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Opening extract from
Room of the Broom

Written by
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Illustrated by
Axel Scheffler

Published by
Macmillan Children's Books

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For Natasha, Sabrina and Jasmine – J.D.



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Room on the Broom

by Julia Donaldson



Illustrated by Axel Scheffler

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The witch had a cat
and a very tall hat,
And long ginger hair
which she wore in a plait.
How the cat purred
and how the witch grinned,
As they sat on their broomstick
and flew through the wind.

But how the witch wailed
and how the cat spat,
When the wind blew so wildly
it blew off the hat.



"Down!" cried the witch,
and they flew to the ground.
They searched for the hat
but no hat could be found.



Then out of the bushes
on thundering paws
There bounded a dog
with the hat in his jaws.

He dropped it politely,
then eagerly said
(As the witch pulled the hat
firmly down on her head),
"I am a dog, as keen as can be.
Is there room on the broom
for a dog like me?"



"Yes!" cried the witch,
and the dog clambered on.
The witch tapped the broomstick and
whoosh! they were gone.



O ver the fields and the
forests they flew.
The dog wagged his tail
and the stormy wind blew.
The witch laughed aloud
and held onto her hat,
But away blew the bow
from her long ginger plait!



For every picture in this book, Axel Scheffler did many different sketches – more than for any other book he's illustrated! Read the story and see if you can tell which pictures these early drawings became.



It takes several steps to create the perfect picture . . .



Axel begins by drawing a very rough pencil sketch.



Next he does a neater drawing in pen and ink.



Finally, he uses ink, paint and colouring pencils to create the finished picture.

A Note from the Author

The idea for *Room on the Broom* came about when I started to think about witches and cats. Witches in storybooks, you see, are almost always accompanied by cats and, of course, the cats often ride with the witches on the backs of their broomsticks.

What would happen, I wondered, if a witch didn't just have a cat but lots of animals? Would they all travel with her? How would they all fit onto a broomstick? And how much weight can one broom carry? And that's where the basic storyline came from.

There wasn't a dragon in the original story, but once the broom had broken and everyone had tumbled to the ground I created him to add some more excitement and drama. And as to the trick that the animals play on the dragon to save the witch? Well, I think I must have been inspired by the story of "The Musicians of Bremen". "The Musicians of Bremen" is a German folktale about four old animals – a donkey, a dog, a cat and a rooster – who come across a band of robbers in a cottage in some woods. They climb on one another's backs and make a fearful din. The robbers are convinced that there must be a terrible creature outside and run away, leaving the animals to settle in for the evening. It's a wonderful story and I am indebted to it because, although it was unconscious at the time, I think it must have been an inspiration.

The witch herself though, is definitely based on me! I am quite scatty. When I was a child I was always dropping and losing things, just like the witch in *Room on the Broom*. In fact, I still do. I can remember seeing the first sketches that Axel drew of the witch and asking my editor if she could be made a bit younger and less tidy, and if her nose might be a bit smaller. She looked older, wartier and much neater than I'd thought of her when I was writing the story. But now, of course, I am extremely fond of the witch and couldn't imagine her looking any other way.



Julia Donaldson
August 2015

