A Phantom in the Box

Pip is mad for socks. Spot socks. Frill socks. **Phenomenal** socks with wee zigzag stitches. All week she cleans them, dries them, and sorts them into neat little sets. 'There,' she says, and hugs the pile to her chest. 'No one can grab my socks. My socks are best in all the land.'

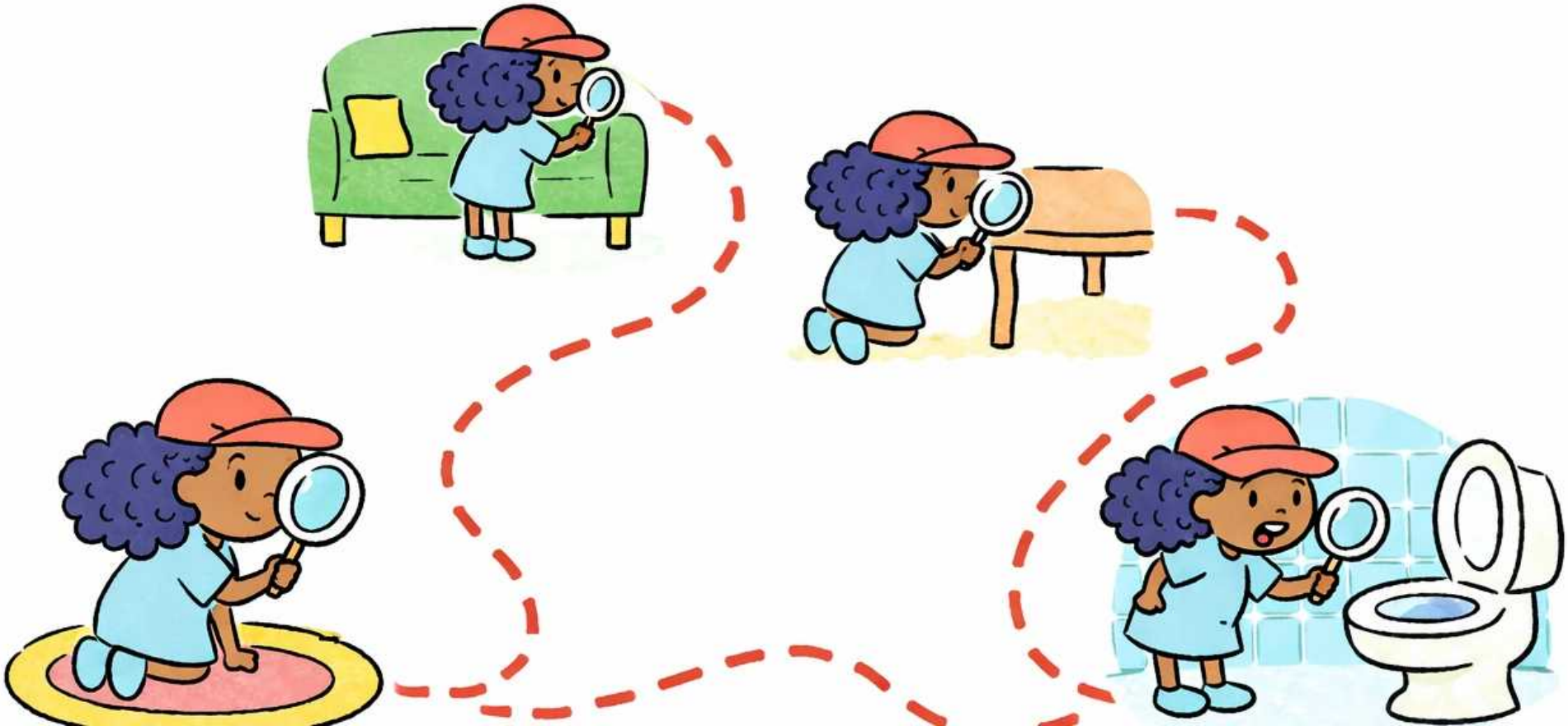
Pip's socks live in a big box under her bed. But her best socks get a little box, tucked snugly inside the big box. Pip keeps them for big days. Birthdays. **Photo** day. Days when she feels smart. She lifts the lid and peeks in. **'Phew,'** she says. 'Still there.'

One morning, Pip lifts the lid off the little box. It is empty! She shakes the box. Nothing. 'My best socks!' she gasps. 'A **phantom** stole my best socks!' Pip tugs on her cap, grabs socks that do not match at all, and marches past Mom. 'I am on the case,' says Pip. Mom starts to say a thing, but Pip is off by then.

Pip stops to dream. The best socks. Pink, with dots on the frills and dots on the heels. Pip can see the socks, sharp as a **photograph.**

'The best socks ever, in all the land,' Pip tells the cloth pile, very stern. The pile says nothing. It is just a pile.

Pip grabs her glass. Not specs. A big glass, just like a top spy has. She checks the couch. Old crumbs. She hunts under the desk. Dust and fluff. She lifts the lid on the loo and peeks in. 'Yuck!' No socks, but **phew,** what a shock.



Pip will not quit. Ace spies do not quit. Then she spots a thing on the ground. A cloth scrap with dots! She lifts her glass, and Pip has an **epiphany.** Pink with plum dots. That is her sock! 'Who took my socks and cut them up?' she gasps.

The scrap trail leads to Mom's room. Like a **phantom,** Pip creeps up and lifts her glass to the wee window in the door. Inside, the stitcher hums. Mom is in there. Snip, snip. Stitch, stitch. Mom hums a soft tune. 'What is Mom making in there?' says Pip.

Pip rushes in. 'My best socks!' she yells. 'The scrap trail ends here, Mom!' Mom is not upset at all. 'Pip, my sweet, the old socks had so many holes. Skin peeked out at the heels and the tips!' Pip is **emphatic.** 'Holes do not upset me! What upsets me is...' But then Mom lifts up a thing, and Pip's mouth gapes.

A doll! Mom has **morphed** the socks into a doll. It has curls, just like Pip's. A wee hat, just like Pip's cap. The frills form a smart ruff at its neck, and the stitches are so wee and neat. Pip holds the doll in her hands. 'It looks like me,' she says. 'Mom! It is me, but small!'

Pip runs and hugs Mom tight. 'This doll is better than socks! Better than ALL the socks!' Then Pip stops. Pip blinks. 'Wait. Mom. Wait. Can any old sock **morph** into a doll? Any sock at all?' Mom nods. Pip grins a big, big grin. 'Quick! We must count all the old socks we have!'

Pip grabs Mom's hand and drags her fast, with so much **oomph.** 'Check the shelf! Check the boxes! Check under all the things!' Pip yells. She dives into a box and comes up waving an old sock. 'Ooh! Dad must have lots. Dad's socks all have holes!'

Dad's socks are so big, Mom can get a doll from the leg part and a doll from the foot part! Pip helps stuff them as Mom stitches, and soon a **phenomenal** little doll team sits on the bed. 'We will make one for all my pals,' says Pip, and starts to count. Then she looks down at her feet. The odd socks from the morning look back up at her. 'Do not get too snug,' she tells them. 'Odd socks are next!'

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A Phantom in the Box

Pip loves her socks more than anything, especially her very best pair kept safe in a secret little box. One morning the box is empty, and she is sure a phantom must be to blame. Grabbing her spy glass, Pip sets off on the case, following a trail of clues straight to Mom's sewing room. What could Mom possibly be making in there? Written for Jolly Phonics classrooms (Step 3, Unit 1: ph as in phone), this book practices words like 'phew', 'photograph', 'emphatic', 'morphed', 'oomph'.

Phonics Focus: <ph>

emphatic, epiphany, morph, morphed, oomph, phantom, phenomenal, phew, photo, photograph

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