



TalkforWriting™

Talk for Writing Home-school booklet

# The Ultimate Guide to Elves and Sprites

by Pie Corbett



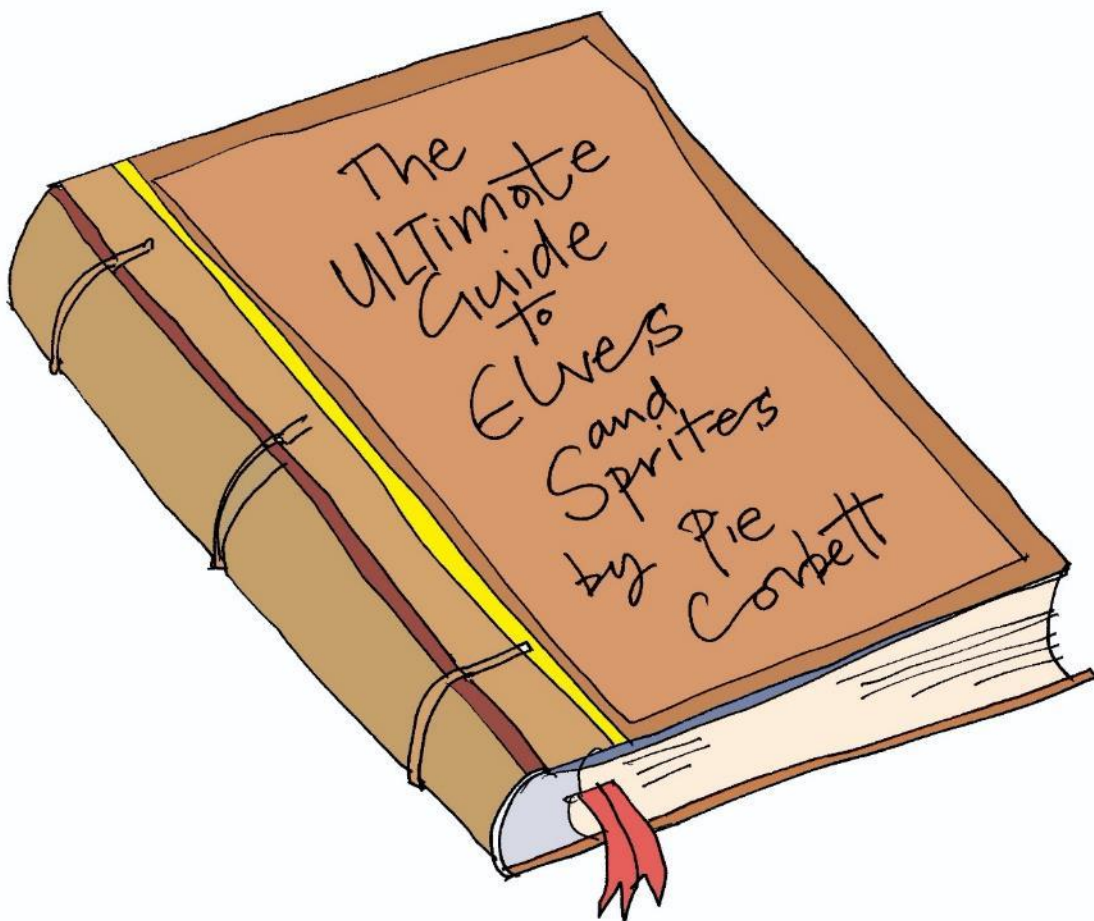
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World famous elf and sprite expert Pie Corbett is putting together The Ultimate Guide to Elves and Sprites. Pie is well-known as an elf whisperer and has researched elves of the Americas and sprites living in Iceland. Your job, should you accept this mission, is to provide Pie with another entry for his book by writing about a type of elf or their smaller cousin the sprite.



## Information with a touch of 'faction'

*In this workbook, we are going to be writing an information text about a type of elf or sprite. Of course, these are mythological figures. Even though this is a non-fiction genre of writing, we can still be inventive and creative. We like calling it **FACTION** because the form fits information about facts but the content is fiction.*

*To get us started, here is a model of a fictional information text about a cave elf. As you are listening, you might want to think about which type of elf or sprite that you will write about. Have a read below and then listen to me read it aloud here: <https://soundcloud.com/talkforwriting/whisperer/s-im7KkHzc880>*

### Cave Elves

Why is it that cave elves have interested elf whisperers over the years? Perhaps it is because the cave elf is such a rare form of elf and little is known about it. Generally, cave elves are only out and about at night. This is because they have grown so used to living in deep, dark caves that they find the sunlight so bright and hot that they can hardly see. A word of warning – do not handle cave elves as they may lash out in defense if they cannot see!

Surprisingly, cave elves are easy to identify as they are the smallest elf in the world being about the size of small cats. Unfortunately, their children are often mistaken for rats. They wear broad-brimmed hats to keep the



sun from their faces and leather clothes. The adult cave elf is a dark green colour which enables it to hide in shadows as well as trees, hedgerows and tall grass. They often wear cloaks, sturdy boots and have long beards and pointed ears. However, juveniles are born with a yellowish tinge and red hair which they lose after their 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Cave elves are found in most mountain ranges and hills where there are plenty of hiding holes. Almost all cave elves live in large groups in underground caverns where they feel safest. However, a minority live as hermits. When out and about foraging for food, they will keep to the shadows and this makes them very difficult to identify. They live in harmony and train mice as their pets. The mice are treated in the same way that humans fuss over dogs or cats.

Whilst most elves are renowned for their magical abilities and precious stones, the cave elf shows no interest in gold, silver or any other valuable stones. They are only interested in playing chess and wiling away their time holding quiz shows and tending to their indoor pot plants. These shy and gentle creatures are vegetarians and grow their own fruit and vegetables on mountainsides close to the entrance to their dens. Cave elves present no danger to humans and several have made friends with shepherds who are often out at night tending to their flocks.

Our 'save the cave elf' campaign has been concerned for many years that these delightful creatures might be mistaken for other less pleasant types of elf and therefore be hunted. David Battenburg suggests that where their cave dwellings and caverns have been discovered, it is important to ensure that the location is kept secret. Our advice is that to preserve these mysterious and gentle creatures, all elf lovers living near caves should make sure that vegetable and fruit peelings are left out during snowy weather.

Pie Corbett, Elf Whisperer



## Activity 1: match the vocabulary to its definition

You might not know all of the vocabulary that is in our model text. Don't worry as this activity will help! Match the word to the correct definition and then check at the end of the booklet on page 25 to see if you have worked them out.

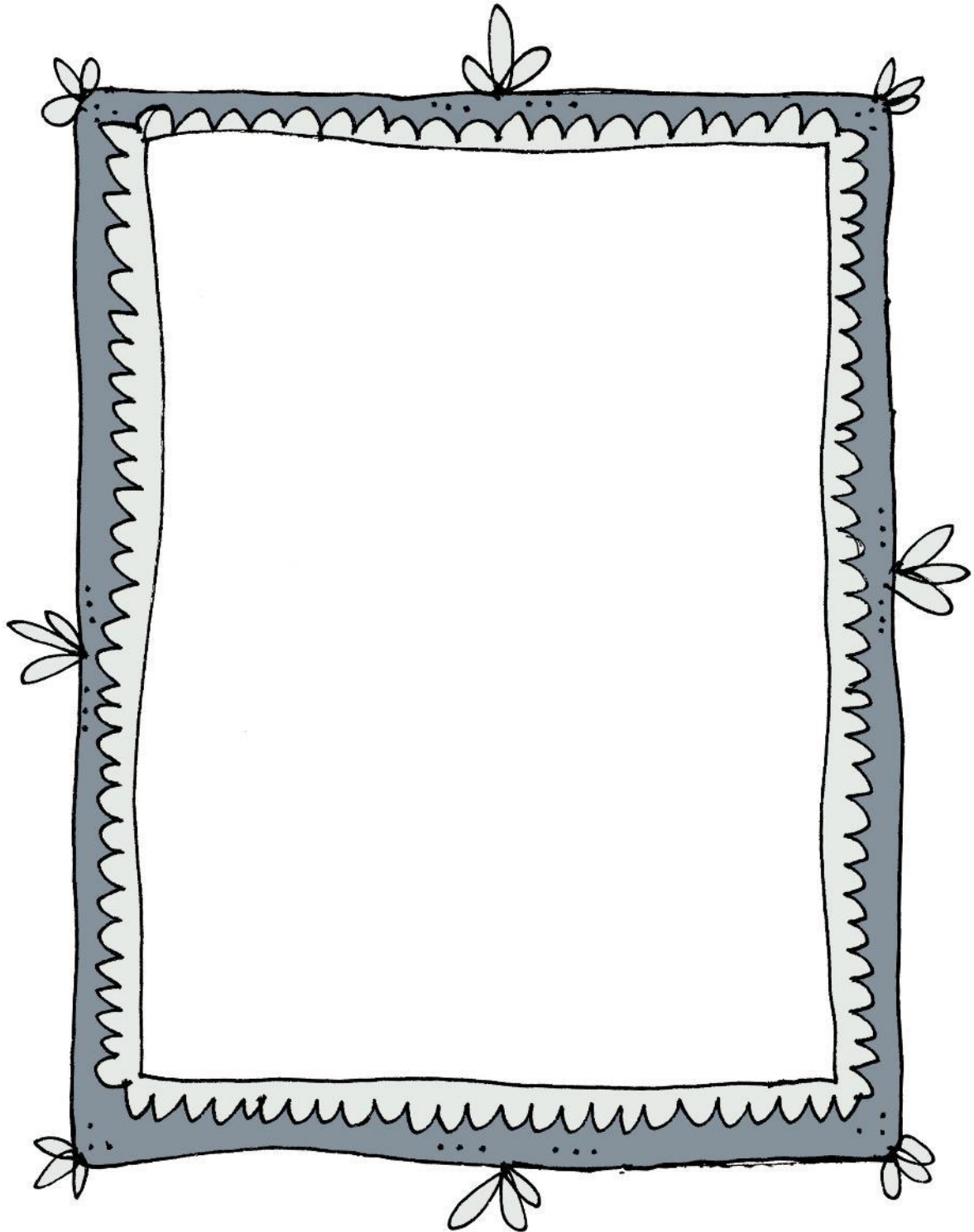
Word from the text	Definition
campaign	a hint or touch of a colour
foraging	very uncommon
hoarding	recognise
tinge	place
flock	a movement
granite	animal who does not eat meat
rare	lots of sheep
vegetarians	determined and obstinate
hermits	store away
renowned	line of mountains
mountain range	look for food
stubborn	live together well
identify	well-known
harmony	person who lives alone
location	hard stone

You could magpie some of these words and use them in your own writing later on.



## Activity 2: draw a cave elf

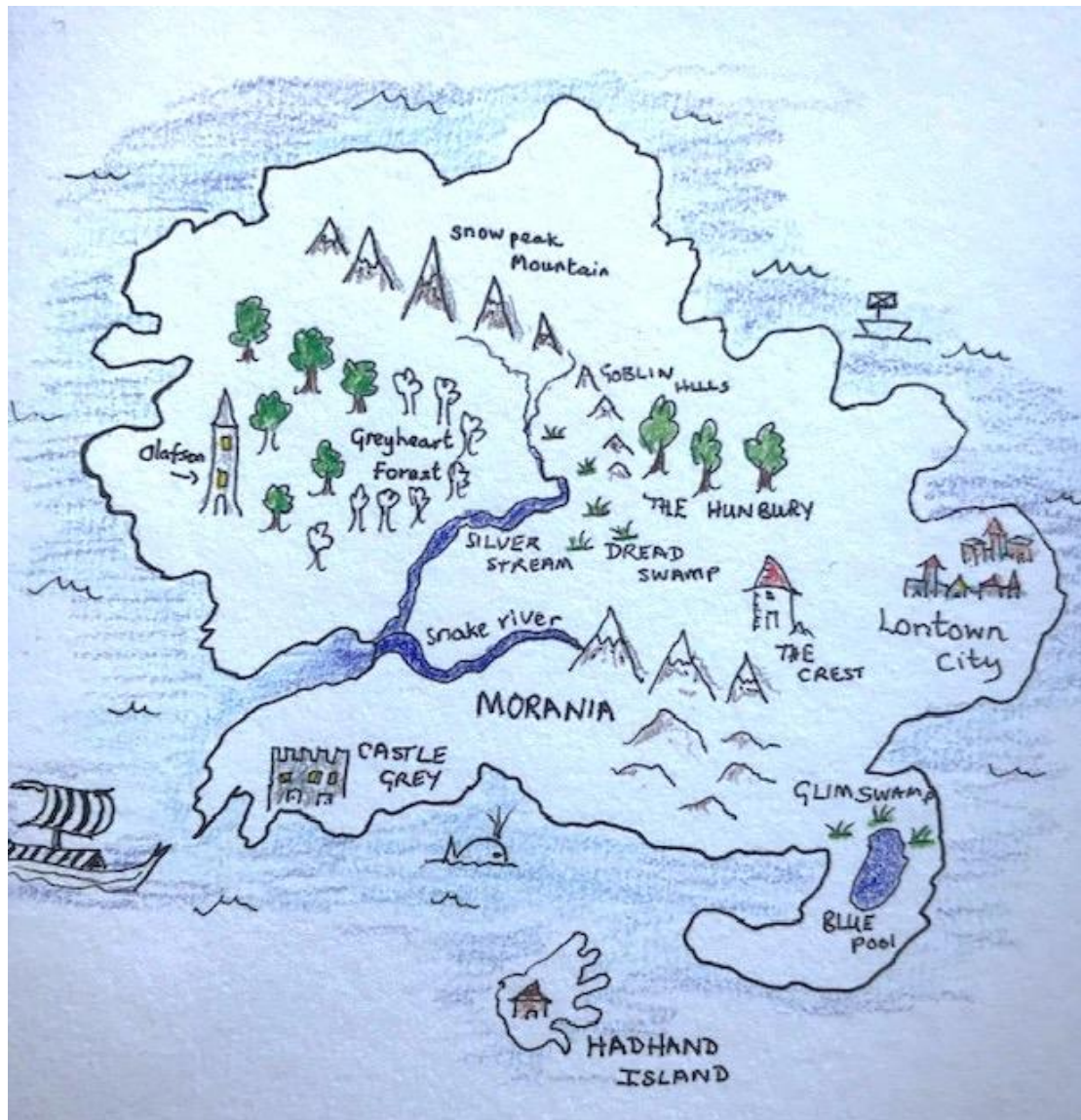
In the box below, draw an adult cave elf with a toddler and label them with information taken from the writing.





### Activity 3: where do cave elves live?

Look carefully at this map. Mark the spot where you think cave elves might live. Give three reasons for your answer.



Reason 1 -

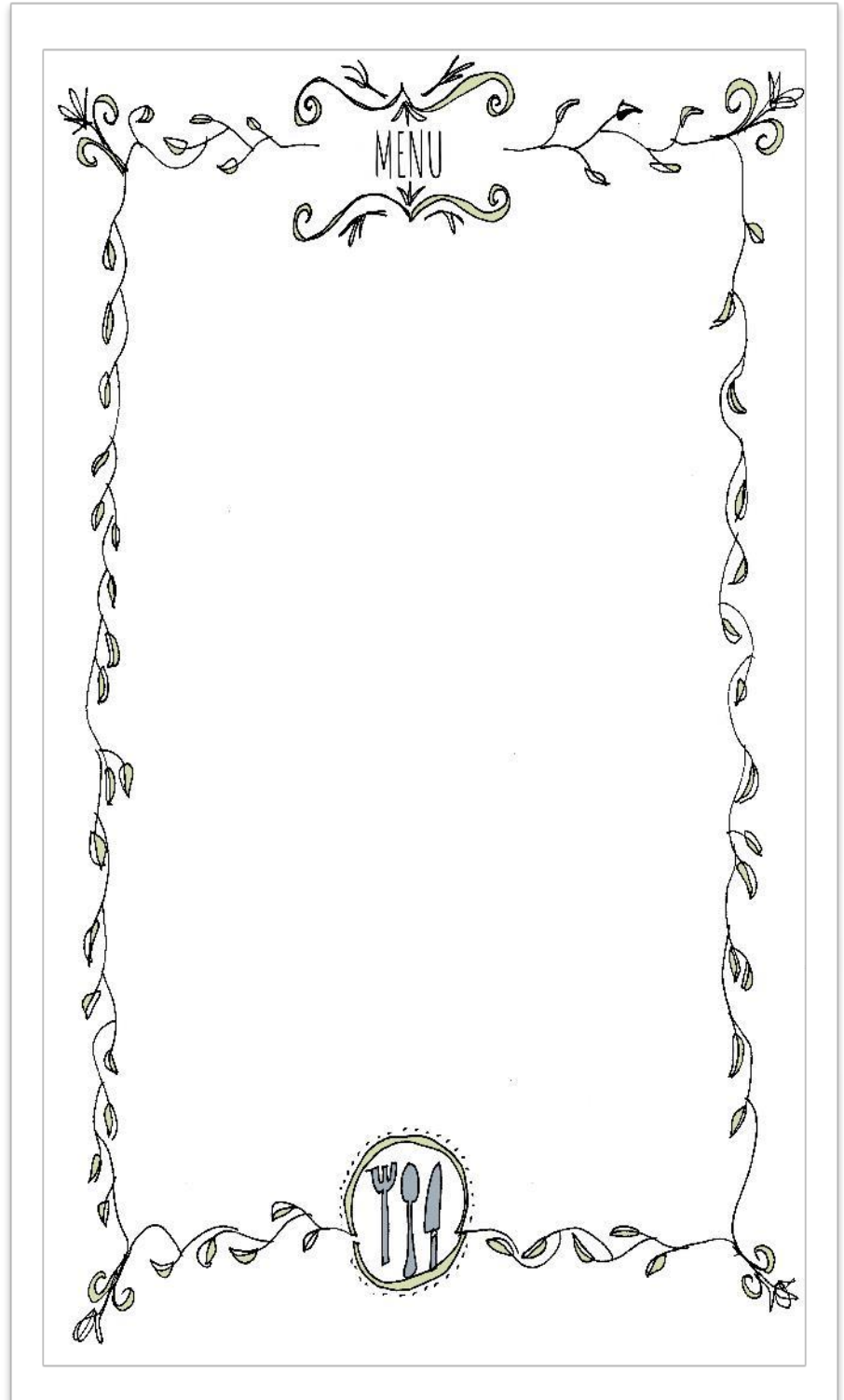
Reason 2 -

Reason 3 -

## Activity 4: design a cave elf's menu

Using some of the ingredients below, create a menu for a cave elf's lunch.

pears  
apples  
strawberries  
bread  
bacon  
peas  
ice cream  
turnips  
potatoes  
tomatoes  
lettuce  
ham  
melon  
chocolate biscuits  
butter  
grass  
sausages  
baked beans  
oranges  
spaghetti  
crisps  
rice  
pate  
fish fingers  
leaves  
onions  
mars bar  
chicken nuggets  
nettles  
dandelion leaves  
carrots  
watercress  
spinach





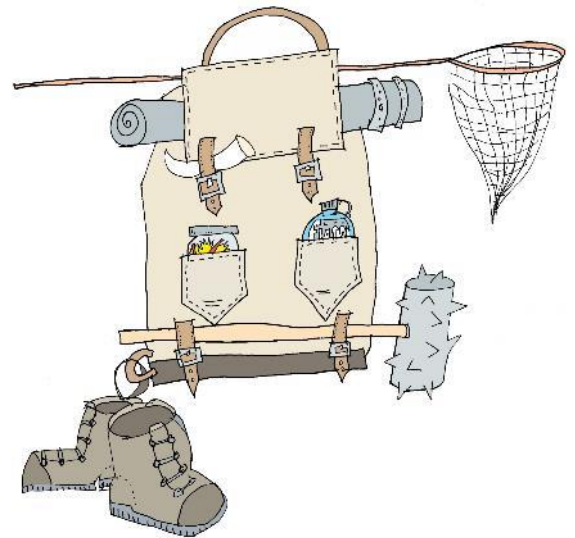
## Activity 5: what's in a cave elf's knapsack?

Cave elves have to make occasional journeys to the market in order to buy provisions or seeds for their gardens. What 6 things might you find in a cave elf's knapsack? Here is a list of 6 things found in a goblin's knapsack. You can hear me read this aloud here:

<https://soundcloud.com/talkforwriting/knapsack/s-PzqyzJwV8Rb>

### Six things found in a goblin's knapsack

1. Two fire-flies in a jam jar to light up your way.
2. A flagon of never-ending water to quench any goblin's thirst.
3. The fang of a dragon to slay fleeing foe.
4. A pair of light boots which can endure months of crossing rivers, navigating woods and stumbling through seemingly endless caves and caverns.
5. A steel-lined cape and a skull-basher.
6. A net for catching harmless hobbits and unsuspecting elves.



### Six Things found in a cave elf's knapsack

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

## Activity 6: Magpie openers & useful words

Are there any words in the Cave Elf report that you would like to add to the word bank below and use in your report? Are there any words that start the sentences or phrases that might be useful for your writing? I have found some and added several extra ones. Can you find any more by reading the text again. There is another text on pages 19-20. Are there any useful words or phrases in that text that you can use when writing?

<i>unfortunately</i>	<i>surprisingly</i>	<i>amazingly</i>	<i>interestingly</i>	<i>weirdly</i>
<i>additionally</i>	<i>moreover</i>	<i>furthermore</i>	<i>also</i>	<i>similarly</i>
<i>generally</i>	<i>almost all</i>	<i>most</i>	<i>many</i>	<i>the majority</i>
<i>however</i>	<i>several</i>	<i>some</i>	<i>a few</i>	<i>the minority</i>
<i>often</i>	<i>perhaps</i>	<i>on the other hand</i>	<i>contrary to popular belief</i>	

When you are writing, use this bank of words and phrases. Look back at the model texts to see how they are used in sentences. Of course, you will be inventing your own facts.

## Activity 7: spot the underlying pattern

I have picked out the underlying pattern for you by boxing up the structure. This is just a guide and you could add in extra paragraphs, different sections, diagrams etc.

<b>Type of creature</b>	<b>Cave Elves</b>
<b>Opening hook –</b> <i>introduction to what is being written about, to make the reader interested in finding out more. Fascinating fact for interest</i>	Why is it that cave elves have interested elf whisperers over the years? Perhaps it is because the cave elf is such a rare form of elf and little is known about it. Generally, cave elves are only out and about at night. This is because they have grown so used to living in deep, dark caves that they find the sunlight so bright and hot that they can hardly see. A word of warning – do not handle cave elves as they may lash out in defense if they cannot see!
<b>Appearance</b> <i>Information about what the creature looks like</i>	Surprisingly, cave elves are easy to identify as they are the smallest elf in the world being about the size of small cats. Unfortunately, their children are often mistaken for rats. They wear broad-brimmed hats to keep the sun from their faces and leather clothes. The adult cave elf is a dark green colour which enables it to hide in shadows as well as trees, hedgerows and tall grass. They often wear cloaks, sturdy boots and have long beards and pointed ears. However, juveniles are born with a yellowish tinge and red hair which they lose after their 100 <sup>th</sup> birthday.
<b>Habitat</b> <i>Information about the area the creature lives in</i>	Cave elves are found in most mountain ranges and hills where there are plenty of hiding holes. Almost all cave elves live in large groups in underground caverns where they feel safest. However, a minority live as hermits. When out and about foraging for food, they will keep to the shadows and this makes them very difficult to identify. They live in harmony and train mice as their pets. The mice are treated in the same way that humans look fuss over dogs or cats.
<b>Behaviour</b> <i>Information about what the creature does</i>	Whilst most elves are renowned for their magical abilities and precious stones, the cave elf shows no interest in gold, silver or any other valuable stones. They are only interested in playing chess and wiling away their time holding quiz shows and tending to their indoor pot plants. These shy and gentle creatures are vegetarians and grow their own fruit and vegetables on mountain sides close to the entrance to their dens. Cave elves present no danger to humans and several have made friends with shepherds who are often out at night tending to their flocks.
<b>Ending – involving the reader</b>	Our 'save the cave elf' campaign has been concerned for many years that these delightful creatures might be mistaken for other less pleasant types of elf and therefore become hunted. David Battenburg suggests that where cave dwellings and caverns have been discovered, it is important to ensure that the location is kept secret. Our advice is that to preserve these mysterious and gentle creatures, all elf lovers living near caves should make sure that vegetable and fruit peelings are left out during snowy weather.

## What additional paragraphs to include

When you write your own entry for the Ultimate Guide, are there any other paragraphs that you might include? Think about what your reader might want to know about.

What sort of person might read this guide?

What other things would they be interested in?

What would someone who wanted an elf or a sprite as a pet be interested in?

What would an evil elf hunter want to know about?

What would someone who wanted to protect your chosen species be interested in?

**Add your ideas for what other paragraphs you could include here:**


## Activity 7: sort the structure activity

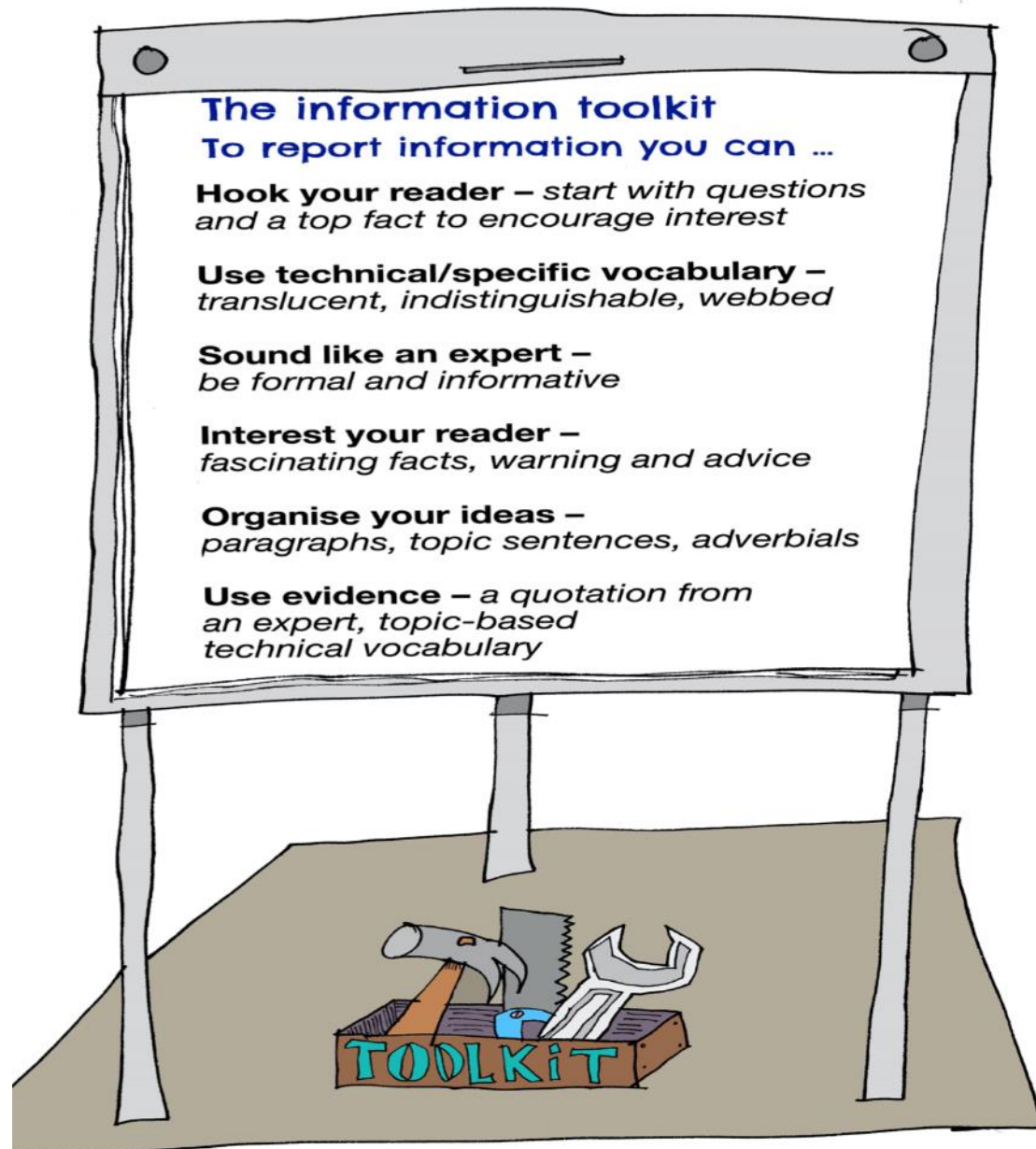
In the first column there is a list of sub-headings for an information report. These are muddled into the wrong order. How would you organise these? Write your suggestion in the second column.

Incorrect structure	Logical structure
Wrapping it up	
Do they make good pets?	
Should they be hunted?	
Strengths	
Behaviour	
Hooking the reader's interest	
Habitat	
How do you trap one?	
Weaknesses	
Description	
Special powers	



## Activity 8: let's look at the toolkit

Before we start thinking about our own ideas for our monster, we need to look closely at the text and see what writing tools/tips/tricks the author has used so we can do the same in ours. Here is a toolkit I have made for writing information texts.



## Activity 9: new ideas

Now comes the fun part! Your challenge is to write an information text about a type of elf or sprite. The choices are endless and I am sure that you already have an idea about the type of creature that you might write about. To help you think of what type of elf or sprite, here is a list of suggestions and some ideas and pictures that might inspire you:

**The forest elf** is found in large woods and hedgerows. It has twigs and leaves sprouting out of its head.

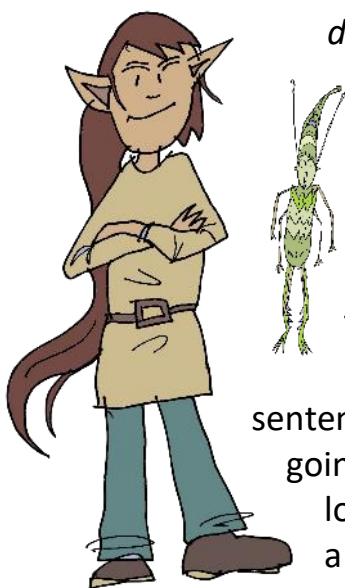
**The river sprite** lives under riverbanks. It is covered in a salmon's scales and is very slippery to touch.

**The rose elf** inhabits gardens and has red, soft skin. It smells very sweet and likes to sleep in a rose's petals.

**Lemon tree elves** live in grocery departments of big stores and are an astonishing bright yellow. However, they have sour spit which is best avoided.

**The library sprite** hides on bookshelves, is pale and, because of reading so much, tends to wear glasses.

**The sky elves** live in clouds, can fly with their tiny wings and have misty hair. They are the only species of elf that can fly long distances.



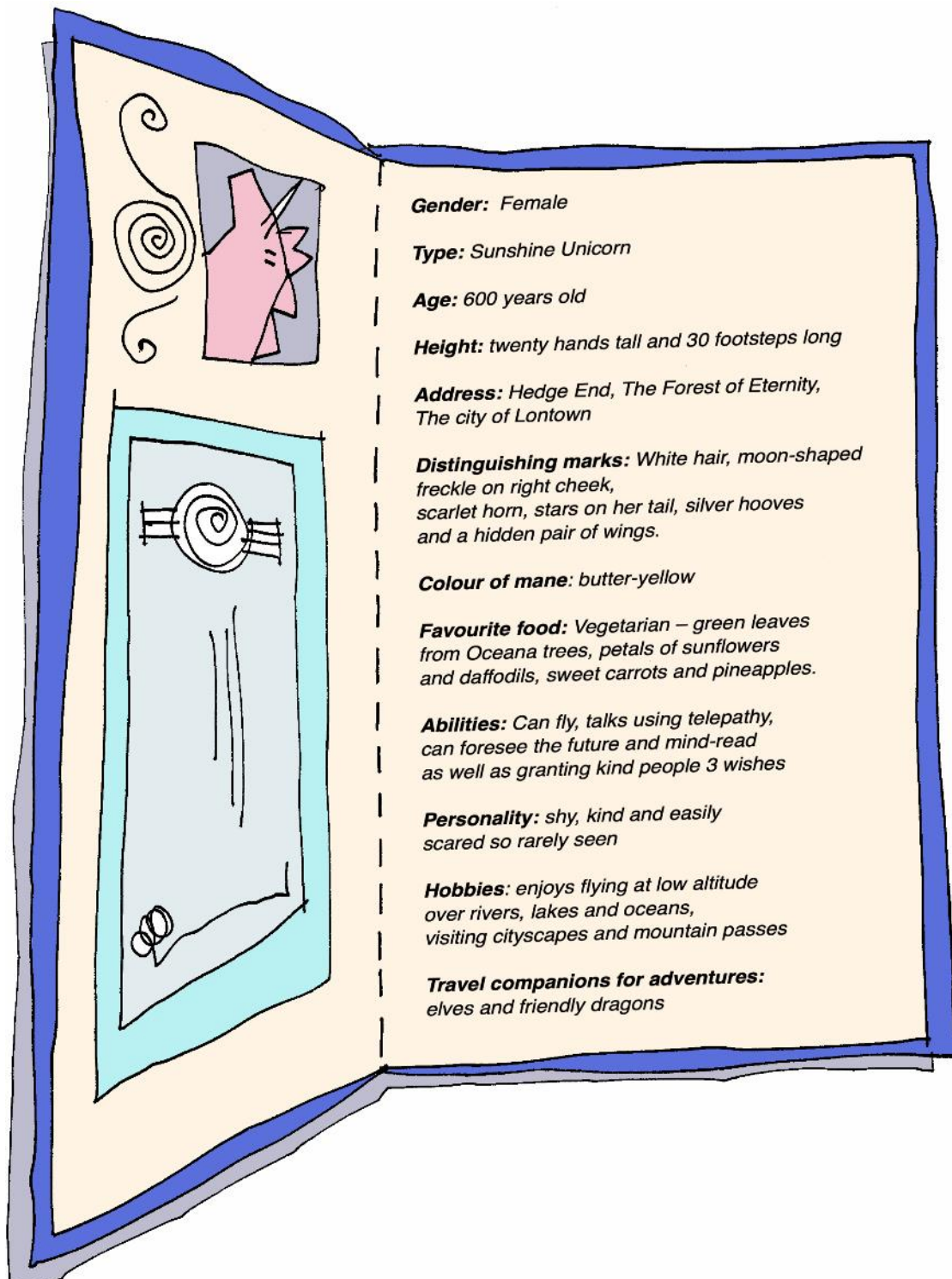
Time to make your mind up. Which type of elf or sprite will you be writing about? Write a couple of sentences to explain which type of elf or sprite you are going to write about, where they live and what they look like. Use the pattern of the above sentences as a model.

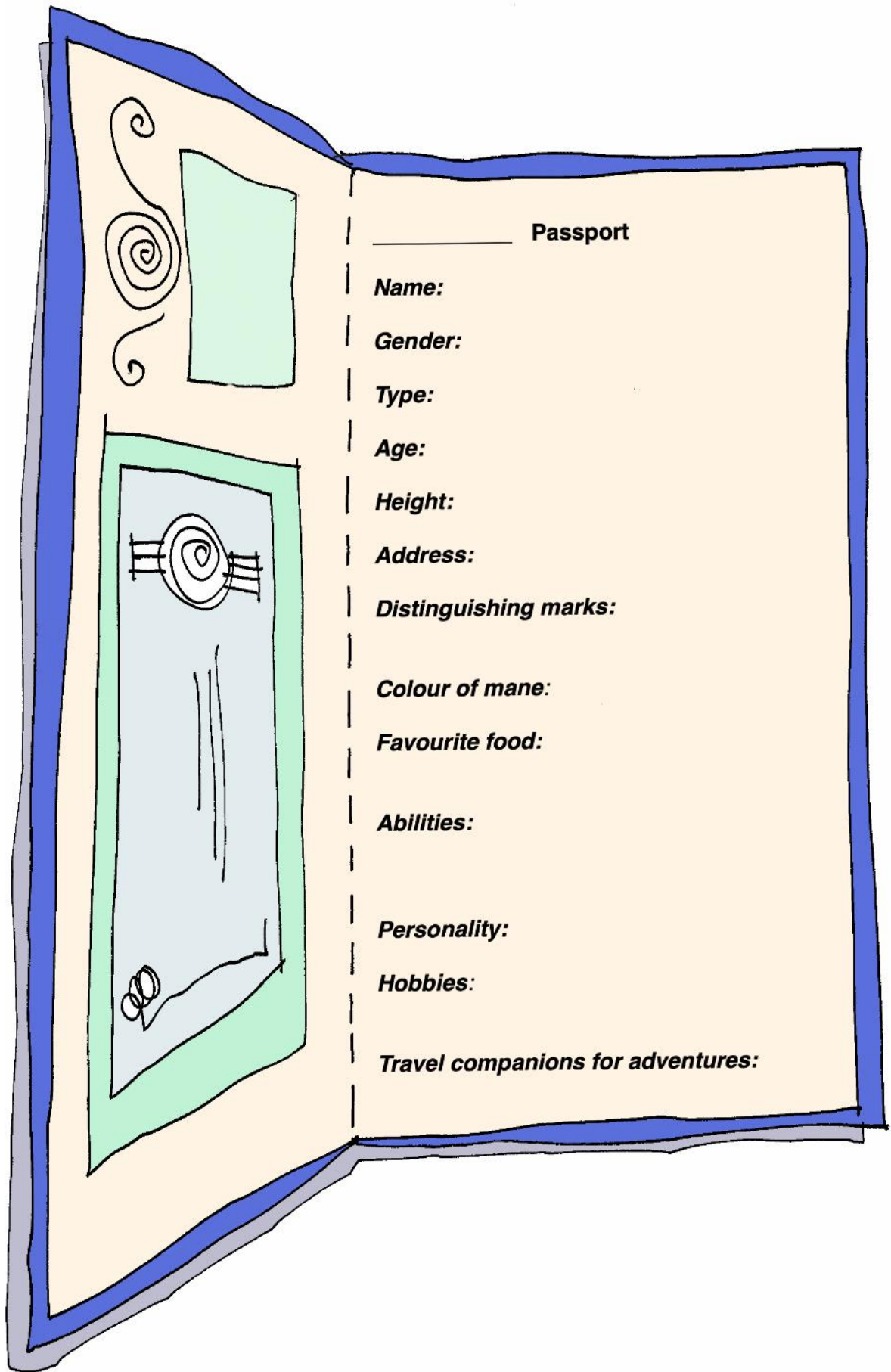
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## Activity 10: create a Passport

To help you think about your chosen type or species of creature, you are now going to create a passport. You will need to provide details and draw a picture. Here is an example of a passport for a unicorn. Use the template on the next page to create your own passport for one of your chosen species of elf or sprite.

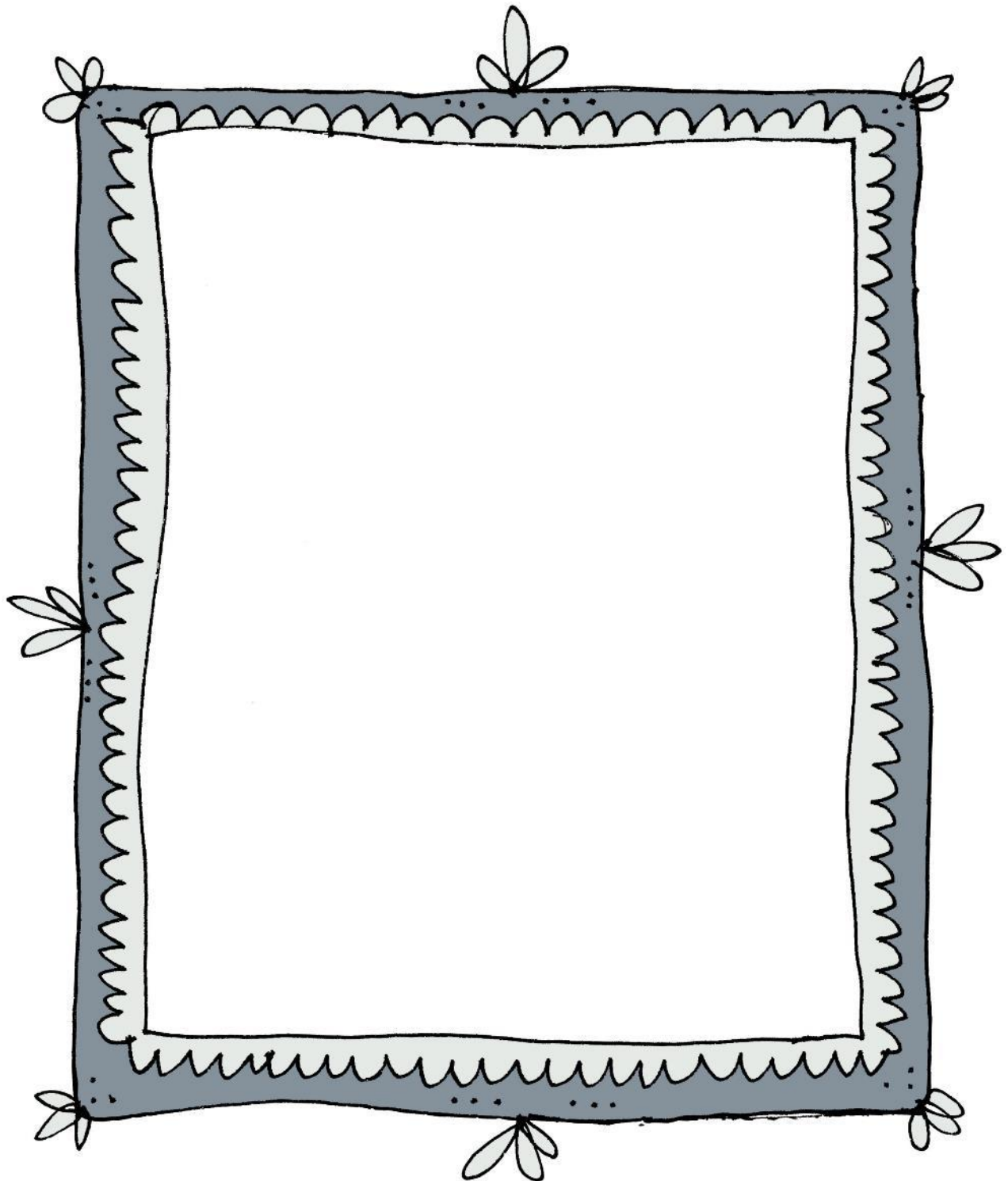






## Activity 11: draw and label your chosen species of elf or sprite

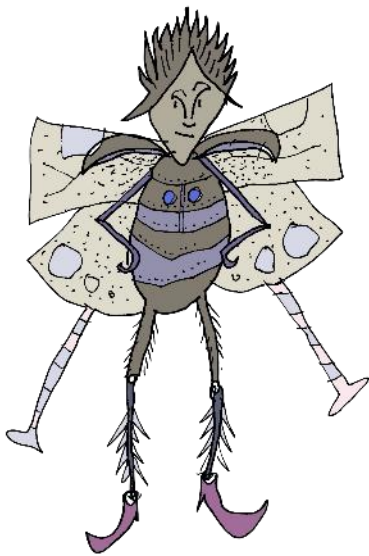
To help you get a real picture of what your creature is like, have a go at sketching them. Then label basic information.





## Activity 12: read and raid

Here is an entry from the *Ultimate Guide About Forest Sprites*. Notice what the different paragraphs are about, taking ideas that you might employ in your writing. Also, magpie any useful vocabulary that you can use in your own writing. Have a read below and listen to me read the text aloud here: <https://soundcloud.com/talkforwriting/ultimate-guide/s-kK1juktwp1w>



### The Forest Sprite

Forest sprites are a type of sprite that is very rarely seen because they are such shy creatures. They are extremely good at camouflage and many people have never seen one. However, during the recent lockdown, these beautiful shy creatures have become bolder and some have been sighted in parks and gardens.

Would you be able to recognise a forest sprite if you stumbled across one? Like most sprites they are small as a wren and move very rapidly. This makes it hard for them to be seen. They have the ability to change colour, blending into their background. This is why they have often been referred to as 'chameleon sprites'. Forest sprites are flimsy creatures, often very thin and have wings that are virtually transparent. Their tiny bodies are slender and may appear when moving rather like a thin piece of smoke or silk drifting between trees. Up close, you can see their tiny faces, pointed ears and very bright eyes.

Forest sprites live in wooded areas. They cling to trees, hide under bushes and gather in reedy areas. This makes them almost impossible to see. They change colour shifting easily from shades of green to brown when they are against the trunk of a tree. They often fly in shadows. This means that

they are impossible for most humans to identify. Some have been sighted in gardens where there is little disturbance from humans.

These delicate creatures feed on plants, fruits and vegetables. They are especially fond of strawberries and, if they eat too many, will turn an alarming red colour. They like to help gardeners by pollinating plants when the bees become over-worked. In fact, many gardeners call forest sprites their 'handy helpers'.

To relax, forest sprites play hide and seek in wooded areas. Younger ones play kiss chase, riding on the backs of dragonflies. Older sprites sit on branches watching the world pass by whilst playing simple card games and chess using carved acorns. They do not mix with other types of sprite and positively dislike stone and mountain sprites, considering them to be vulgar.

Forest sprites are gentle creatures but live in fear of hawks, herons and squirrels, as they have been known to grab sprites when hungry. For this reason, groups of sprites have been known to attack birds' nests and squirrels' drays, pulling them down.

If you are gentle in your approach and keep very still in a wooded glade, you may be lucky enough to watch these wonderful creatures dancing together as the cuckoo calls in spring or when moonlight strikes on a fairy's ring. Once in a thousand days, they can offer a wish to a chosen mortal so always ensure that you care for trees. Rumour has it that forest sprites are really the souls of trees and so must be taken care of. Imagine a world with no trees!

## Activity 13: planning

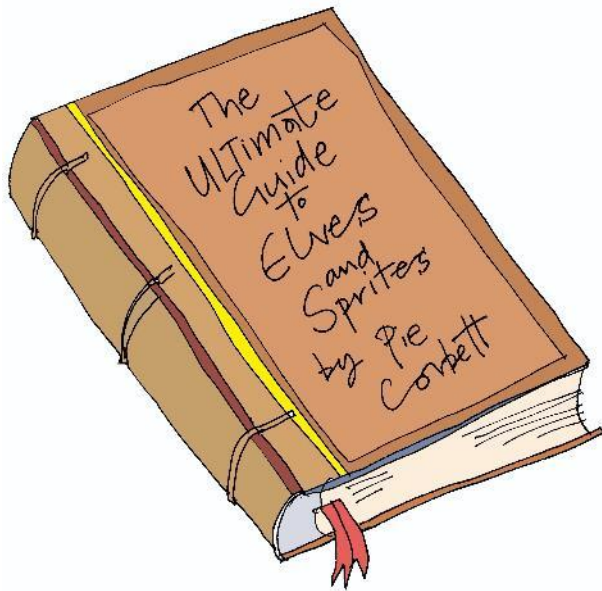
Now you are going to organise your ideas into a boxed-up planner to help structure your writing. Remember, to pick extra topics other than appearance, habitat and diet. I have left four blank sections for extra sections. I have also left the right-hand column blank so you can bullet point in your ideas. Do NOT write the whole text in the right hand column – use bullet points to list ideas. This is a planner.

<b>Structure of information text</b>	<b>Plan your ideas using bullet points</b>
<b>Type of creature</b>	
<b>Opening hook</b> – to make the reader interested in finding out more. <i>Fascinating fact for interest</i>	
<b>Habitat</b> <i>Information about the area the creature lives in</i>	
<b>Appearance</b> <i>Information about what the creature looks like</i>	
<b>Diet</b> <i>Information about what the creature eats</i>	
<b>Behaviour</b> <i>Information about what the creature does</i>	
<b>Ending – involving the reader</b>	

## Activity 14: talk your plan through

It is really important to have a good read through your plan to make sure that it makes sense. Why not read it aloud to someone in your house and see if they have any suggestions for how to improve it. Then try saying out loud exactly what you are going to write.

## Activity 15: it's time to write your report about your chosen type of elf or sprite for the 'Ultimate Guide'.



To help you with your writing, there are lots of things to help you:

- ✓ The text about cave elves and the one about forest sprites
- ✓ The boxed up plan and structure and toolkit
- ✓ Your ideas page
- ✓ The vocabulary we magpied from the model
- ✓ And, most importantly, your plan

Draft your ideas on one piece of paper and edit. Make sure that when you read the text aloud, it flows. If you find a sentence hard to read aloud then so will your reader. Check that you haven't muddled up the information. Does it sound like my texts? Read it through again to check spelling and punctuation and then write your final draft.

## Activity 16: map your imaginary land

One of my favourite things about reading children's books is when you find a map right at the beginning showing the land in the story. I keep referring to the map as I about the different locations and settings in the story. I am sure that you have done the same. I thought it would be a great idea for you to design and draw your own map of where your type of elf or sprite lives. If you can, check out on the internet to see how Kieran Larwood, author of *Podkin One-Ear*, draws maps of his story worlds: <https://www.kmlarwood.com/resources/>

- ★ **Step 1: draw the outline of your map**
- ★ **Step 2: fill in the landmarks: trees, rivers, boulders, mountains, volcano, cities, sea, swamps**
- ★ **Step 3: make up names for the different areas of your map**
- ★ **Step 4: stain the map to make it look old by using a used (and cool) tea bag to turn the paper brown. You don't need to get it that wet for it to change colour**
- ★ **Step 5: When it is dry, cut or rip the edges of the paper to make it look old and worn. A small hole in the middle of the map can look great**



## Activity 17: extension writing choices

You are not finished yet! There are lots of different bits of writing you could do if you are enjoying this unit. You could even create and illustrate a whole booklet about your chosen creature:

- Write another report about a different mythological creature (ogre, giant, phoenix, dragon, goblin)
- Write a fact-file for your chosen creature
- Write a story about your chosen creature, using your ideas from the passport. What would happen if you found your creature hiding in your house or flat?
- Write a newspaper report about a sighting of your creature
- Write up an interview with an elf or sprite
- Write a set of Instructions for How to trap a ...
- Write an explanation about how a dragon's fire works
- Write a discussion, 'Should Elves be allowed to live locally?'
- Write an advert for a goblin hunter
- Design a WANTED poster calling on the public to help hunt down and capture a dragon or goblin on the loose before it is too late. You might want to include:

★ A reward

★ Who to contact if they see the monster

★ What the monster has done – why they are dangerous

★ Where they were last spotted

## Book recommendations

If you enjoyed this unit then here are some exciting books:

- |                                      |                                  |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| • 'Podkin One-Ear' by Kieran Larwood | • 'Sky Song' by Abi Elphinstone; |
| • 'Brightstorm' by Vashti Hardy      | • 'Cogheart' by Peter Bunzl      |
| • 'Artemis Fowl' by Eoin Colfer      | • 'Malamander' by Thomas Taylor. |

## Answers to vocabulary on page 5

Word from the text	Definition
<b>campaign</b>	a movement
<b>foraging</b>	look for food
<b>hoarding</b>	store away
<b>tinge</b>	a hint or touch of a colour
<b>flock</b>	lots of sheep
<b>granite</b>	hard stone
<b>rare</b>	very uncommon
<b>vegetarians</b>	animal who does not eat meat
<b>hermits</b>	person who lives alone
<b>renowned</b>	well-known
<b>mountain range</b>	line of mountains
<b>stubborn</b>	determined and obstinate
<b>identify</b>	recognise
<b>harmony</b>	live together well
<b>location</b>	place

I hope you have enjoyed working through this workbook. Please share any work produced by tweeting me @piecorbett



**Pie Corbett was a Headteacher, Inspector and Teacher Trainer. He now works as a poet and author, and leads Talk For Writing.**

**Edited and designed by Julia Strong**

**Prepared for online distribution by Nick Batty**

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