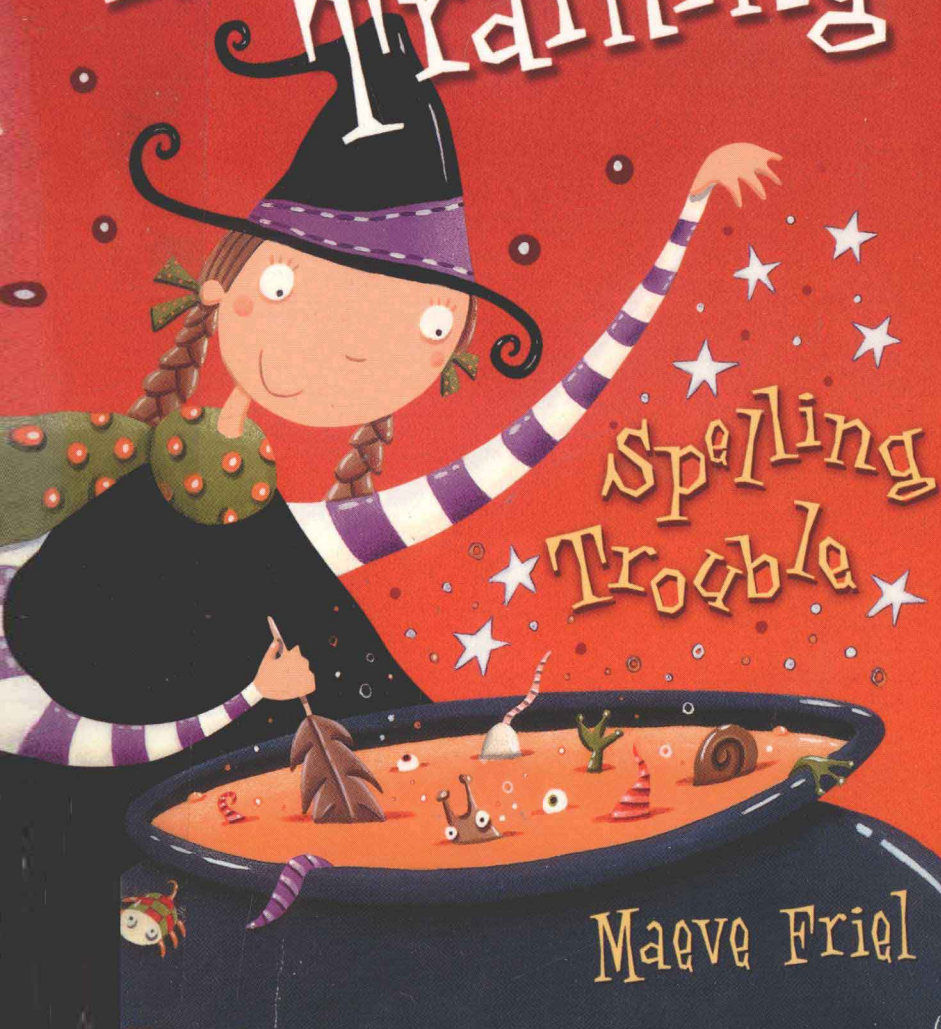




# Witch-in- Training



Spelling  
Troggle

Maeve Friel

# Witch-in- Training Spelling Trouble

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Illustrated by Nathan Reed



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# Chapter One

Jessica Diamond found out that she was a witch on her tenth birthday. She started broom-flying lessons at once with the legendary witch trainer, Miss Strega, and soon afterwards passed her Flying Test

(despite a nearly catastrophic encounter with a tearaway goblin). Now she was about to begin her Spelling Lessons.

Miss Strega's shop was founded in 991. It was an old-fashioned hardware shop, tucked in between the estate agent's and the toy shop. If anyone peered in through the window they could see what a heap of junk







When Jessica arrived after school that afternoon, she discovered the place was even messier than usual. It looked as if a tornado had just rushed through it. There were cauldrons, cobwebby crates and three-legged stools lying all over the floor. Dozens of dusty books were scattered on the counter beneath a pile of flying helmets.



And Miss Strega herself seemed to have been blown into the cupboard under the stairs, for she suddenly emerged draped from head to toe in witches' cloaks.

"What on earth has happened?" Jessica asked, dismounting from her broom and rushing to disentangle Miss Strega. "Have you been burgled?"

"Not at all, my little lamb's lettuce!" exclaimed Miss Strega. "Perish the thought. I'm just having a good sort-out. We can revise your renaming skills at the same time."

"My *renaming* skills?" Jessica frowned.

Miss Strega pushed Felicity, her fat ginger cat, off a stool and set down armfuls of cloaks. "As you now know, Jessica," she said, tapping the side of her long nose, "I am the Official Storekeeper of the Members of Witches World Wide, the W3. My shop has to

be a highly undercover secret operation so I make the shop look as uninviting as possible to ordinary people. Even so, once in a blue moon, some chump blunders in looking for garden shears or a packet of parsley seeds, so..."

"I know," said Jessica, "you rename things so that they think they really *are* in a hardware shop before you chase them out. Like you put the Teenage Slugs in a drawer marked Ten-Amp plugs."

"Exactly," agreed Miss Strega. "There are two Spelling Programmes involved – Noquan and Sablit."

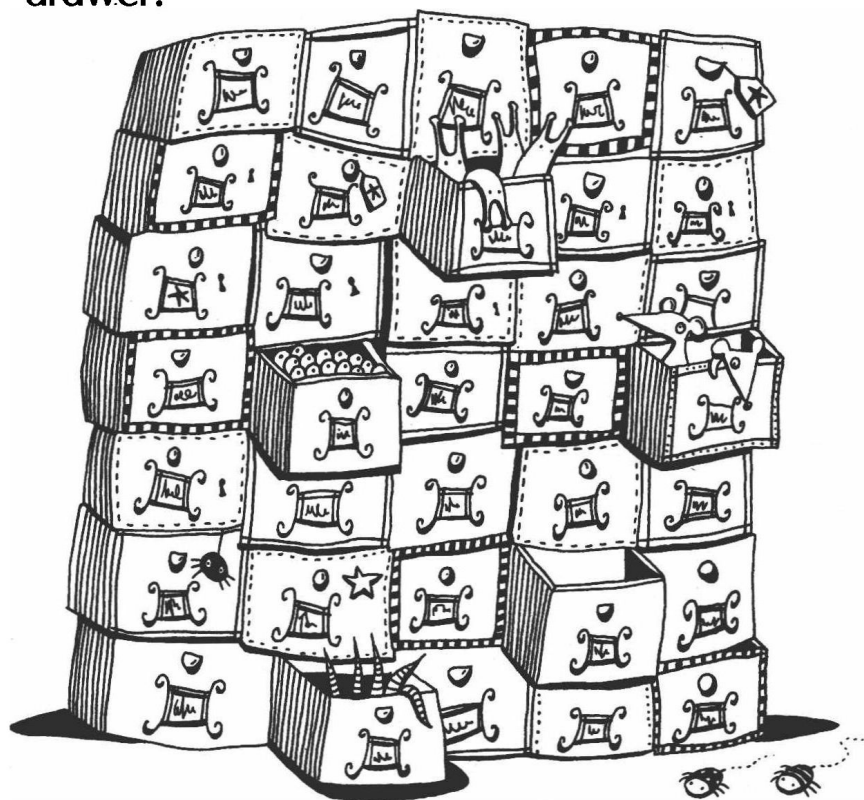
Jessica's eyes opened wide.

"NOQUAN stands for Not-Quite-an-Anagram. SABLIT – Sounds-a-Bit-Like-It. You'll soon get the hang of them. Pop up on your broom and follow me."

The back wall of the shop was covered from top to bottom in wooden drawers with brass handles and spidery handwritten labels.

“Look at that, for example,” she said, pointing at a label that read Parsley Seeds.

“What do you think I really keep in that drawer?”



Jessica knitted her brow. "Is it Sablit? Pa's Sleigh Beads. No, that doesn't make any sense."

Miss Strega stroked her long chin. "Try Noquan."

Jessica allowed the letters to swim around in her mind. "Could it be a Sleepy Dress? A magic dress that makes whoever wears it fall asleep?"

"I can see you are going to be a whiz at Noquan," Miss Strega chuckled. "What about Ten-inch Nails?"

"Oh, I remember that one from before. They're Snails' Antennae."

"Grate Polish?"

"Gnat's Spittle."

"Slide Rules?"

"Yeuch," said Jessica as she worked it out. "That must be Snails' Drool."

"Tickety-boo. Now, let's do it the other way round. Where could you put the Dragon Spears?"

"Behind the Garden Shears?"

"Good girl. A pot of Happy Dream?"

"Nappy Cream?"

"Lungs of Skunk?"

"Sink Plungers," Jessica grinned. "But what are they all for?"

"I was just coming to that," said Miss Strega, "but first I'll make us a stiff brew while you tidy away all this clutter. I'm sure you'll have no difficulty in working out where everything goes."

While Miss Strega stirred her brew, Jessica tidied up the shop. She was just putting the last of the Serpent Tears in the drawer labelled Secateurs when a book on the counter caught her eye.

As everybody knows, it's very difficult not to pick up a book with a good cover. However, the book that caught Jessica's eye did *not* have a good cover. In fact it did not have a cover at all. It was very grubby and spattered with multicoloured stains like a well-used cookery book. Indeed, as Jessica discovered when she riffled through the pages, *Spelling Made Easy* was a sort of recipe book but for very odd dishes like Astronomical Turnovers and Vanishing Cream. She flipped the pages back to the Introduction.

"Spelling is easy," she read aloud, "but the secret of *good* Spelling is in the Mingling."

"Absolutely!" said Miss Strega, giving her cauldron a resounding smack with a wooden spoon. The sudden noise gave Berkeley, Jessica's night-in-gale mascot, a

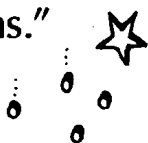
terrible shock. She had been having an afternoon nap in Jessica's pocket but now soared up to the ceiling rafters with a warning "hu-eet, hu-eet".



Miss Strega pretended not to notice and went on. "As you say, the art of Spelling, Jessica, is in the Mingling."

Jessica read the sentence again. "Actually, I don't understand it at all. What exactly is Mingling?"

"As luck would have it, Jessica," said Miss Strega as she hopped up on her high stool, "Mingling is the next topic of our Spelling Lessons."







## Chapter Two

Jessica sat cross-legged on the counter and laid her broom carefully beside her. Berkeley fluttered down from the ceiling and perched on her shoulder. Felicity jumped up on to the counter too, arched her back, stretched,