

THE WARRIOR IN MY WARDROBE

SIMON FARNABY

READING NOTES AND ACTIVITIES FOR KS2

Suitable for:
Ages 8+

Includes:
Extracts from the book + corresponding reading questions and activities

Subject Checklist:

- ✓ Reading Comprehension and Inference
- ✓ Writing
- ✓ History
- ✓ Art, Design & Technology
- ✓ Drama



ABOUT THE SERIES

Merdyn the Wild is from the Dark Ages. He's the world's greatest Warlock (don't call him a wizard), banished to the 21st century for bad behaviour, and he's about to create a whole load of trouble for Rose, aged 12. Join them on two hilarious adventures that might just end in an epic wizard battle - if you're lucky.

ABOUT THE BOOK

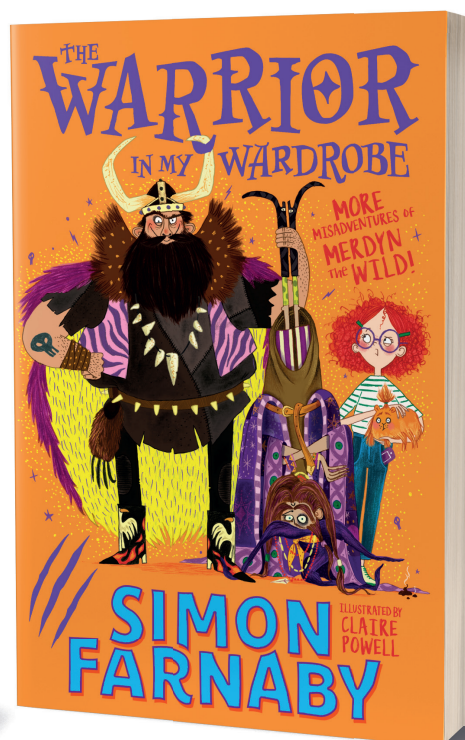
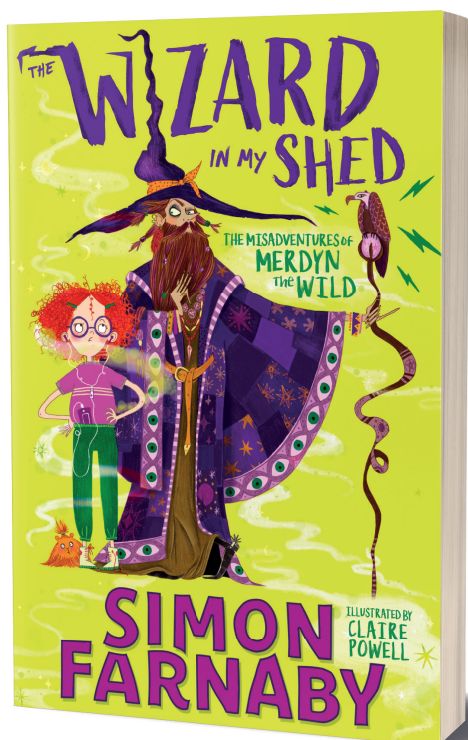
THE WARRIOR IN MY WARDROBE

*Merdyn is the greatest wizard of the Dark Ages. Obviously.
Rose is his 21st-century descendent. Lucky her.*

And Vanheldon the vandal warrior is FURIOUS! After all, last time they met, Merdyn turned his army to stone.

Seeking revenge, Vanheldon comes up with a way to kidnap Rose and transport her back to Dark Ages Transylvania, set on luring Merdyn into a terrible trap. Except - whoops! - his magical minion kidnaps Rose's teenage brother Kris instead.

Rose, Merdyn and Bubbles the guinea pig must team up to save the day. But can they rescue Kris without creating historical mayhem? Will Rose's wizard ancestor even remember her? (And want to help them?) And will Bubbles ever stop pooping?



RESOURCE PACK OBJECTIVES & OUTCOMES

1. **Introducing Vanheldon** Extract: pages 16–18

Reading Focus: To retrieve information about Vanheldon from a passage in the book.

Outcomes: A summary of key information and language used to describe Vanheldon; a mini-biography of the character.

2. **Create a Character** Extract: pages 16–18

Writing Focus: To plan and describe a new character from a historical period.

Outcomes: A Character Map; a humorous description of a chosen character.

3. **Pick a Pet!** Extract: pages 7–8

Reading Focus: To retrieve information about Bubbles from a passage in the book.

Outcome: A gallery of pets with superpowers!

4. **Diary Entry of a Pet** Extract: pages 28–30

Writing Focus: To use vocabulary, style and tone to create the voice of a new character.

Outcomes: A diary entry from a pet character's perspective; a performance of the diary entry.



CHAPTER THREE

SURPRISE!
THESE PAGES RETURN
TO THE DARK AGES


The year 521 to be precise. Ten years after Merdyn had returned from the future. But we're not going to see your favourite warlock-turned-wizard just yet. We're not in Bashingford now! Far from it. We're in what is now Romania. *Transylvania* to be precise (again) . . .

Transylvania in the Dark Ages was a land in turmoil. The Romans had conquered the place and then been thrown out by the Vandals*, who in turn had been thrown out by the Goths**.

There was such upheaval that by the year 521 nobody really knew who was in charge, so it ended up being home

*The Vandals were from Germania (modern-day Germany) and they quite enjoyed sticking it to the Romans, often smashing up their beautiful buildings and artwork just for the heck of it (hence the term "vandalism").

**"Goth" derives from two tribes, the Visigoths and the Ostrogoths, who invaded the Roman Empire in the second and third centuries. Today the word is often associated with music and fashion. A "goth" is characterised as someone drawn to mystery, horror and gloom. The Romans would certainly agree with that!




to various waifs and strays who had been chased out of other countries and didn't really know where to go. One such person was Vanheldon – king of the Vandals.

Vanheldon was an imposing battle-hardened warrior with thick matted hair and a long wiry beard that made it look like a giant hedge on legs was running towards you. He had small dark eyes set into his grey craggy face like two caves in a mountain slope. His nose had been broken so many times it looked more like a potato. He wore llama-skin boots on his feet, deer-skin trousers on his legs, a bear-skin tunic covered his barrel-like chest, and he had a necklace adorned with tiger teeth and dried dead rats. To top it off he wore a leather helmet on his head with bull horns sticking out of it. It was fair to say he was NOT a vegetarian!

Vanheldon had once commanded hundreds of soldiers. But one day he led an invasion of Albion (England) and had his entire army destroyed by one man. That man's name was . . . Merdyn the Wild.

The Vandal king went back to mainland Europe with only his daughter Vanhessa, a couple of guards and a trunk



full of his dead soldiers' belongings. He roamed from place to place before eventually settling in what became Transylvania. The weather there suited him, because it was dark, broody and unpredictable. There he cleared an area of woodland on the top of a hill above a small village and built a sinister-looking fortress*. It was square in shape with a courtyard in the centre and a watchtower in the middle of one side adorned with giant wooden bull horns. The whole building was surrounded by a fence of sharpened wooden stakes on top of which he placed various dead animals' heads. This was a decoration that would be copied nearly a thousand years later by Transylvania's other famous son, Vlad the Impaler**.

If the animal heads on sticks didn't put off unwanted visitors, then its name would. Vanheldon called his home Fort Doom.

*He would have built a castle but stone castles wouldn't be invented until the twelfth century, so he built a wooden fortress instead.

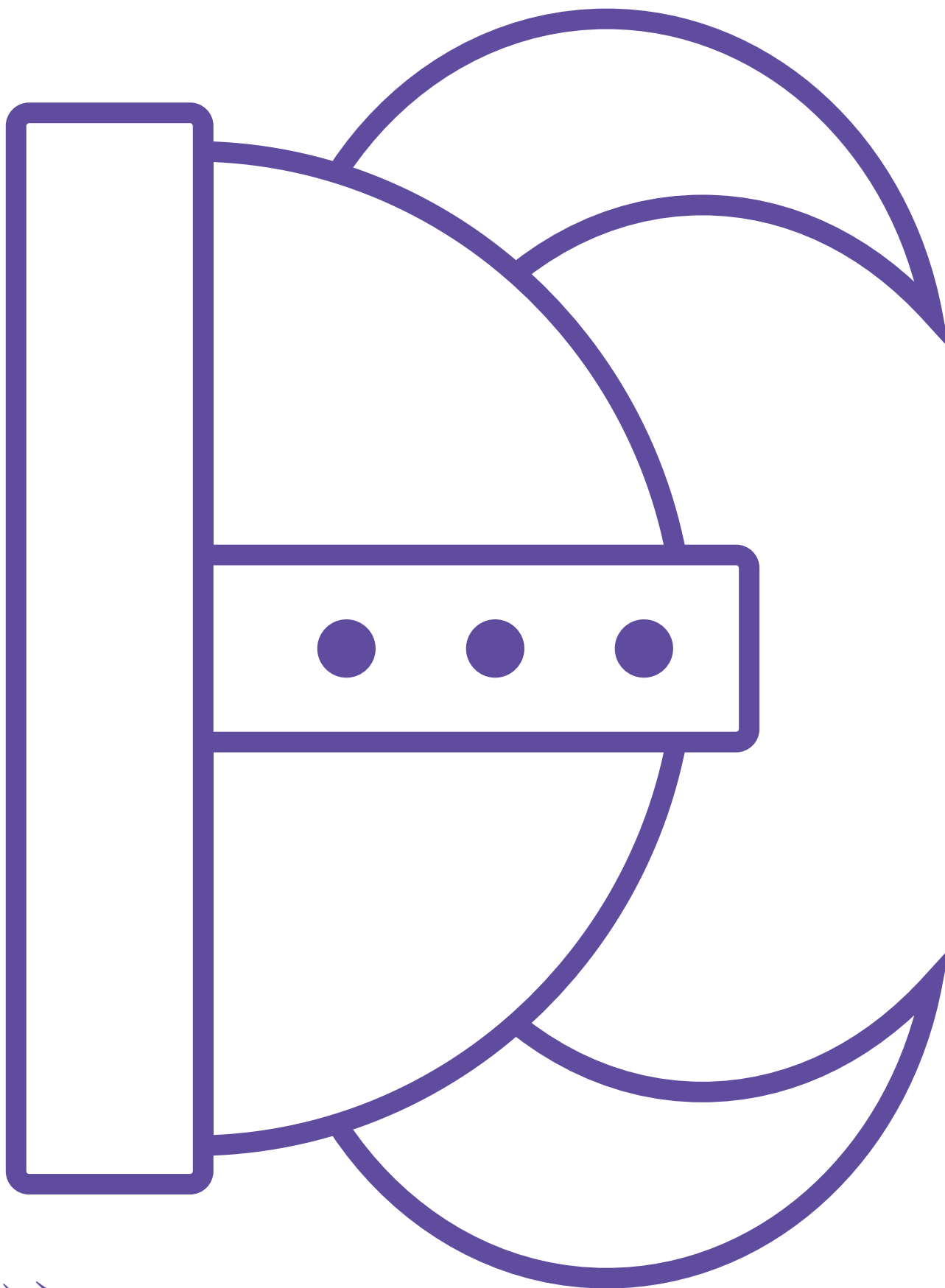
**Vlad the Impaler became ruler of Romania in 1436. His father's name was Dracul, which meant that Vlad was also known as Dracula (son of Dracul) – so no guessing which famous horror character was named after him! (Count Dracula, the vampire – are you keeping up? What are you doing down here? Get back to the action!)

Reading Questions (p17):

- What period of history is Vanheldon from? What do you know of this period?
- Find one of the similes used to describe Vanheldon. Why is it effective?
- What impression was the author trying to create when he put 'tiger teeth' and 'dried dead rats' on Vanheldon's necklace?
- Find definitions of the following words: imposing, matted, scraggy, adorned.
- How has the author used humour in this description? Give three examples.



ACTIVITY: Use the information on pages 16–18 to find out more about the character of Vanheldon. Put the information you find into Vanheldon’s helmet below. You could even use it to write a mini-biography of Vanheldon!



2: CREATE A CHARACTER *Pages 16–18*

ACTIVITY: Create a historical character of your own using the description of Vanheldon on pages 16–18 as a model.

1. First, pick a character and a title for your story. Consider what periods in history interest you or that you've been learning about in school. For example: *There's a Gladiator in My Garden*, *There's a Tudor in Our Toolshed*, *There's a Pharaoh in the Photobooth!*
2. Carry out some research! You may need time to look at relevant pictures or texts to help decide how your character might behave or look. You should also gather some historical facts to include in your footnotes later.
3. Make initial notes in the Character Map outlined in the template below.
4. When you have made initial notes, write some ideas around your map for how you could describe your character. What words would you use? What similes? Ensure you are making interesting vocabulary choices and consider using some of the vocabulary explored in the Vanheldon example to describe your character.
5. You may also want to draw any additional details for your character, such as a helmet or jewellery.
6. Write a descriptive paragraph about your character. Remember to include a humorous simile. For example: *'He looked like a giant hedge on legs'* or *'His nose was like a potato.'*

CHALLENGE: Include a historical footnote in the style of the book. Look at how these are referenced using asterisks in the text. For example: *'Vandals*'* and *'Goths**'* (p16)





Name:

Historical period:

Sketch:

Setting/Home:

Personality:

Triumphs:

Failures:

Appearance:

Descriptive words:

Similes:

Descriptive paragraph:


Historical details (footnotes):

And so he came up with new, exciting spells that she couldn't perform. The invisibility spell was one of them, and he had recently perfected a memory-wipe spell.

Rose was furious as she had been trying to perfect that spell for ages but just couldn't get it right. Stupid Kris had mastered it in weeks! Even more annoying was that he wouldn't share it with her. It would have been soooo useful in her vet clinic. She could get cats to forget being traumatised by dogs, and dogs to forget being traumatised by cats. But would Kris share it? No. Kris didn't see why he should share it when she wouldn't give him the pinecone spell that Rose used to allow her pet guinea pig, Bubbles, to speak. He wanted to use it on a wasp, which Rose thought was ridiculous (and so did Bubbles).

What annoyed Rose most – although she hated to admit it – was that deep down she knew she just wasn't as good at magic as Kris. I mean, yes, she'd saved the world once, but she had had Merdyn to help her then, the greatest wizard of all time. On her own she was just a mediocre W-blood at best, and she hated Kris for spelling it out (literally) so clearly for her.





Rose's beloved father, who had died a few years ago, had always told Rose that she would do something special with her life, would BE something special. When she found out she could do magic, she'd thought that was it! THIS was what her father had meant! But now Kris could do magic too. Not only that, he could do magic BETTER than her. Well, what made her so special now? Nothing. These were the thoughts that went through her head every night and which would keep her awake until she cried herself to sleep.

"Would you mind keeping the noise down please?" a voice would often pipe up from the cage in the corner of her bedroom. There sat a yellow guinea pig, munching on muesli.

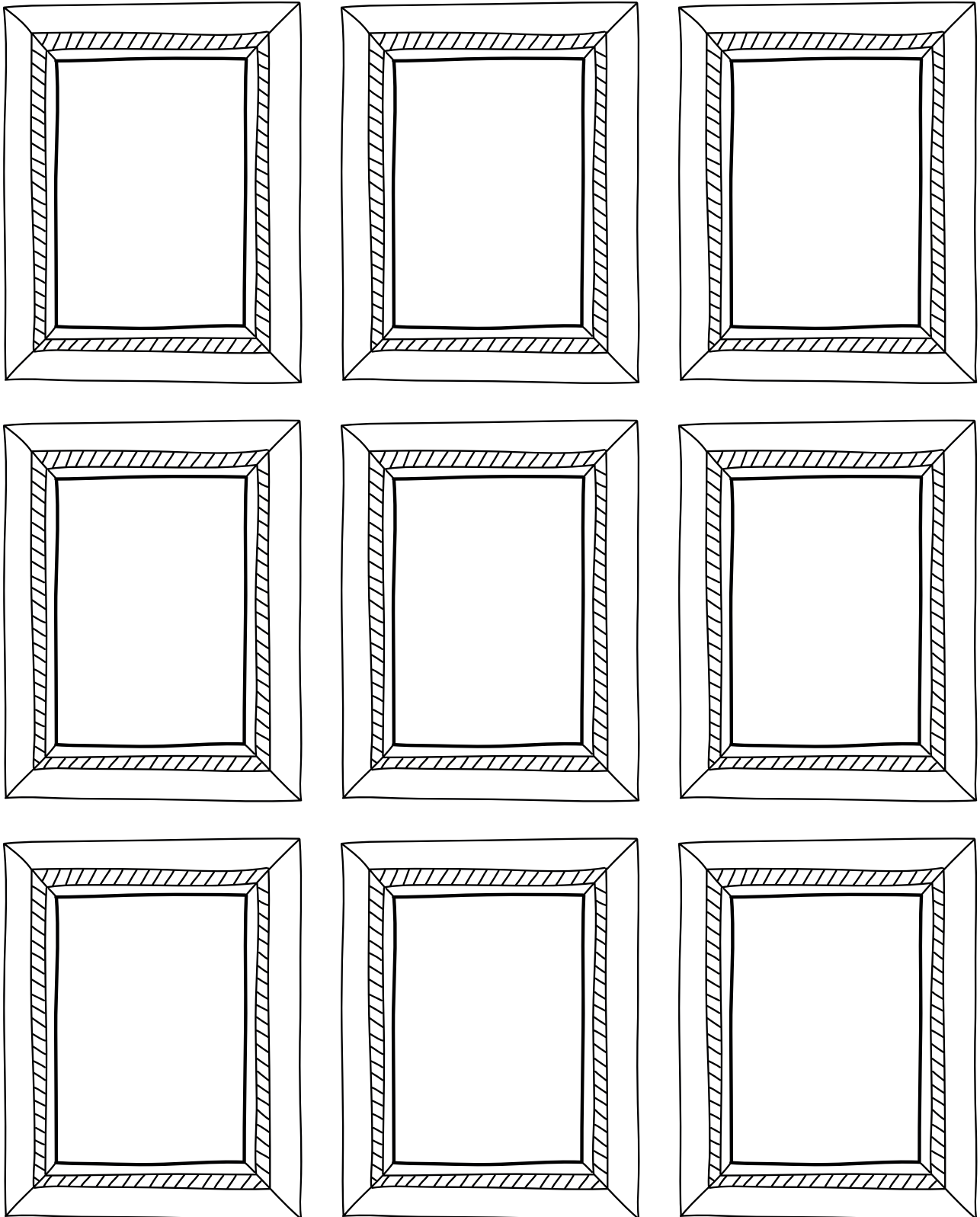
*The voice
was from Bubbles,
A beloved pet
who didn't care for troubles.*

Reading Questions:

- How does Rose feel in this passage? Why?
- Who is Bubbles? What is his unique power?
- How did Bubbles get this power?
- What did Rose think was 'ridiculous'? Why?
- What colour is Bubbles? What does he enjoy eating?
- What can you guess about Bubbles' personality from the passage?



ACTIVITY: It's time to create household pets of your own – with unique powers!
You could pick from a: rabbit, hamster, iguana, grass snake, cat, tarantula – or something else! Think about how the pets will get their powers. Create a gallery of your new pets by filling in the template below!




Bubbles pressed record on the Dictaphone and listed all the good things about being able to talk . . .

Right. Shhh. Quiet. OK. Here goes . . . Ahem.

1. Food. Being able to talk means I can ask Rose for any kind of food I want. At the moment I'm into organic muesli from the posh pet shop in town. It's ace.

2. Poos. The organic muesli keeps my poos nice and regular, which is what guinea pigs are good at. One poo every seven minutes is ideal for me. Soft fresh fruit makes me poo far too regularly – say, once every four minutes, which is just too often and makes life all about poo. It's all poo, poo, poo, poo, and no one needs that, not even a guinea pig. Now, non-organic muesli makes me poo every ten minutes, which is far *too long* to wait and makes me feel anxious. So being able to ask for my favourite muesli is very important. This one is really to do with food



again, but I didn't just want to talk about food all the time.

3. Food. Being able to talk also lets me tell other animals to stay away from my food. While I'm in the garden or at the shops with my owner Rose, birds, cats and even dogs will often try to eat my food. I tell them to "get lost" and they tend to freak out because they've never heard a guinea pig talk before. So that's another good thing. Right.

4. Dogs. Did I mention I hate dogs? And when I say I hate them, I mean I HAAAAAATE them. I HAAAAATE THEM. I, I, I HAAAAAATE them so much. I mean, HAAAAA— You get the picture. I hate *everything* about them. Their slobbery mouths and unreasonably wet noses. Why are their noses so wet? What's all that about? D'you know what I mean?! *My* nose isn't wet! And what's worse is that they poke their

noses into everyone else's business. And they think they're sooooo great because they can run fast and bark and stuff. I haaaate them! I think I said that. I like being able to talk so I can tell dogs to get lost and freak them out. I did mention this in number 3 but I just wanted to say it again because I cannot tell you how much I HAAAATE dogs.

5. Food. Being able to ask for food is good.

6. Poos. I might have mentioned poos. But being able to talk is good for my poos because being able to talk means I can control my food. So, poos. And what else? Oh yes.

7. Did I mention that I hate dogs? Well, I do, I HAAAAATE them. The end.

Bubbles had only just finished his list when Rose rushed in, looking flustered.



