

Don't Hog the Hedge!

“Goodness me!” snorted Hattie the Hedgehog. “It’s half past September already. I haven’t got time to play! I must finish my hibernation checklist.”

As the leaves grew crispier, and the air colder, Hattie worked hard to prepare her winter home.

She snuggled tightly into her cosy and comfortable hedge, just in time for the Big Sleep.

Just as she was drifting off, little footsteps caused her to open her eyes.

“Who could that be?” she grumbled, as she stuck her furry and slightly damp nose out of the hedge.



Three dormice, Dylan, Dexter and Doris, popped up out of a patch of fallen leaves.

“We were just admiring the beautiful home you have made,” Dylan squeaked. “Could we stay here for the Big Sleep too?”

“Your nest looks so wonderfully warm and you have prepared it so well. So, please... don’t hog the hedge!”

“Well, my hedge is only really set up for one,” Hattie grunted. “But as you’re all only little, I can probably find some space for you, just this once.”



Just as soon as they had settled in, Hattie heard a new, very strange sound heading their way.

Thud... shuffle... shuffle... thud!

Toby the Toad came to a stop in front of the hedge.

"Hello! Can I hunker down in that marvellous hedge of yours?" he croaked loudly.

"Your nest looks so comfy and you have prepared it so well. So, please... don't hog the hedge!"



"You really should have sorted out a place to stay sooner!" Hattie scolded. "But I suppose you can stay if you promise not to leap around too much."

Hattie budged up closer to the dormice to give Toby more room. The hedge may have been very short of space now but it was much cosier than before.

"Thank you so much for sharing with us," Doris said.

"You're my hero!" Toby declared.

As the animals thanked her, Hattie's prickly mood began to change.

"I've never been called a hero before!" she said, proudly.

She happily snuggled down tight into her leafy bed with her new companions, but just as her tired little eyes gently closed...





Buzzzzzzzzzz! A bumblebee appeared.

“Sorry to disturb you all,” she called, “but I can see that the home you have made is, quite simply, fit for a queen. And well, here I am – Queen Beatrice!”

“Your nest looks so snugly and safe, and you have prepared it so well. So, please... don't hog the...”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah! You don't need to ask, Your Majesty,” Hattie chuckled. “Just come on in and make yourself at home.”

What a squashed-up bunch they were! Hattie's spikes tickled Toby's toes and everyone was trying hard to avoid Queen Beatrice's sting. Eventually, they all settled down but then...

Sob... snuffle... sob... “Waaah!”

Billy, a young and very upset bat, floated gently down beside the hedge.

“I'm lost! I can't find my family,” he sobbed. “Can I hang out in your company for a little while?”

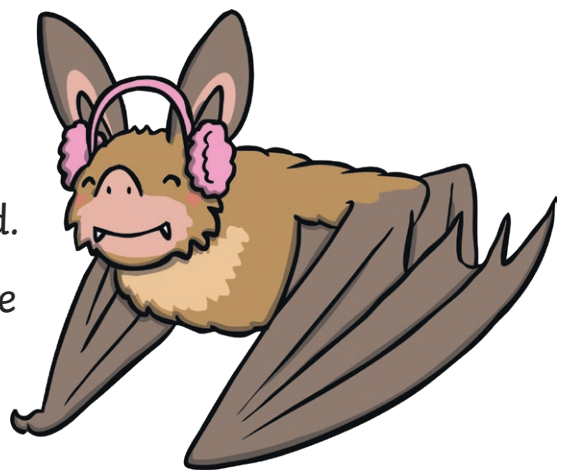
Hattie looked around at her cramped little shelter.

“I don't think there's any hedge left to hog!” she said. “We simply cannot all fit in.”

But then, she did something totally unexpected...

“You can have my space,” Hattie offered.

She stepped out of the hedge to make room for the lost little bat.



But then, her friends did something even more unexpected...

They all stepped out of the hedge as well!

"This hedge is not a home without you, Hattie," squeaked Dexter.

"Let's find a place where we can all fit."

Hattie felt warm and fuzzy inside, even though it was freezing outside!

So, they set off and soon found a new, more perfect spot for their big and well-deserved sleep...

...and they found Billy's family there, too.

All of them!



Questions

1. What kind of animal is Hattie? Tick one.

- a bat
- a hedgehog
- a toad

2. Where did Hattie want to sleep? Tick one.

- under a rock
- in a tree
- in a hedge

3. What did the other animals want to do? Tick one.

- sleep in the hedge too
- go on holiday
- have a party

4. Where did the animals decide to sleep at the end of the story? Tick one.

- a field
- a cave
- the hedge

5. How did Hattie feel at the end of the story? Tick one.

- warm and fuzzy
- cross and upset
- cold and tired