

The Cat's Trance

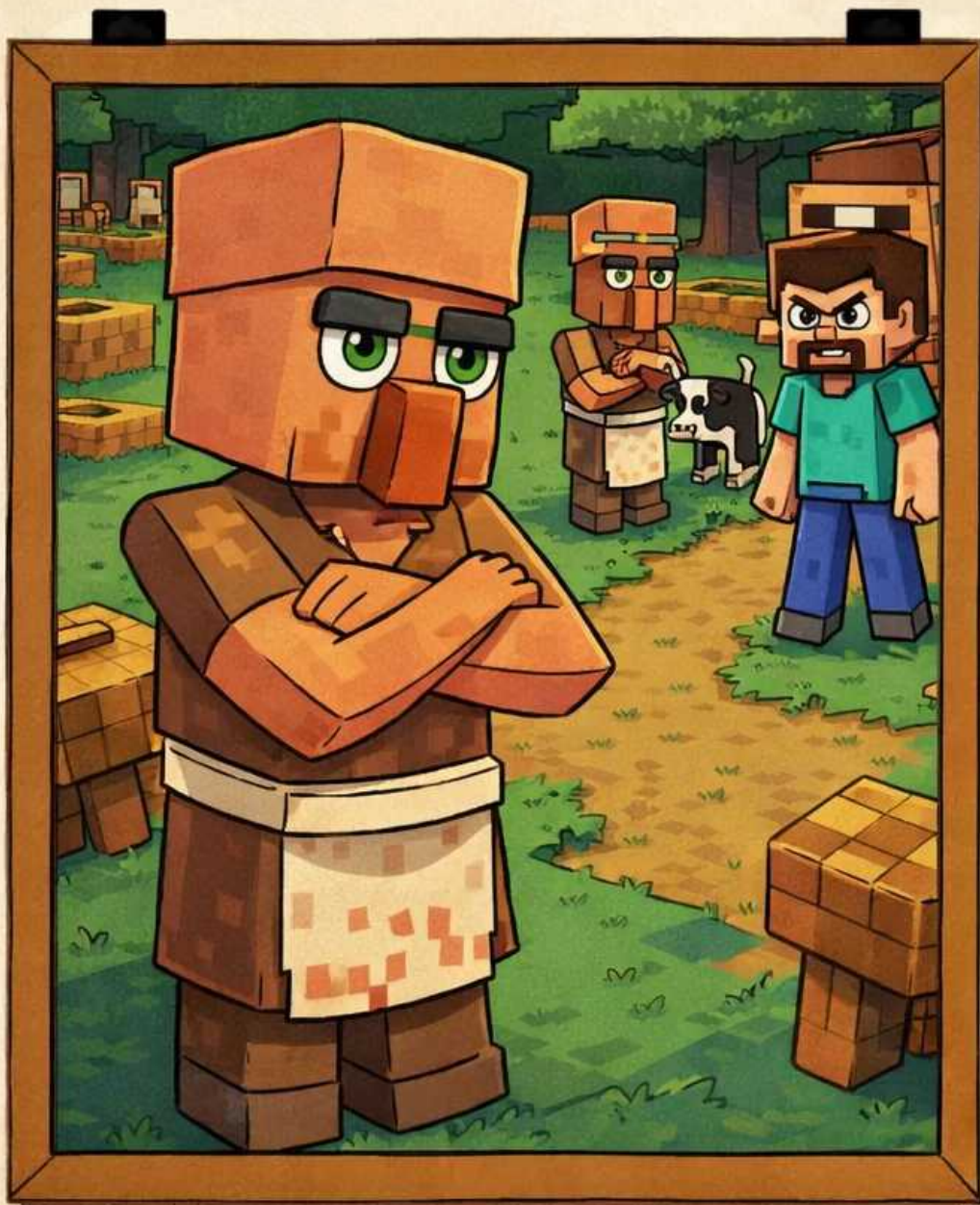


Grr! My belly is so loud it upsets a hen.

I **glance** down at the emerald in my hand. It glows like a little green sun. The clouds stop. All is still. I am in a **trance**.

Then I blink. The sun is high up now. Was it not just morn? I tuck the emerald deep in my pocket. 'That was odd,' I say. I need food, and lucky for me, this is a big town.





A mob comes down the path. One man crosses his arms and **glances** at me. That look. As if I just sat on his bench. A cow trots past, tail going swish, swish. I spot the food man by a patch. 'Food man!' I grin. 'Just the man I need.' I pat the emerald in my pocket. One emerald for one hot hen. This deal will be a **cinch**.

I go up and tap the food man on the arm. He turns and hums a deep hum. 'Hmmm.' 'So, big nose,' I say. 'What can I trade?' I tap him one more time to check. A hot hen. One emerald. I lick my lips. 'That is the **nicest** deal in town. One emerald for a hot meal? Food man, we have a deal!'





I pull the emerald from my pocket and hold it out. The food man **winces**. He jumps back like it is hot. 'Hmmm! Hmmm!' His hums get quick and loud. The lot start to bump and wail in a panic. 'No, no, no!' I tuck the emerald back in my pocket. The lot go still. Just like that. I gape at them. They gaze at me. 'What,' I say, 'is up with this emerald?'

No chap will trade with me now. Fine. I will hunt for food the old way. I peek into a hut. A man and a pal stand at a bench, bent over an odd glow. They do not **glance** up. 'Do not look up,' I say. 'I am just a chap with a cursed pocket rock.' This is a big town with many huts. But I must take no **chances**. I do not need the town to think I am bad.





Next hut. A chest. What luck! I flip the lid and see a loaf and bars inside. I grab the loaf and munch so fast I just about eat my own hand. Still chewing, I drop string and sticks into the chest. I do this all the time. No chap in town can get string and sticks, and a glad town gives **nicer** deals next time. 'Good,' I say, and wipe my shirt clean. 'My belly is full. Now I must check what is up with this emerald.'

In the corner I spot a cat,
very still. I reach out to pet
it. My hand hits stone. It is
a stone cat, not a real cat.
Then a real cat darts in
and skids to a stop by my
leg. Cats look up to beg
for fish. But this cat does
not look up. It does not
blink. It is stiff as **cement**.
Just like the stone cat.

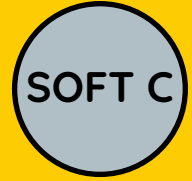




My chest pounds. Why did the food man **wince** at me? I **glance** at my pocket. The emerald. It is doing all this. I step back. One step. One more. The cat blinks. Then it bolts outside in a flash. I gape. The emerald stops time. It froze the cat. It set me in a **trance** in the sun. And the town did see this before. That is why they **wince** and panic.

I step outside and lean on the **fence**. The sun is low now. The sky glows red and yellow. The day slips past so fast. The emerald hums in my pocket. It calls to me. Just one more peek. One little **glance** at that green glow. I grip the **fence** rail and keep my hands there. 'No,' I say. This is a cursed emerald. And I will not look at it. Not one **glance**.





The Cat's Trance

A cat sits frozen, still as stone, while a hungry boy grips a strange green emerald that seems to stop time itself. Villagers flinch and back away the moment he pulls it from his pocket. What is this cursed gem really doing to the world around him? Written for Jolly Phonics classrooms (Step 3, Unit 2: soft c as in city), this book practices words like 'glance', 'fence', 'trance', 'wince', 'cinch'.

Phonics Focus: <soft> <c>

cement, chances, cinch, fence, glance, glances, nicer, nicest, trance, wince, winces

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