

# HEDGEWITCH

SKYE MCKENNA



For Ages  
9+

Teacher Resource Pack

## ABOUT THE BOOK

### Witches aren't born, they're made...

Welcome to the village of Hedgely, where the world of Faerie lies just beyond our own, through the enchanted forest of the Hedge. Within the woods lurk imps, wyrms, wisps and goblins, yet there has always been a Hedgewitch to guard the border against the faery folk.

Cassie Morgan has run away. After seven years spent waiting for her mother to return, she flees her dreary boarding school and sets out to find her. But the world outside her school is full of hidden magic and children have been going missing.

Join Cassie and her friends in the Hedgely Coven as they train to become witches, earning their badges, hats and broomsticks. Will Cassie discover the truth about her mother? Can she find the lost faery treasures before the wicked Erl King gets his hands on them? And what will it take to save her new home – and Britain itself – from the shadowy magic of Faerie?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Skye McKenna grew up in a mining town in the Australian outback. Surrounded by the red dust of the Pilbara, she developed a healthy respect for wild things and wild places at a young age.

Seeking adventures of her own she travelled to the UK and fell in love with the British countryside.

Skye now lives in Scotland and works for a heritage charity, with whom she recently curated an exhibition on medieval magic. When she's not reading and writing, she goes looking for stories in the hills and forests of her new home.

*Hedgewitch* is Skye's first novel and the first of five books in the series.



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# NOTES FOR TEACHERS

**Suitable for:** Children aged 9+ years

**Based on:** *Hedgewitch* by Skye McKenna

**Includes:** Activities suitable for the classroom or library sessions

**Subject Checklist:** Literacy, Science (the moon), Maths (estimating and measuring), PSHE

**Themes:** Adventure, fantasy, nature and wildlife, the night sky and learning together

## CONTENTS:

### 4 Book cover prompts

### 5 Theme 1 – A secret key

**Activities:** Draw a picture of Cassie's key. Make predictions about what the key might open.

**Objectives:** Retrieve and understand information from the text; make predictions based on clues in the text.

### 7 Theme 2 – The sky at night

**Activities:** Keep a moon diary.

**Objectives:** Make and record observations; consider why the moon looks different on different days.

### 9 Theme 3 – Learning new skills

**Activities:** Design a set of badges.

**Objectives:** Share skills and interests with classmates.

### 11 Theme 4 – Into the woods

**Activities:** Measure the circumference of different tree trunks. Produce a piece of creative writing.

**Objectives:** Estimate and measure lengths to the nearest cm using a tape measure; plan a short story in which the main character encounters a tree and discovers it can talk

### 14 Further writing opportunities



## BOOK COVER PROMPTS:



1.  
What do you notice about the front cover?

2.  
What do you wonder?

3.  
What do you like about the cover design?

4.  
Can you make any predictions about the story based on the front cover?

5.  
Does the front cover remind you of any other books you've read?



## THEME 1: A secret key

**PRE-READ QUESTION:** What problems has Cassie encountered in the story so far?

### EXTRACT 1 (pages 27-28)

Cassie sat up and peered at the wall calendar which showed a drooping daffodil. It was April 30th, the anniversary of her arrival at Fowell House.

Cassie fell back against the mattress, which squeaked in surprise. She didn't care if she woke anyone. Today was the worst day of the whole year. Worse than her birthday, which no one remembered, or Christmas, when she sat alone in the dining hall picking at dry turkey while everyone else went home to family and presents and pudding.

Today marked seven years since she'd come to live at Fowell House and seven years since she'd last seen her mother.

Cassie tugged at the cord around her neck and fished out her key. The chain had broken years ago and string was more inconspicuous anyway. Jewellery was another item on the long list of things forbidden at Fowell House so, although she wore the key always, she never let anyone see it. It was no longer than her index finger and green-gold in colour. The bow was shaped like the spiral of a fern frond, unfurling into a straight stem with little leaflets forming the bit at the end.

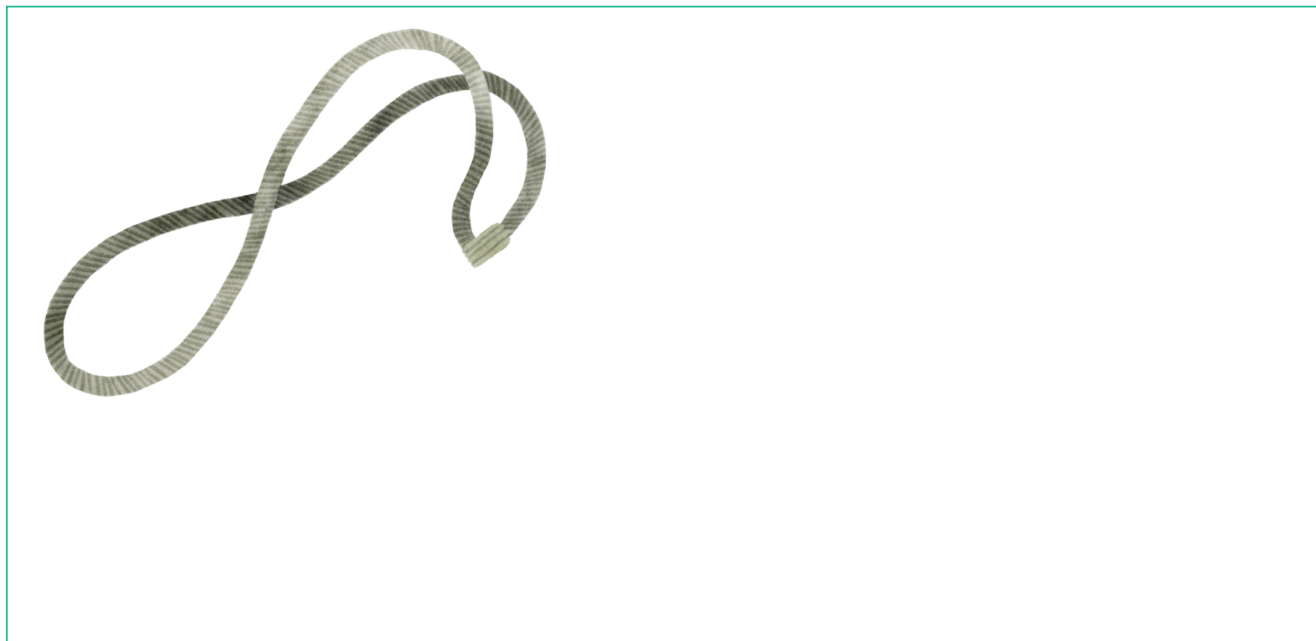
Cassie had many theories about what the key might open: a treasure chest, a secret vault, the door to the home she and her mother would someday return to. Yet it was also a promise and a reminder of the commitment she herself had made. Her mother had given her the key on the day she left, begging Cassie to wait patiently for her, and Cassie had promised she would. At the time, she could never have imagined just how long that would be. Whenever she held the key, she drew on the small well of hope deep inside her heart, but when she reached for it now, she found the well was nearly empty. Another year had passed and she found it harder and harder to believe her mother was ever coming back.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How long has Cassie been at Fowell House?
- Can you think of 3 words to describe Cassie's time at Fowell House so far?
- What do you think the word 'inconspicuous' might mean?
- Why does Cassie keep the key a secret?
- Why is the key important to Cassie?
- How does Cassie feel when she holds the key in her hand? What thoughts might be going through her mind?

## Activity 1: Cassie's key

Underline the words and phrases in extract 1 that describe the key. Can you imagine what it looks like? Draw a picture of Cassie's secret key in the space below:



What do you think Cassie's secret key might open? Use your imagination, as well as any clues you've gathered from the story so far and the book cover, to make predictions. Discuss your ideas with a partner and write them in the space below:



**Extra activity:** Cassie's secret key is designed to look like a fern frond. Can you design your own special key? It could be designed to look like anything you choose. What might your special key open?

## THEME 2: The sky at night

### EXTRACT 2 (pages 146-147)

This is the song that the 1st Hedgely Witches sing in their coven meetings.

*'The sky is clear as we fly on  
Beneath the dazzling stars.  
We know their names and stories,  
Their wisdom, it is ours.*

*The cauldron boils and bubbles,  
A sweet and healing brew.  
We gather herbs and flowers  
To make our potions true.*

*The night is calm and peaceful,  
The lamb bleats in his stall.  
We guard the village and the home  
From dangers great and small.*

*For we are witches, one and all,  
And we are not afraid  
Of goblins, grigs and gwyllions,  
Our wards and charms are laid.*

*For we are witches, one and all,  
A coven of the best.  
Good friends who stand together  
Through any threat or test.*

*For we are witches, one and all,  
We know, protect and heal,  
With noble hearts, loyal and kind,  
And courage true as steel.'*

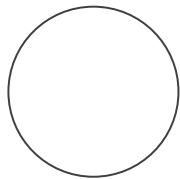
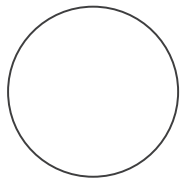
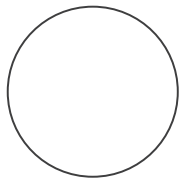
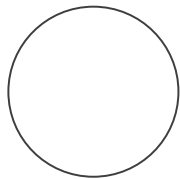
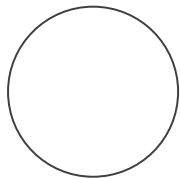
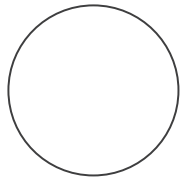
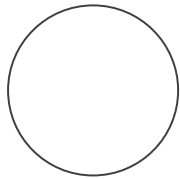
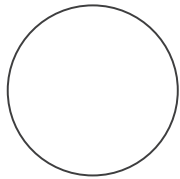
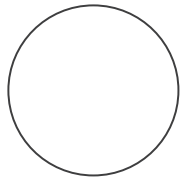
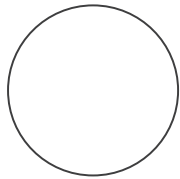
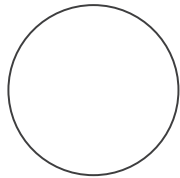
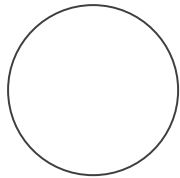
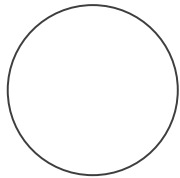
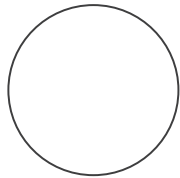
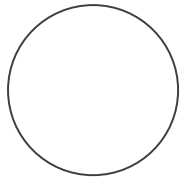
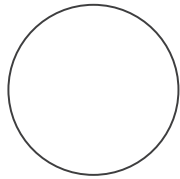
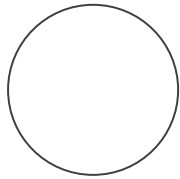
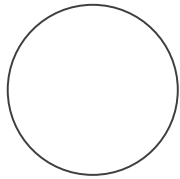
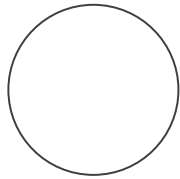
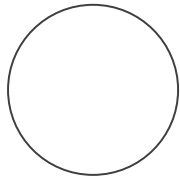
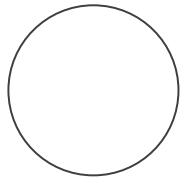
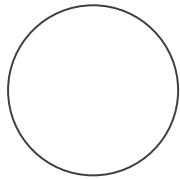
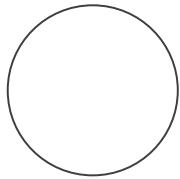
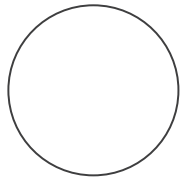
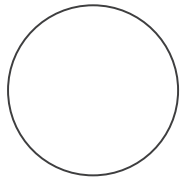
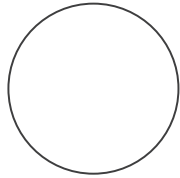
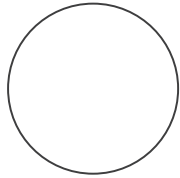
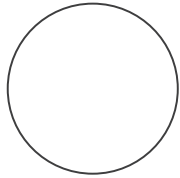
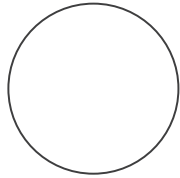
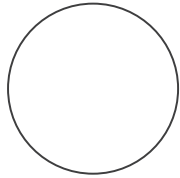
### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What do we learn about the activities of the Hedgely witches from the song? Underline any verbs that tell you what the witches do.
- Can you draw a picture or write one word to represent what that verse of the song is about?
- Highlight the rhyming words in each verse. What is the rhyme scheme of the song?
- What character traits are mentioned in the song? What kind of people do you think the 1st Hedgely Witches aspire to be?
- With a small group, practise reading the song out loud as a poem. Can you think of an action for each verse?



## Activity 2: Keep a moon diary

The first verse of the song in extract 2 is about the night sky. What do you know about the night sky? For the next 30 days, look for the moon every evening and notice what shape you can see. Shade in the circle so that the shape of the moon remains. If it is too cloudy to see the moon, draw a cloud.

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Why do you think the moon looks different on different days? Can you find out what the different phases of the moon are called?

## THEME 3: Learning new skills

Below you will find exclusive details from author Skye McKenna about the badges that Cassie and the other member of 1st Hedgely Coven can earn on their path to becoming fully fledged witches!

### Coven Badges

**Skill badges:** These badges are embroidered fabric circles sewn on to cloaks. They are earned by completing a series of tasks. Some of the skills badges are listed below.

**Fledgling, Sapling and Sterling pins:** These pins are awarded for passing the three major tests of witchcraft within the coven system. They are metal pins worn on cloak collars.

**Event badges:** These badges are awarded for attending events such as the Midsummer Fair. They are fabric badges usually sewn on to camp blankets or casual clothes.

**Award badges:** These badges are given for things like perfect attendance and uniform or being camp monitor.

A selection of some of the skills badges:

Badge Name	Image on the badge
Broom Courier	Winged letter
Chantress	Nightingale
Curse Breaker	Candle
Faery Tracker	Pointy footprints
Friend to Familiars	Mouse in a witch's hat
Herb Grower	Seedling in a pot
Highflyer	Broomstick and moon
Kitchen Witch	Spoon and stars
Lore Keeper	Stack of books
Magical First Aider	Pot of ointment and leaves
Mushroomer	Fly agaric mushroom
Potioner (white, red and black levels)	Bubbling cauldron (white, red or black)
Rune Reader	Pouch of rune stones
Stargazer	Constellation
Stone Seeker	Quartz crystal
Ward Weaver	Spider's web

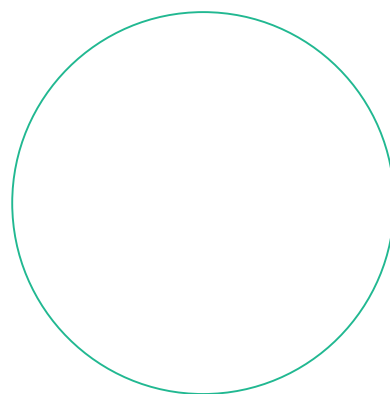
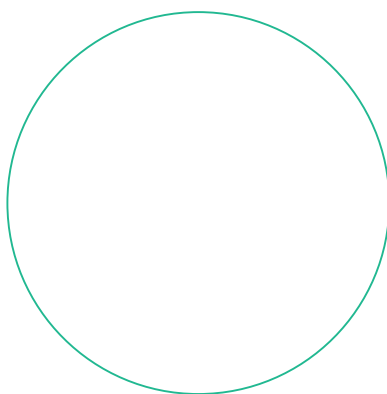
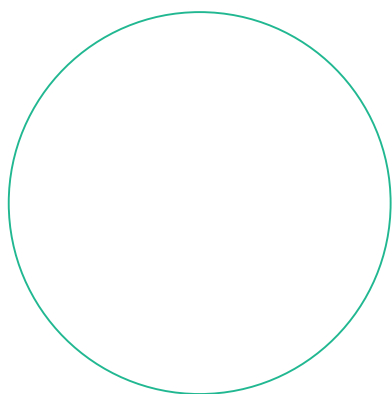
### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Which kind of badges are sewn onto cloaks?
- Which badges might be sewn onto camp blankets or casual clothes?
- Choose one of the skills badges and describe what kind of skills you think it would involve.
- Which of the skills badges do you think sounds the most interesting?
- Play badge pictionary! In a small group, take it in turns to draw a picture of one of the skills badges. Who can guess which badge is being drawn first?
  - Which skills badge do you think Cassie would most want to achieve and why?
  - Are there any badges you think would be suited to Cassie and her skills and strengths?

As you read the rest of the book, highlight or underline any badges that Cassie and her friends either work towards or achieve.

### Activity 3: Design your own badges

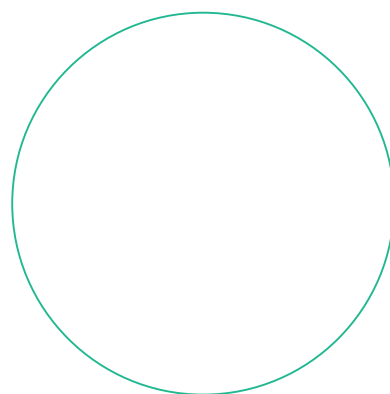
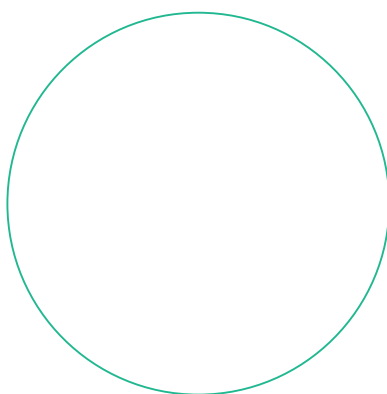
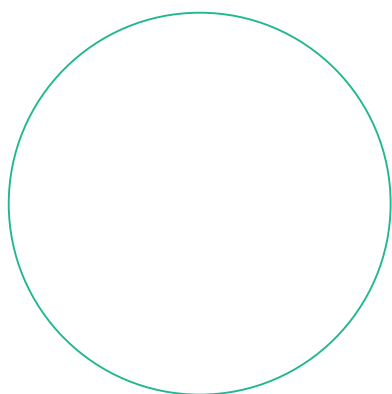
Think about a hobby or activity that you really enjoy such as skateboarding, baking, rock climbing or reading. What skills does this activity involve? Can you design some skills badges for your chosen activity? You might like to include badges for skills you've already mastered and badges for skills you hope to achieve. Draw your badges in the circles below. Above each picture, write the name of the badge and below the picture write a description of the tasks that must be completed to earn this badge.



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Now, read pages 176–177 in which the members of Ash Patrol take it in turns to share their different skills with Cassie. In a small group, take turns to describe your badges to the rest of the group. Perhaps you could arrange a series of skill-share sessions where everyone in your class has an opportunity to demonstrate and teach their own particular skills to others?

## THEME 4: Into the woods

**PRE-READ QUESTIONS:** How old is the oldest tree in Britain? Carry out some research to find out. What do you think life would have been like at the time this tree was a sapling? What historical events have occurred since this tree began its life?

### EXTRACT 3 (pages 236-237)

The oaks were ancient, some of them had trunks so wide that it would take all of Ash Patrol to encircle them, their arms outstretched. Cassie walked on, stepping over gnarled roots and ducking low branches. At the heart of the oak wood was a tree so old that its crown had died away, leaving only the lower boughs which dragged along the ground as if too heavy for the tree to sustain. Yet its leaves were as fresh and green as the youngest sapling and made a curtain that brushed Cassie's face as she stepped beneath it. She stood before the old tree and felt the dangers of the Hedge recede. Here, she was safe, unseen from the outside and protected by the solid presence of the oak. Cassie traced her fingers on the bark, wondering just how old the tree was. Hundreds of years? Thousands?

It was curious the way the bark twisted and bulged. There was a knot of wood that almost looked like a face, an old man's face with a bulbous nose, bushy brows and whiskers. The cracks in the bark formed laughter lines around the mouth and eyes. It was a kindly face, she thought. Cassie reached out to touch it and felt a warm, fluttering sensation at her chest – her key, it was growing warm again.

The tree sneezed.

Cassie stepped back and tripped over a root, falling with a thud in the leaf mould. She pulled herself up again and brushed her skirt. The tree was still, the wooden face remained inert. Perhaps she had been in the Hedge for too long and it was doing strange things to her mind. Trees often looked like they had faces, the way clouds sometimes looked like fish or birds. She was letting her imagination run away with her.

Two slits in the wood opened to reveal deep brown eyes, bleary and glazed with sleep.

'Nimue?' asked the tree.

Cassie fought the urge to run. The tree was talking, that was unusual, but she supposed there were a lot of unusual things in the Hedge. If there were talking cats and toads then why not trees as well?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

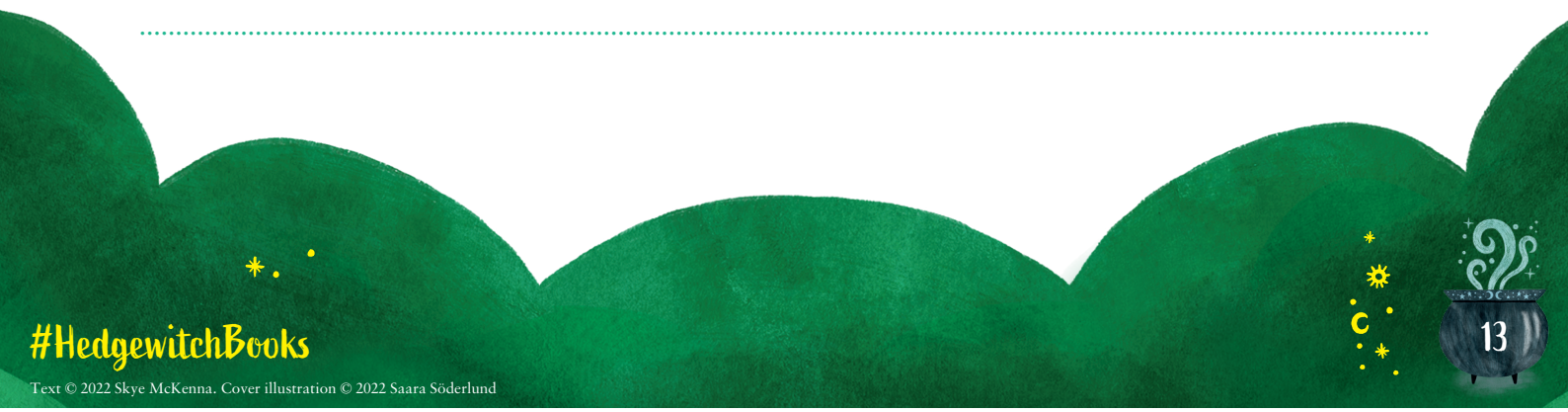
- How does the author describe the size of the most ancient oaks in the wood? Can you estimate the circumference of the trunks of these ancient oaks?
- What do you think the 'crown' of a tree might be? What is a 'bough'?
- How does Cassie feel when she first stands beneath the ancient oak?
  - Underline any adjectives the author uses to describe the face in the tree.
  - What does Cassie's reaction when the tree sneezes suggest about how she feels?
  - How does Cassie react when the tree speaks?
  - What do you think might happen next in the story?

## Activity 4: A walk in the woods

- Go for a walk somewhere there are plenty of trees – perhaps in your school grounds or a nearby park or woods. Take a tape measure, clipboard, paper and pencil.
- Can you find the tree trunk in your area with the smallest circumference and the tree trunk with the largest circumference? Working with a partner or small group, begin by finding a tree and estimating the circumference of its trunk. Then, use a tape measure to measure the circumference to the nearest cm and record your results. Continue, estimating, measuring and recording the circumference of different trees. (It's a good idea to measure the circumference of each tree trunk at approximately the same height from the ground so that you can compare them fairly.) Share your results with your class and discuss.
- As a general rule, the larger the circumference of the tree trunk, the older the tree. Which tree do you think is the oldest tree in your area? Stand beneath this tree, just as Cassie stands beneath the ancient oak. Take some time to get to know the tree: feel its textures, explore the patterns in its bark, look at the shape of its leaves and branches. What words would you use to describe this tree? How do you feel as you stand beneath it?
- Use your imagination to answer these questions and discuss them with your class:
  - If this tree could see, what might it have seen during its lifetime?
  - If this tree could hear, what sounds might it have heard?
  - What memories might this tree have?
  - What do you think this tree might feel?
  - If this tree could talk, what do you think it might say? Do you think it might have any questions or advice for humans?
- Plan a short story in which your main character encounters a tree and discovers it can talk just like Cassie does in extract 3. The setting should be outdoors. Your main character should have a problem that need solving just like Cassie does. Perhaps your character is in the woods looking for a lost dog or maybe they've just started a new school and they're alone in the playground? How might they encounter the tree and how might they react when they discover it can talk? What do they say to each other? Perhaps the tree helps your character in some way?
- You can write your story on the following page. Use strong descriptive language to build up a picture of the tree and include speech marks to punctuate the conversation. You can re-read extract 3 for ideas and inspiration.



Handwriting practice area consisting of 20 horizontal dotted lines on a white background.



## Further writing opportunities

- Choose one of the houses in Hedgely (have a look at the map for ideas). Imagine you are an estate agent and you have been tasked with selling this house. How would you persuade somebody to buy it? What could you tell them about Hedgely? How could you make living near The Hedge sound really appealing? Write an estate agent's brochure for the house. Use strong persuasive language to convince your reader that this is the ideal home and location for them!
- Write your own version of the song on page 146–147 (extract 2). Use a similar structure and rhyme scheme but instead of writing your song about a coven, write it about your class. What do you like about your class and what do you enjoy doing together?
- In Chapter 12 (page 155), we learn a bit more about Ivy's family. Write a diary entry from the point of view of Ivy. How do you think Ivy feels about Cassie joining the coven? What are her hopes and fears?
- Tabitha's grandmother has a spell for finding her gloves because she is always losing them (pages 200-201). Write a rhyming 'spell' of your own for something that's always going missing such as a sock, your little brother's favourite toy, your mum's car keys or the white board pens in your classroom!
- On page 401, 'The Argent Star' is awarded 'in recognition of bravery, skill and service to the community'. What is 'community'? Can you think of someone in your community who deserves recognition for their service? Write a speech about this person. Describe how they help the community and why you think their work is important.

# Thank you for using this resource pack!

Please share your writing and activities with us:

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