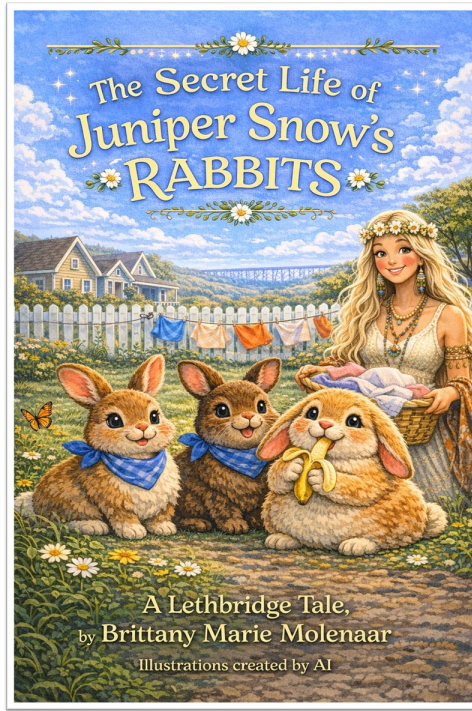


EASY-READER EDITION
Fluent Reader · Grades 3 – 5



The Midnight Munchers & Crunch & Thunder

A story from "The Secret Life of Juniper Snow's Rabbits" · A Lethbridge Tale

Original story & illustrations by Brittany Marie Molenaar

How to use this reader

This is an easy-reader retelling of the original story, levelled for fluent readers (Grades 3 – 5). The artwork and the storyline are unchanged — only the words have been simplified to suit the reading level.

Read the words printed under each picture together. The pictures still carry the original art, so point to them as you read.

Every page has a yellow “Sound check” box. These build phonemic awareness — the sounds inside bigger words — which the new Alberta English Language Arts and Literature curriculum emphasizes in the early grades.

At the back, you’ll find Key Words, the characters’ Secret Code Names, talk-about-it questions, and quick sound games — all matched to this level.

Curriculum note: aligned to the Alberta English Language Arts & Literature (2022) organizing ideas for Phonics & Word Knowledge, Phonological Awareness, Vocabulary, Fluency, and Comprehension.

SCENE 1



1

At Juniper Snow's house, the morning sun woke every animal, one by one.

The rabbits twitched their noses.

The world felt calm, peaceful, and normal.

"Okay, roll call," said one rabbit, trying to sound grown-up. "One, two, three, four—"

...Wait.

One, two, three, four...

The entire yard froze.

Sound check — Syllable split: an·i·mals (3). Find the 'an' chunk to start the word.

SCENE 2



2

The entire yard froze.

A rabbit spun in frantic little circles; ears flopping. The cat blinked, now wide awake.

"She did it again."

"She totally did."

All eyes turned to the far corner, where fresh dirt had been dug up in the night.

The hole. Mopsy's hole.

"Oh, that naughty little rabbit..."

Sound check — circle = cir·cle. A soft c says /s/ before i, e and y (circle, ice).

SCENE 3



3

That night, the ninja team crept out under the moon, ready for the mission.

Sound check — ninja → nin·ja (2 syllables). The /j/ sound is spelled with j.

SCENE 4



4

"Well," said a rabbit, puffing up bravely, "we know where she went."

"Pebbles' place," another said.

A serious silence fell.

"We go in. We get her. We get out."

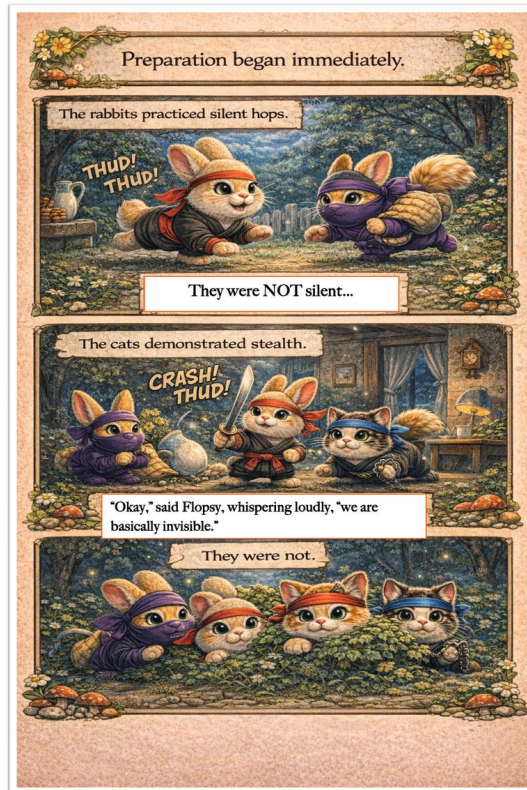
And we're back before Juniper Snow even notices.

"And definitely before suppertime," someone whispered.

That part felt... important.

Sound check — suppertime is a compound word: supper + time. Spot the two words.

SCENE 5



5

They began to get ready right away.

The rabbits practised silent hops.

They were NOT silent...

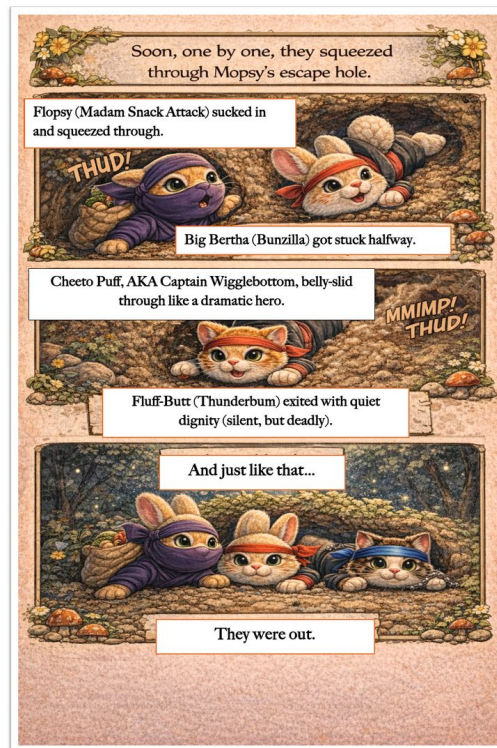
The cats showed off their sneaking.

"Okay," said Flopsy, whispering loudly, "we are basically invisible."

They were not.

Sound check — invisible → in·vis·i·ble (4). The prefix 'in-' can mean 'not'.

SCENE 6



6

One by one, they squeezed through Mopsy's escape hole.

Flopsy — Madam Snack Attack — sucked in and squeezed through.

Big Bertha — Bunzilla — got stuck halfway.

Cheeto Puff, A.K.A. Captain Wigglebottom, belly-slid through like a hero.

Fluff-Butt — Thunderbum — slipped out with quiet dignity (silent, but stinky).

And just like that...

They were out.

Sound check — squeezed = squeeze + -ed. Drop the e, add -ed. 'qu' = /kw/.

SCENE 7



7

The neighbourhood stretched before them like a wild, untamed jungle.

They crept across the lawns.

They panicked at a barking dog.

They dodged a sprinkler.

"WHY IS EVERYTHING SO LOUD OUT HERE?!" someone whispered loudly.

Sound check — neighbourhood → neigh·bour·hood. 'eigh' is a team that says /ā/.

SCENE 8



8

At last, they reached Pebbles' place.

The team dropped low.

"Ninja positions!" shouted Flopsy.

"Quick mission," said another. "In and out."

"...home by supertime."

Sound check — mission = mis·sion. 'ss-ion' makes /shən/ — just like -tion.

SCENE 9



9

They crept forward.

Something felt... wrong.

"Smelly," said Cheeto Puff, gagging.

"Why does it smell like old cabbage and regret?"

A shadow shifted. Something snorted.

Slowly... something stepped forward.

Sound check — shadow → shad·ow. Here 'ow' says long /ō/, not /ow/ as in cow.

SCENE 10



10

"That's not Pebbles," someone whispered.

What is that... that's not a dog...

The figure lifted its muddy head and grinned.

"Name's not Pebbles," he said.

A pause.

"It's Stinky Pete."

Sound check — Double letters (mud·dy, grin·ned) keep the vowel short — split between them.

SCENE 11



11

The team recoiled instantly.

Stinky Pete smelled like old socks and mouldy sandwiches.

"And what do we have here..." he said, licking his lips.

Stinky Pete circled them slowly, sniffing the air.

"I don't like him," said Cheeto.

"I really don't like him."

"...A little snack pack?"

Sound check — recoiled = re- + coil + -ed. 'oi' says /oy/; 're-' means back/again.

SCENE 12



12

Nobody moved. Then—

The team recoiled instantly.

"I'm smelling regret..."

"I signed up to get a snack, not BE A SNACK!"

"And what do we have here..."

"RETREAT! NINJA RETREAT!"

RUN.

Sound check — retreat = re-treat. 'ea' says /ē/ and the prefix 're-' means back.

SCENE 13



13

Chaos exploded! Rabbits zig-zagged everywhere. Cats scrambled and climbed. Stinky Pete charged after them like a muddy avalanche.

THIS WAS A TERRIBLE PLAN!

"I DID NOT SIGN UP TO BE SUPPER!"

"RETREAT! NINJA RETREAT!"

"...We almost got eaten," Flopsy said.

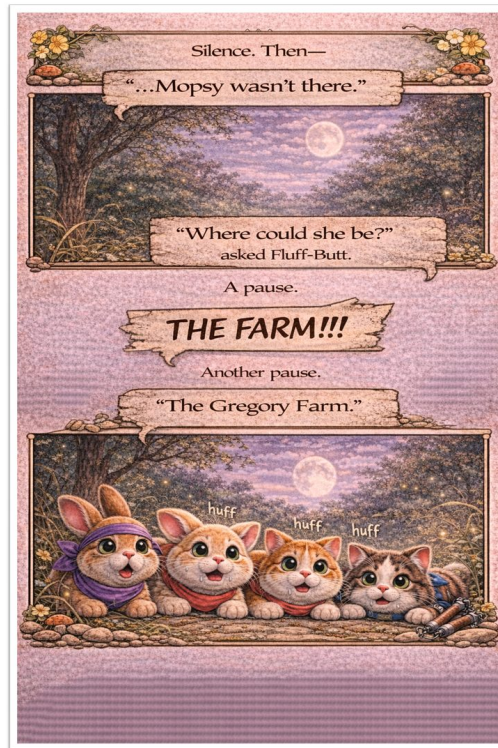
"That was not a rescue."

"NEXT TIME — DINNER'S ON ME!"

"That was a buffet situation," said Cheeto Puff.

Sound check — avalanche → av·a·lanche. 'ch' here says /ch/; in 'chaos' 'ch' says /k/.

SCENE 14



14

Silence. Then— "...Mopsy wasn't there."

"Where could she be?" asked Fluff-Butt.

A pause.

THE FARM!!!

Another pause.

"The Gregory Farm."

Sound check — silence → si·lence. Two ways to spell /s/ here: s- and soft -ce.

SCENE 15



15

It looks like we need to go to the Gregory Farm...

"That's far."

"Like... miss-supper far."

"Juniper Snow is going to KNOW."

"I love Mopsy, but... I love supper too. What should we do?"

No one spoke.

...Mopsy would come for us.

A long pause.

Then, nods.

Sound check — Juniper → Ju·ni·per (3). It begins with a long /ū/ sound.

SCENE 16



16

"Then we go... and we try — really try — to be back by suppertime."

Together, the Midnight Munchers and Crunch & Thunder stepped forward — out of the safety of home and into the wide, unknown world. The sun was already climbing higher. The day was moving faster. And somewhere out there... Mopsy was waiting.

Sound check — unknown = un- + known. The k is silent; 'un-' means 'not'.

SCENE 17



17

But as they made their way toward the Gregory Farm, none of them noticed the distant shapes shifting in the wheat — or the eyes watching from afar.

They had escaped Stinky Pete... but they might not make it home by suppertime.

TO BE CONTINUED...

Sound check — continued → con·tin·ued. Tap out each beat as you read.

FOR GROWN-UPS & YOUNG READERS

Activity Pages

Key Words to Know

Word	What it means
frantic	very worried and moving fast
dignity	acting calm, proud and in control
untamed	wild; not controlled (un- = not)
recoiled	jumped back quickly (re- = back)
avalanche	a big, fast slide of snow or mud
regret	the sorry feeling after a mistake
suppertime	the time supper is eaten (compound word)

Secret Code Names

The rabbits are the Midnight Munchers. The cats are Crunch & Thunder.

Animal	Code name
Flopsy	Madam Snack Attack
Big Bertha	Bunzilla
Cheeto Puff	Captain Wigglebottom
Fluff-Butt	Thunderbum
Mopsy	the runaway bunny they are trying to save
Stinky Pete	the smelly stranger who is NOT Pebbles

Let's Talk About It

Talk about these together. There are no wrong answers — go back to the pictures for clues.

1. The team makes a three-step plan. What are the steps, and why does the plan fail?
2. Cheeto Puff calls the chase “a buffet situation.” What does he mean?
3. Find two words the author uses to make Stinky Pete seem gross. How do they make you feel?
4. Going to the Gregory Farm means missing supertime. Why do the friends go anyway? What does that show about them?
5. The story ends on a cliffhanger. What clues hint that more danger is coming?
6. Why do you think each animal has a funny code name? How do the names fit their personalities?

Play With Sounds

Quick sound games to build phonemic awareness. Say them out loud!

- Syllable split: clap and split — av·a·lanche, in·vis·i·ble, neigh·bour·hood, sup·per·time.
- Word parts: add the prefix ‘re-’ to treat and coil → retreat, recoil. Add ‘-ed’ to squeeze and grin → squeezed, grinned (watch the spelling!).
- Vowel teams: hunt for ‘ea’ (retreat, wheat), ‘oi’ (recoiled) and ‘ee’ (squeezed). Sort them by the sound they make.