

# The Terrible Trio

The Day the Mac 'n' Cheese  
Ran Out (Book 2)

By Swapna Haddow

Illustrated by Minky Stapleton

- Reading • Writing • Friendship • Teamwork
- Humour

## Synopsis

In their second hilarious adventure, Zeb the zebra, Margarine the penguin and Barry the lemur are certain that nothing could ever be worse than discovering they'd been given the world's worst superpowers. But when Zeb arrives at the Superhero Café for work one morning, he discovers something truly disastrous: the café is closed, the customers are panicking and Marge has lost her mac 'n' cheese-making powers.

Before Zeb can catch his breath, things get even worse. He accidentally promises a very hungry, very shouty lion enough mac 'n' cheese to feed an entire pride. And if the trio can't deliver, they'll be the ones on the barbecue. Literally.

To save themselves, Zeb appoints himself Marge's "power mentor", dragging her across town to sample cheeses, visit a mystic swan, consult an unhelpful mountain goat and try every possible trick to reignite her powers. Meanwhile, Barry attempts to soothe the ravenous lion with polite conversation and beautiful handwritten signs.

Just when all hope seems lost and the lions are firing up the grill, Barry realises Marge's powers didn't vanish at all – they were smothered by the sadness she felt after receiving a letter from her impressively perfect sister. With her friends' encouragement, Marge tunes back into herself, regains her confidence and her powers burst back stronger than ever.

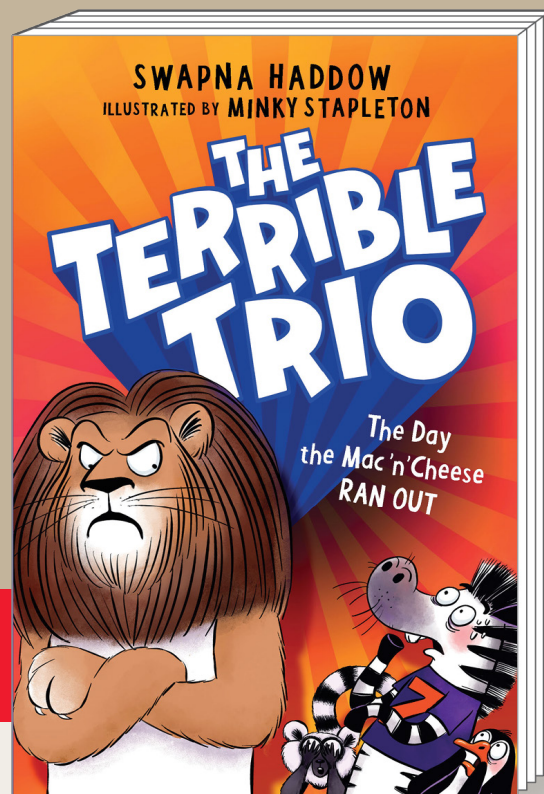
With a pride of lions finally fed and disaster narrowly avoided, the Terrible Trio learn that the worst powers in the world aren't nearly as terrible when you've got the best friends by your side..

## About the Author

**Swapna Haddow** grew up in the UK and wrote her first book at age eight. She wishes she'd kept it, but it seemed like a good idea at the time to trade it for two stickers and a couple of marbles! Her first published book was the hilarious junior novel *Dave Pigeon*, which grew into a laugh-out-loud, award-winning series. She has since written many funny, colourful and much-loved picture books as well as further junior fiction series. Swapna loves to write stories filled with boisterous animals causing mayhem, with friendship and humour consistently at the heart of her work. Swapna now lives in Dunedin, New Zealand, with her husband, son and their dog. Her first homegrown tall tale with Scholastic New Zealand is *But Then . . . the almost true story of an overdue book* followed by *Why Not . . . ? The almost true story of stuff that actually happened in a library*.

## About the Illustrator

**Minky Stapleton** is a multi-faceted illustrator with a range of styles, all with a dash of humour. An award-winning Art Director and Creative Director originally from Johannesburg, South Africa, Minky gave up advertising to follow her first love, illustration. She now resides in Auckland, New Zealand, where she balances illustration projects with running classes for kids on how to design scary monsters. Minky has illustrated many titles for Scholastic, from hilarious picture books to historical fiction and high-energy, heavily illustrated junior fiction. She has also written and illustrated her own books, the very funny *Roo and Vladimir* and *Bubbles, the Zooting, Tooting Manatee*.



# Writing and Illustration Style

*The Terrible Trio: The Day the Mac 'n' Cheese RAN OUT* is the second book in this best-selling graphic novel trilogy written for the 5–8 age group. The author, Swapna Haddow, has done it again. She's written a book that's as popular as Marge's mac 'n' cheese at a lion's birthday party! Swapna's wonderful humour and storytelling abilities turn poor ol' Marge's tragedy of losing her superpower into an opportunity in which the trio – Marge, Zeb and Barry – work together as a team to try to get it back.

The text is presented in bite-sized chunks, making it accessible to students who struggle to or are reluctant to read. The dialogue text is written in the present tense. To add interest and drama, some of the text is presented on angles and in a range of font sizes and typefaces. Larger sizes are used for important parts of the dialogue, such as when the characters shout or when they want to get their point of view across.

Minky Stapleton is the ideal illustrator for this goofy, lively series. The expressions, gestures and movements of her characters complement the story well. Created in Adobe Photoshop and Procreate, the illustrations are black and white on all the internal pages. This simple palette works well because all eyes are then on the characters and the drama that unfolds. The words and pictures work in hilarious harmony and share the loud-out-loud limelight.

## Shared Learning and Discussion Points

Questioning is an important skill. It helps students make inferences, predictions and clarifies their understanding of the characters and events in the story. It also encourages them to draw on their own personal experiences. Allow time for the students to discuss some of the themes presented in the book, such as friendship and teamwork. Use some of the following questions to help promote discussion.

### ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

Look at the front cover and read the blurb on the back cover.

- Look at the facial expression of the lion. Why might he be so annoyed?
- Look at the expressions and body language of the trio on the front cover. How would you describe how they're feeling?
- What could happen when the mac 'n' cheese runs out?
- What does the word 'hangry' mean? Do you get hangry? How do you behave when you're hangry?
- If Zeb gets roasted, who might be roasting him?

### COMPREHENSION:

- Do you think Zeb, Barry and Margarine will ever have a day as terrible as the one when they got their superpowers? Why or why not? (p.3)
- Why do you think the animals are making noises such as 'Grrrrrr' and 'Hisssss' outside the Superhero Café? What reasons would customers have to moan and groan if they are waiting in a line outside a café? (p.4)
- Food inspectors shut cafés down if there are cockroach infestations. Why else might a café get shut down? (p.5)
- What other animals can infest a café? (p.6)
- If Zeb doesn't even know about the café closing, what does this tell you about how suddenly it happened? (p.7)
- Marge is crying. Do you cry when something goes wrong? Explain your answer. Why is it hard to understand people when they talk and cry at the same time? (pp.8–9)
- Why might a lion want to eat the trio? (p.13)
- Why might Zeb have promised the lion so much mac 'n' cheese? (p.14)
- Zeb's superpower is the power to blend in at a zebra crossing. What might he be thinking when he sees the road cones? Do you think he might get up to mischief? Why or why not? (p.15)
- Why might Zeb's power be dangerous for him when he crosses a zebra crossing? (p.16)
- Why don't the animals walking on the zebra crossing and those in the cars find it funny when the cones appear to be flying through the air? Who is the one who's finding it funny? Why? (p.17)
- Look at the lion on page 19. What do you think is going to happen? Why is it dangerous for people to be using their phones when they cross the road or drive a car? (p.19)
- Why is the lion sniffing? What do lions use their sense of smell to do in the wild? (p.20)
- Zeb tells the lion that he has so much to live for? What do you think Zeb has to live for? If you were in this situation, what would you say you had to live for? (p.23)



- Zeb tells the lion that Marge's mac 'n' cheese is OK. What do you think Marge should say about it to 'sell' it more to the lion? Adjectives are describing words. What adjectives could Marge use instead of just 'OK'? (p.27)
- Why does Zeb's promise to the lion seem reasonable under normal circumstances? (p.30)
- Barry suggests that the lion might just need a glass of water. What do you think of his suggestion? Explain your answer. (p.33)
- Marge and Barry get sidetracked with all their talk about peanut butter on sandwiches and crackers. Why do you think they're doing that? How can stress and anxiety make you go off task? (p.35)
- Marge is telling how her morning started in detail. Do you find it hard to leave things out and get to the point when you're telling someone about something that has happened to you? Why is that? (p.39)
- Marge says good morning to Mr Buttons, the doormat and the breakfast bowl. Do you think she's in a good mood? Explain your answer. (pp.39-41)
- On page 40, look at the picture on the wall. What do you notice about Marge and her expression compared with the other three members of her family? What is Butter holding and what does that say? Why do you think Marge might be looking sad? (p.40)
- Why might there be no mac 'n' cheese in the bowl? (p.41)
- No matter how fast and hard Marge tries to whip up some mac 'n' cheese, nothing happens. What might be happening to Marge's superpower? (p.43)
- Look at Marge's facial expressions on pages 42 and 43. How do facial expressions and body language let others know how you're feeling? (pp.42-43)
- Barry says 'You must feel very SCARED'. Who do you think he was talking to? (p.48)
- How could Zeb get the trio off the lion's menu? What would you do if you couldn't whip up mac 'n' cheese? (p.51)
- The lion taps on the glass window with a claw. The words 'Tap Tap' are examples of onomatopoeia, which are words that sound like what they describe. What other onomatopoeic words could the author have used here instead? (p.55)
- Zeb doesn't tell the truth to the lion. He says that they want to deliver the mac 'n' cheese fresh to the party. What other excuses could he have made here? (p.58)
- Why do you think Marge tells the lion she has lost her powers? Is that wise? Explain your answer. (p.59)
- What does 'on the blink' mean? (p.60)
- Do you think the lion is being reasonable and patient with the trio? Why or why not? (p.63)
- Why do you think Marge and Barry get distracted so easily? Do you know someone like that? (p.68)
- Zeb is holding up cheer-leading pom-poms. Why is he doing this? (p.71)
- Marge is making lots of noise. Do you think she knows what she's doing? Why or why not? (p.72)
- Do you think cooking is hard? How can you figure out how to make something? (p.74)
- Why do you think there are so many balls in the fridge? Do you think they might be ingredients? Why or why not? (p.75)
- Do you think some cheeses smell like feet? Do you think Zeb and Marge are wasting time? Does it matter what they think about the smell of the cheeses? (pp.83-85)
- What kind of cheese is good for mac 'n' cheese? Does it really matter? (pp.88-89)
- Look at the bat's T-shirt. Why do some market owners wear things that stand out or relate to their stall? What other things could the bat have had on his T-shirt? (p.92)
- Do you think all the cheese will help Marge get her powers back? Explain your answer. (pp.96-97)
- What are penguin toots? What other slang words or terms mean 'farts'? There are many of them, including *air biscuits*, *bottom burps* and *cheek squeaks*. Research them on the internet. (p.98)
- Look at the wagon. What does the word 'PSYCHIC' mean? At a market, who might be inside this wagon? What would he or she be selling? (p.98)
- Zeb asks the psychic if he and his friends are going to be eaten today. What would you ask the psychic? (p.102)
- The psychic says inspirational sayings. What does 'Your destiny is in your own hooves and flippers' mean? (p.103)
- On page 104, does the psychic's saying make sense to you? Explain your answer. (p.104)
- Why does the psychic send Zeb and Marge to see the mountain goat? Do you think she's trying to get rid of them? Why would she do that? (p.105)
- Why is Barry making small talk with the lion when he asks if the lion is from around here? (p.109)
- What advice do you think the mountain goat will give Marge? (p.117)
- Have you meditated before? Did it help you? Why or why not? (p.119)
- Do you think Marge and Zeb should panic? Would you panic at this point? Explain your answer. (p.124)
- Do you think the lion would accept an apology from Zeb? Why or why not? (p.132)
- Barry says 'We can't TURN on each other'. What does he mean by this? (p.134)
- Barry's superpower is having the power of nice handwriting. Why was this a good idea to make a card to say sorry to the lion? (p.135)



- Marge is thinking about her mother’s letter and says that a handwritten letter can be very powerful. What do you think she means by this? (p.137)
- Have the trio run out of options? What would you do now if you were Marge, Zeb and Barry? (p.137)
- Is that wise of Zeb to say to the lion about the volume control of his super-roar? (p.140)
- If the lion can’t order a takeaway, who could do that? (pp.144–145)
- Barry suggests that the lion barbecues him first because the taste of a Barry might put the lion off eating the other two. What does this tell you about the kind of friend Barry is to Marge and Zeb? (p.149)
- While the lion gets his apron, what do you think the trio should do now? (p.149)
- Why do you think Zeb offers to be eaten first? (p.150)
- Why do you think Marge has been carrying around her mum’s letter all day? (pp.152–153)
- What might Mum have written in the letter that made Marge lose her superpower? (p.157)
- Would you be upset and sad if you read a letter like that from your mother or father? Explain your answer. (p.171)
- Marge is happy that her sister has the best power in the world, so why is Marge so sad? (p.172)
- What is your family proud of you for? (p.173)
- Butter on Toes is a high achiever. Why is it important to teach children that other traits and skills such as being a kind person, being able to make people laugh or being a positive person are equally as important? (pp.174–175)
- Why should you not compete with other people? What can it lead to? (p.176)
- Would you like to be perfect? Is it an impossible and unrealistic goal? Explain your answer. (p.177)
- What do you think is going to happen after Zeb says that Marge and Barry are his ‘bestest friends’? (p.181)
- Why do you think Marge is suddenly in a whirl beside Barry? What’s happening? (p.183)
- Why does Marge get her power back? (p.184)
- What does the mystic swan mean by ‘Tune back into me’? (p.189)
- Would you stop Zeb from playing the zebra crossing game with the cones after all that has happened? Why or why not? (p.192)

### SEE NEXT PAGE FOR ACTIVITIES

# Activities

## ACTIVITY 1: MAYBE ONE DAY...

On pages 23 and 24, Zeb says to the lion that he has so much to live for, such as he could enter the Zebra Olympics and try mint choc chip ice cream. Imagine that you're the author and have to come up with three more things that young Zeb wants to do when he's older. On page 24, the illustrator presents Zeb's things in a thought-bubble design. Write down your three things, starting with the sentence opener 'Maybe one day I could...' and then draw your three things inside a thought-bubble design. Use the layout on page 24 to help you. You could use a black-and-white palette only. Share your work with a friend or the class.

## ACTIVITY 2: DON'T EAT BARRYS!

The lion tells the trio that he doesn't usually eat Barrys. He reckons they get stuck in his teeth. Imagine that the lion teaches his cubs about not eating Barrys. Write a short list of reasons why lions shouldn't eat Barrys, such as too hairy, too chewy, never eat anything starting with the letter *B* and so on. Have fun with your list of reasons. Lists often use bullet points or are numbered. They also might contain brief sentences or incomplete sentences. Share your finished list with the rest of the class.

## ACTIVITY 3: CHEESE NAMES

The trio go to the market to buy some cheese to make mac 'n' cheese. The bat sells lots of different cheeses, all with different names. Some cheeses around the world have some odd names, such as *Laughing Cow*, *Stinking Nanny*, *Sheep Rustler* and *Little Stinky!* Have fun dreaming up names for some of the cheeses that the bat sells. Design five cheese signs that the bat could stick in the cheeses, like the ones on page 83. Write your cheese names on your five signs. Your cheese signs could be colourful and have a cheesy design, such as yellow with Swiss cheese holes. Share your cheese signs and names with the rest of the class.

## ACTIVITY 4: I FANCY A...

The lion shouts that he fancies a 'ZEBRA-PENGUIN-BARRY SANDWICH WITH FRIES'. Imagine what some of his pride might fancy eating when they don't get the mac 'n' cheese at the party. Draw and write what a cub or a lioness from the pride might fancy eating. Present your work on a paper plate, or a round-shaped piece of paper. (Uncoated paper plates are easier to write and draw on.) Draw the food in the centre of the plate and the name or the description of the food around the edge of the plate. Display your completed artwork around the classroom.

## ACTIVITY 5: INSPIRATIONAL SAYINGS

The mystic swan tells the trio four inspirational quotes on pages 100–101 and 103–104. Imagine the mystic swan wants to put one of these quotes on the side of the wagon as a business advertisement. Draw an outline of the wagon on a large piece of paper and then choose your favourite inspirational saying to go on the side of it. Use the book to help you. For instance, look at the top drawing on page 104. This drawing of the mystic swan and the inspirational saying would make a perfect advertisement design for the wagon if you're stuck for an idea. Display your finished advertisements on a classroom wall.

## ACTIVITY 6: SORRY!

Barry's superpower is fancy handwriting, so he sets about making a card to show the lion that Zeb is genuinely sorry. Pretend you are Barry. Think about what you would write in the card. Get a piece of paper and fold it in half. In your most fancy handwriting, write your apology to the lion on the inside right-hand side of the paper. Then draw Barry, Zeb and Marge on the inside left-hand side of the paper. On the front cover of the card, draw decorative things, such as hearts and smiley faces, to make it look appealing, or you could write 'SORRY' in a large fancy lettering. Read your cards to the rest of the class and display them in the classroom.

Written by Janine Scott