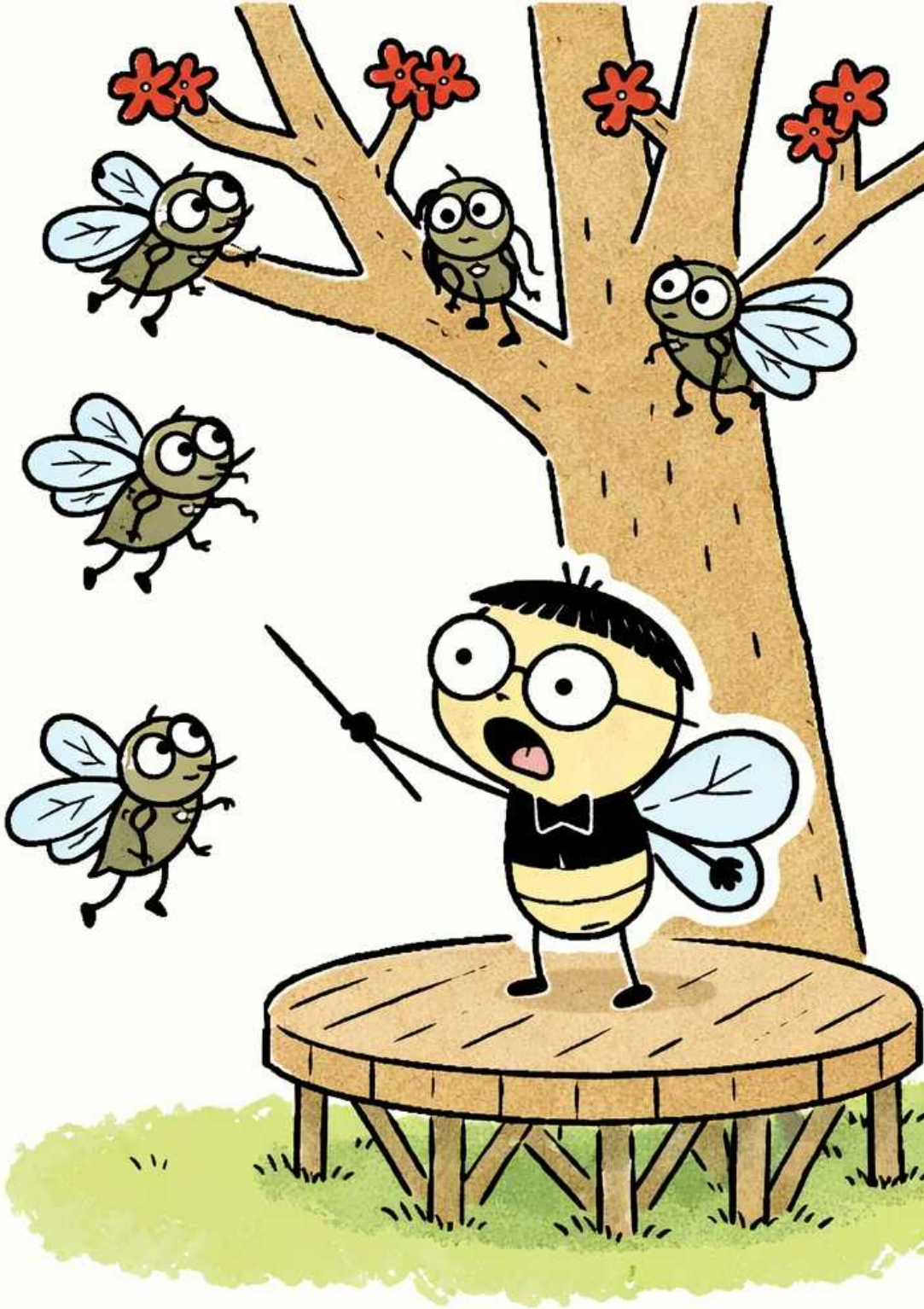
Can a Skittish Bug Conduct?

Pang the cicada had a big problem. A big, belly-flipping problem for a **skittish** bug like him. He had been chosen to conduct the Dry Season Concert, the biggest concert of the year. Every insect in the forest would come to listen. Nothing could go wrong. Pang gripped his baton and stepped up to the wooden platform by the big tree. 'I can do this,' he whispered. 'Probably. Maybe. I think.' His wings trembled. His knees wobbled. His glasses slid down his nose. But the concert was five days away, and ready or not, Pang was in charge.

At practice, the singing was **rubbish.** The low voices sang high. The high voices sang low. A cicada flapped in circles above the music stand. 'Am I a low voice or a high voice?' she asked. 'You are a high voice!' said Pang, pointing at the calendar. 'The concert is in five days!' He waved his baton hard. But nobody seemed worried. Nobody except Pang.

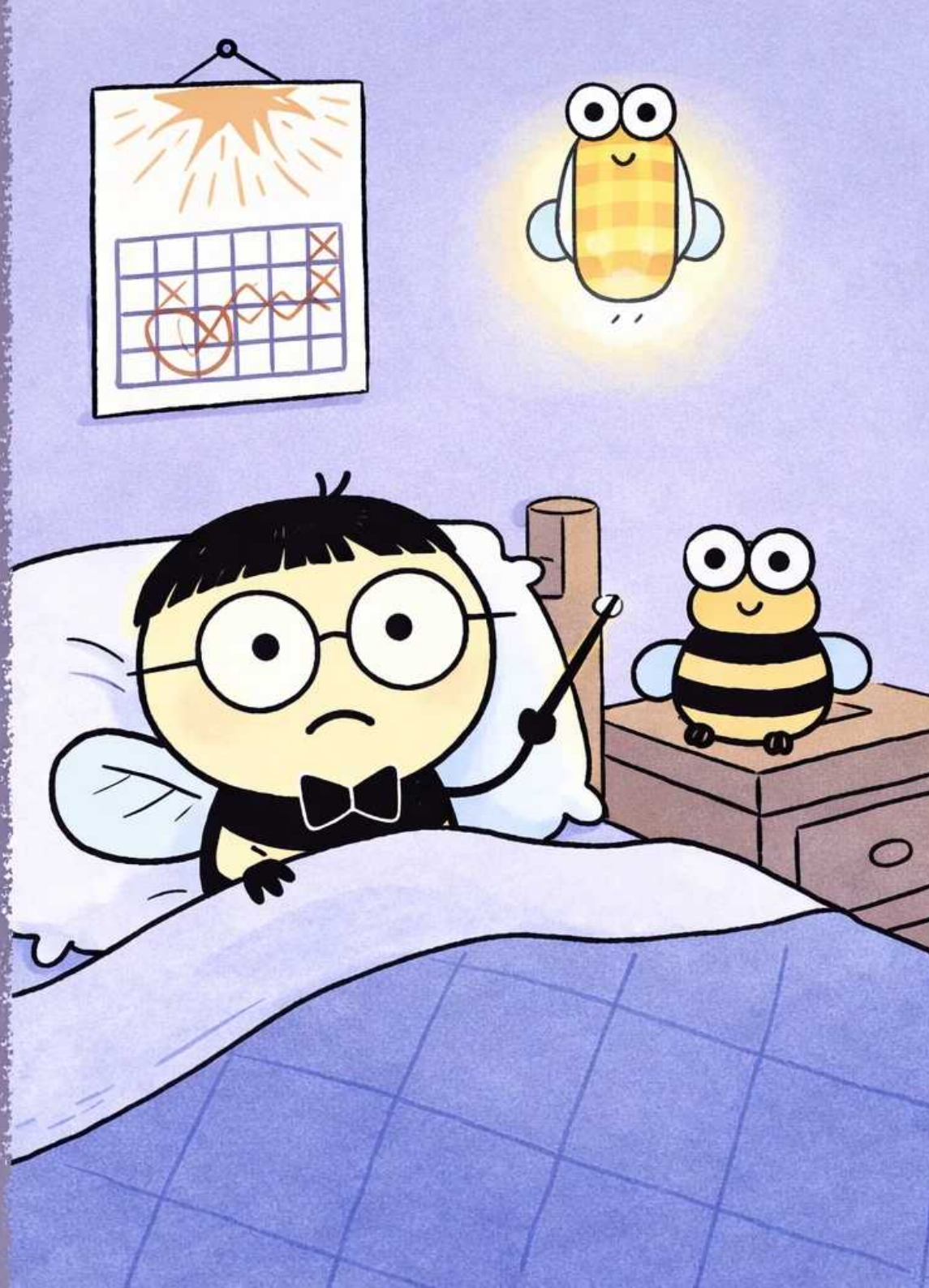
The next morning, Pang went to visit the cicada with the softest voice. He had to lean in just to hear him sing. 'Louder,' Pang said gently. 'The forest needs to hear you. That is how they know the dry season is near.' The small cicada's face went **pinkish.** 'But what if they laugh at me?' 'They will not laugh,' said Pang. 'They will cheer. Trust me.' The small cicada looked up with big, hopeful eyes. 'I will try my very best,' he whispered. Pang trusted him.

The days got hotter. The air got drier. Soon it was time for the final practice. 'To the stage!' Pang called. 'This is it! Our last practice before the real thing!' Cicadas flew in from all sides, bumping into each other mid-air. The next day, all the forest would be watching. Had they practised enough? Had he practised enough? A **foolish** little voice kept saying: maybe not.



The singers opened their blue songbooks. Pang raised his baton. And they sang. The low voices went low. The high voices went high. Nobody was mixed up. Nobody was confused. Nobody was flying in circles. Pang closed his eyes and smiled. 'They truly listened to me,' he whispered, a little shocked. For the first time in five days, a **smallish** thought crept in: maybe, just maybe, this concert was going to be just fine.

That night, Pang could not sleep. He lay in bed clutching his baton while a firefly glowed softly above him. His calendar showed every day crossed off. The concert day was circled in red. 'What if I forget the first beat?' he asked the small bee toy. The bee toy said nothing. 'What if I trip on stage? What if my baton flies out of my hand and hits a bug in the face?' The bee toy still said nothing. It was, after all, a toy. Pang felt a little **sheepish.** Still, he kept talking to it.



Morning came, and it was perfect. The sky was clear. The sun was bright. The dry season had arrived. Beetles, caterpillars, worms, ladybugs, and snails all pushed toward the grassy clearing for the best spot. A shiny beetle bounced up and down. 'I heard this conductor has never done it before!' A caterpillar in a blue scarf raised a brow. 'Brand new? Let us hope he does not mess it up.' Pang, hiding behind the stage, heard every word. He felt **sickish.** His belly did one last big flip.

Pang flew out to the stage. No more hiding. It was time. His singers stood behind him with their blue songbooks open. All the forest was watching. Pang took a deep breath, raised his baton, and called, 'One, two, three, sing!' And they sang. The low voices rumbled. The high voices sparkled. The music swished through the trees and rolled across the clearing. It was the best sound Pang had ever heard in his life. All of his worry seemed to **vanish.** Everything was completely, totally, absolutely perfect.

And then something wet hit Pang right on the nose. Drip. Drip. Drip. Rain. Rain! At a dry season concert!

'That is **rubbish!'** said a cicada beside him, blinking up at the greyish sky. 'It is literally called the dry season!'

But the rain did not care. It fell on the stage, on the songbooks, on Pang's glasses until he could barely see. The singers' voices wobbled. Pages turned soggy. The crowd began to squirm. Pang stared up at the sky, his heart hammering. Everything was falling apart.

The insects below began to panic. Caterpillars curled up. Snails tucked into their shells. A butterfly flapped in frantic circles. Pang looked up. The clouds were thin. He could almost see blue sky behind them. This rain would not last. But if they all ran now, the concert was finished. So Pang spread his wings and flew up above the crowd. 'Insects of the forest!' he shouted, and his voice rang out so loud and clear that every single bug stopped and looked up. Even the **skittish** butterfly.

'Listen!' Pang called from above. 'This rain will **vanish.** It is still the dry season, and this concert is not finished!' For one beat, nobody moved. Then the shiny beetle punched the air. 'You heard the conductor! The show goes on!' Tiny umbrellas popped open. The caterpillar in the blue scarf clapped all of his hands. Insects cheered. Pang flew back to the stage, gave his baton a **swish,** and called, 'From the top! One, two, three, sing!' The singers, **dampish** songbooks and all, lifted their voices louder than ever.

By the time the last note rang out, the rain had stopped and the sky glowed gold. The big tree sparkled with lights, and the forest cheered louder than it ever had. 'That was the best concert this forest has ever had,' said a cicada, nudging Pang with her wing. Pang's face went **pinkish.** His glasses misted up. He tried to say something humble. But what came out was a grin so wide it nearly split his face in two. 'Wait until next year,' he said. 'I am thinking snow.' All the singers groaned.

122

Can a Skittish Bug Conduct?

Pang the cicada has never conducted a concert before, and the biggest one of the year is only five days away. His wings tremble, his knees wobble, and rehearsal turns into a mess of mixed-up voices and worried whispers. Will this skittish bug find the courage to lead the whole forest in song? Created to align with the UFLI Foundations scope and sequence (Lesson 122: -ish), this book practises words like 'skittish', 'rubbish', 'pinkish', 'foolish', 'sheepish'.

Phonics Focus: -ish

dampish, finish, foolish, pinkish, rubbish, sheepish, sickish, skittish, smallish, swish, vanish

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