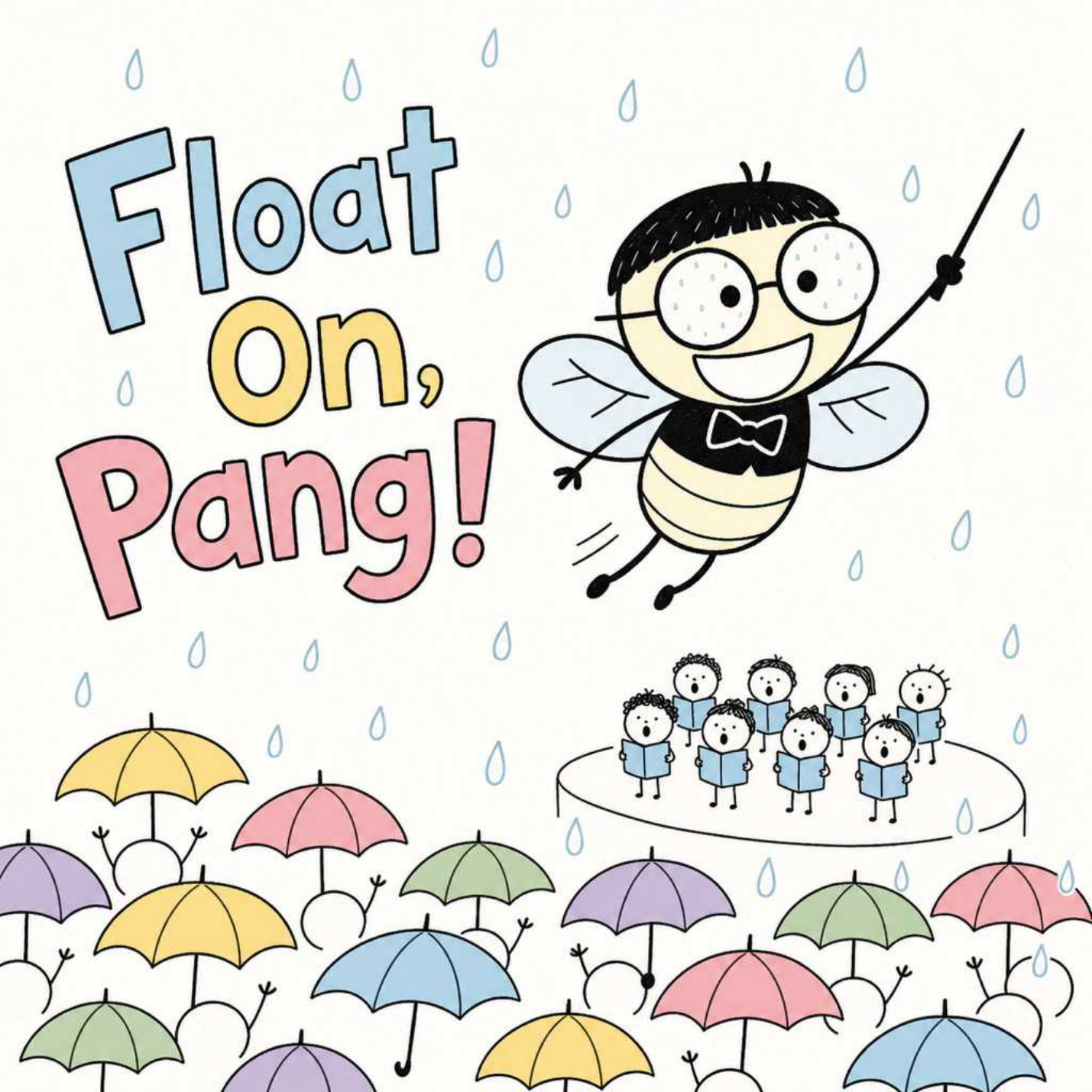
Float On, Pang!

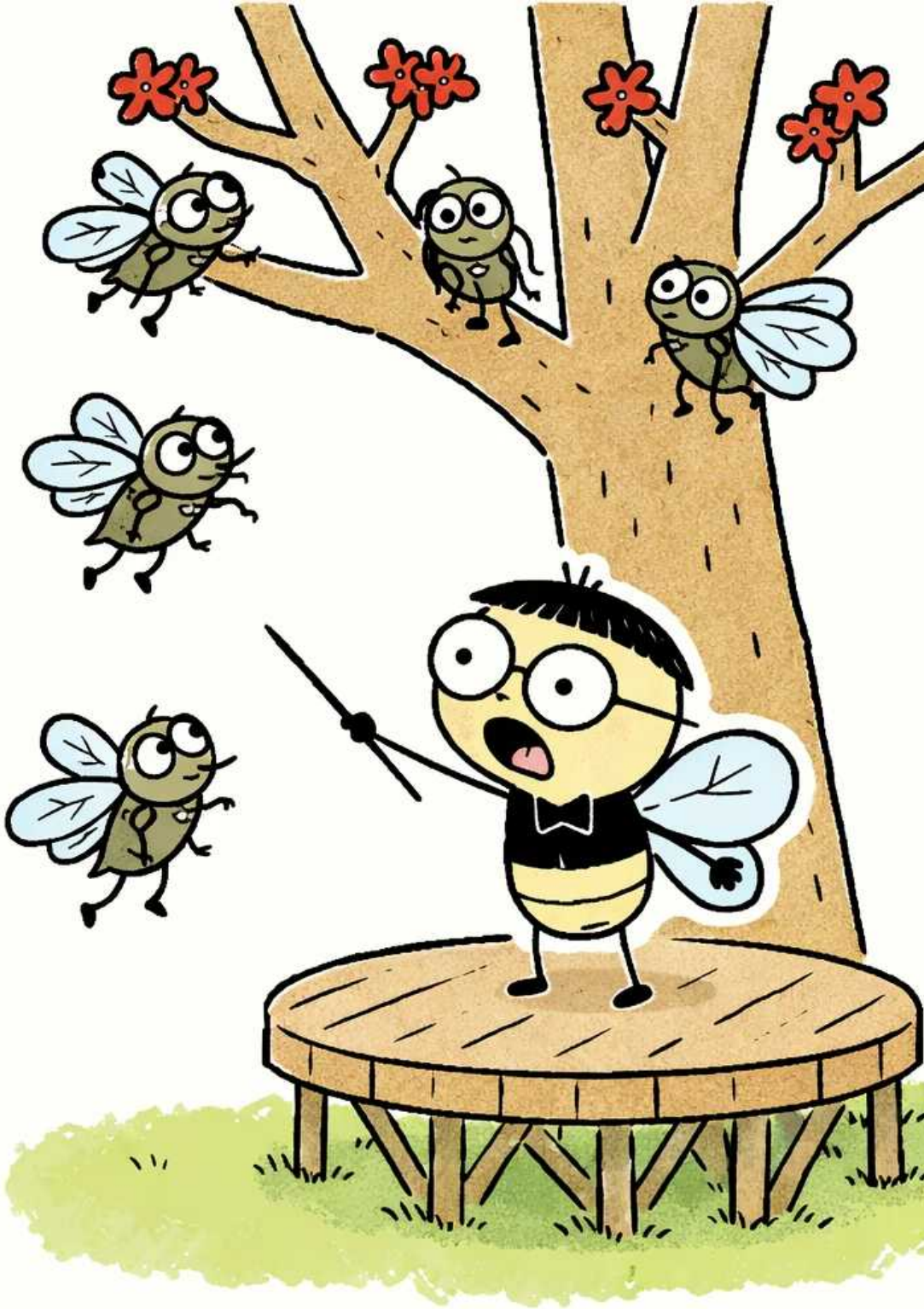


Pang had a big problem. A big, **daunting** problem. He was chosen to lead the Dry Season Show, the grand show in the forest. Every insect came to see it. Nothing could fail. Pang held his baton and walked to the wooden stage by the big tree. 'I can do this,' he whispered. 'Maybe. I think.' His wings shook. His glasses slid down his nose. The show was five days away, and Pang was in charge.

Practice was a mess. The low bugs sang high. The high bugs sang low. One small bug flew above the music stand, **gawking** at the notes. 'Am I a low bug or a high bug?' she said. 'I can not remember!' 'You are a high bug!' Pang said. 'Look at the day chart! The show is in five days! Five!' He waved his baton so hard his arms hurt. But nobody was afraid. Nobody but Pang.

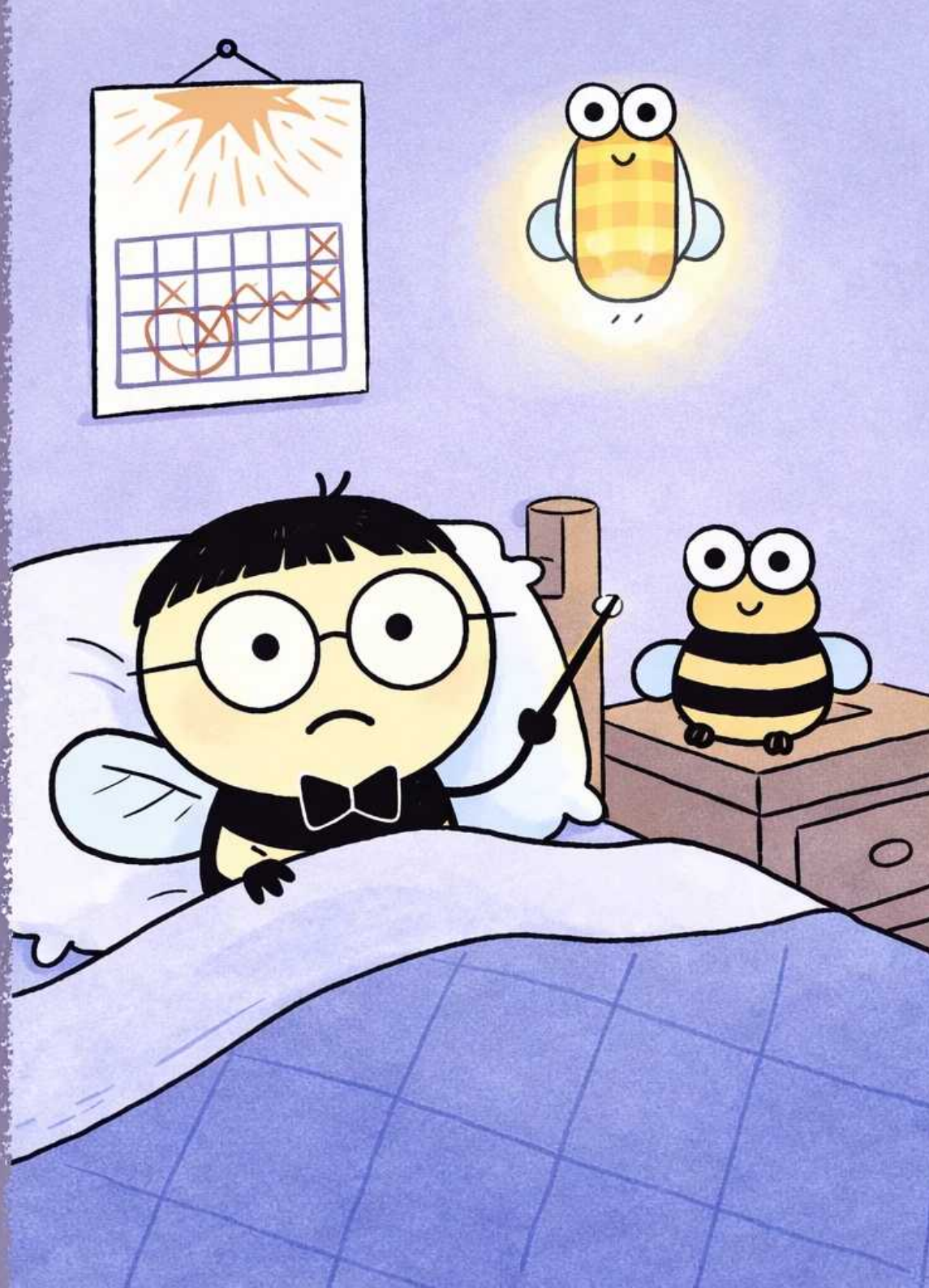
The next morning, Pang went to find the bug with the softest song in the show. He leaned in close just to take it in. 'Be bold,' Pang said. 'The full forest needs to catch your song.' The small bug's face went pink. 'But what if they mock me?' Pang smiled. He had felt that way too. 'They will not,' he said. 'They will **applaud.** I promise.' The small bug looked up with big, bright eyes. 'I will try my best,' he whispered. And Pang felt it was true.

The days grew hot and dry. At last, the final practice had come. Pang stood on the wooden stage. 'Everybody to the stage!' he called. 'This is the last practice!' They **launched** themselves from every side, bumping into each other. Pang gazed at them, and his gut flipped. Had they practiced? Had he practiced at all?



They opened their blue songbooks. Pang lifted his baton. And they sang. The low notes went low and the high notes went high. Nobody was mixed up. The music flowed, full and fine, drifting through the trees. Pang closed his eyes and smiled. He wanted to **applaud** them all. 'They did what I **taught** them,' he whispered, a little shocked. For the first time in five days, one small idea crept in: maybe this show was going to be splendid.

That night, Pang could not sleep. He **yawned,** but sleep would not come. He lay in bed and clutched his baton. Above him, a firefly glowed softly. On the wall, his day chart had every day crossed off. Tomorrow was marked in red. 'What if I forget the first beat?' he said to his small bee doll on the bedside table. The bee doll said nothing. 'What if everybody forgets the words? What if I trip on stage?' The bee doll still said nothing. It was, after all, a doll. But Pang kept talking to it still.



Morning came bright and hot, and the dry season had arrived. Insects from every corner of the forest **crawled** and flew to the grassy open spot: beetles, worms, ladybugs, snails. A shiny beetle waved his arm up high and said, 'I was told the bug in charge is brand new and has never done it before!' A bug in a blue scarf smirked and said, 'Let us hope he does not mess it up.' Pang hid behind the stage and took in every word. His gut did a big flip.

Pang **launched** himself up on the stage. No more hiding, no more shaking. It was time. The bugs stood behind him with their blue songbooks open. The full forest looked on. Pang stood tall, lifted his baton high, and called, 'One, two, three, sing!' And they sang. The low notes rumbled and the high notes sparkled. The music rolled across the open spot and over the hills. It was the best music they had ever made.

Then Pang **caught** something wet right on the nose. Drip. Drip. Drip. Rain. Rain! At a dry season show!

'That can not be,' **squawked** a bug beside him, blinking up at the sky. 'It is the dry season. It is called the dry season!'

But the rain did not stop. It fell on the stage. It fell on the songbooks. It fell on Pang's glasses until he could not see. Their songs wobbled. Pages turned soggy. Pang gazed up at the sky. Everything was falling apart.

The bugs below began to panic. Snails tucked into their shells, and a butterfly flew in frantic loops. Pang looked up. The rain was thin. If all the bugs ran off, the show was lost. Pang opened his wings wide and **launched** himself up above all the bugs. 'Insects of the forest!' he called. His call rang far, and every bug froze and looked up.

'This rain will pass!' Pang called. 'The show is not over!' For one moment, nobody moved. Then the shiny beetle shot a **claw** up. 'Pang said so! The show goes on!' The bugs flipped small umbrellas open. The bug in the blue scarf **applauded** with every single one of his hands. Pang flew back to the stage, lifted his baton, and called, 'From the top! One, two, three, sing!' The singing bugs, soggy songbooks and all, sang their best.

By the time the last note rang, the rain had ended and the sky glowed gold. The big tree sparkled with its string lights. All the bugs yelled and **applauded** until their arms grew weak. 'That,' said a small bug as she nudged Pang with her wing, 'was the best show this forest has ever had.' Pang's face went pink. His glasses went foggy. He tried to say something humble, but a huge grin took over his face. 'Wait until next time,' he said. 'I am thinking... a snowstorm.' All the singing bugs groaned.

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Float On, Pang!

Pang the cicada has been chosen to conduct the forest's biggest concert of the year, and he is terrified he isn't ready. Rehearsals are wobbly, the choir is nervous, and the big day keeps creeping closer. Can Pang find the courage to lead everyone through it? Created to align with the UFLI Foundations scope and sequence (Lesson 93: au, aw, augh /aw/), this book practices words like 'launched', 'applaud', 'crawled', 'taught', 'yawned'.

Phonics Focus: au, aw, augh /aw/

applaud, applauded, caught, claw, crawled, daunting, gawking, launched, squawked, taught, yawned

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