LOVEWENDE

Who do you think of when you hear the word 'love'?

'Love' means a deep affection for something or for someone. This wonderful emotion comes in many different forms, whether that's the feelings we hold for our family, our pets, or even a passion or hobby. In the past, 'love' came with lots of different word-companions. A 'love-glance', for example, was a loving look between two people, while a 'love-spoon' was a decorated wooden spoon, presented by a man to the person he wanted to marry. And then there is 'lovewende', a word that has now disappeared but that describes a person who is both loving to others, and loved deeply in return.

The word 'love' is very old, yet a thousand years on, our language has no other word that means exactly the same thing. Sadly, there are far more words in the dictionary for 'hate' than there are for 'love'. Wouldn't it be nice to bring back some of these joyful expressions from the past?

DARLING

What words do your loved ones use when they talk to you? 'Poppet' perhaps? Or 'sweetheart'? They might also use 'darling', which has been a term of affection for over a thousand years. 'Darling' literally means 'little dear', and is one of many words used for someone we love. Some, from the past, will sound very strange to us now: 'bagpudding', for example, or 'cabbage', 'flittermouse' (an old term for a bat) or 'ding-ding'!

BUTTERFLY

Picture a hazy, dozy summer's day, with a table set for lunch outside. Perhaps you can see a beautiful butterfly with blazing colours, gently fluttering on to a plate? If so, you might be close to solving the mystery of how one of our most treasured insects was named.

We have been using the word 'butterfly' for over a thousand years, and people have been trying to work out the origin of its name ever since. Could it be because many common butterflies have pale yellow wings, like butter? Or perhaps it comes from the belief that butterflies really do love butter and often land on any that has been left out, just like on that lunch table in your imagination! Some people even believe that 'butterfly' began as 'flutterby' because of the way the insects gracefully flutter by us as they fly through the sky.

We also think of these creatures when we are a little bit nervous or excited about something, and we use the phrase 'I have butterflies'. This perfectly captures those moments where it feels like there are tiny wings fluttering away in our stomachs!

DOG

Dogs have been our favourite companions for a very long time. But before we loved 'dogs' we loved 'hounds', for this was the word that people used for the animal a thousand years ago. Where 'dog' came from is a bit of a mystery, but we do know that the earliest records of the word appear in surnames of people living in the 13th century, including Richard Doggetail and Roger Le Doge!

The names of individual dog breeds are less puzzling. Some are based on the country they originated from – an Alsatian, for example, comes from the French region of Alsace. Other names come from the habits of the breed – 'poodle' comes from the German *Pudelhund* – 'splash-hound' – because poodles are water dogs and love splashing about.

The 'terrier' is named after the French for 'earth',

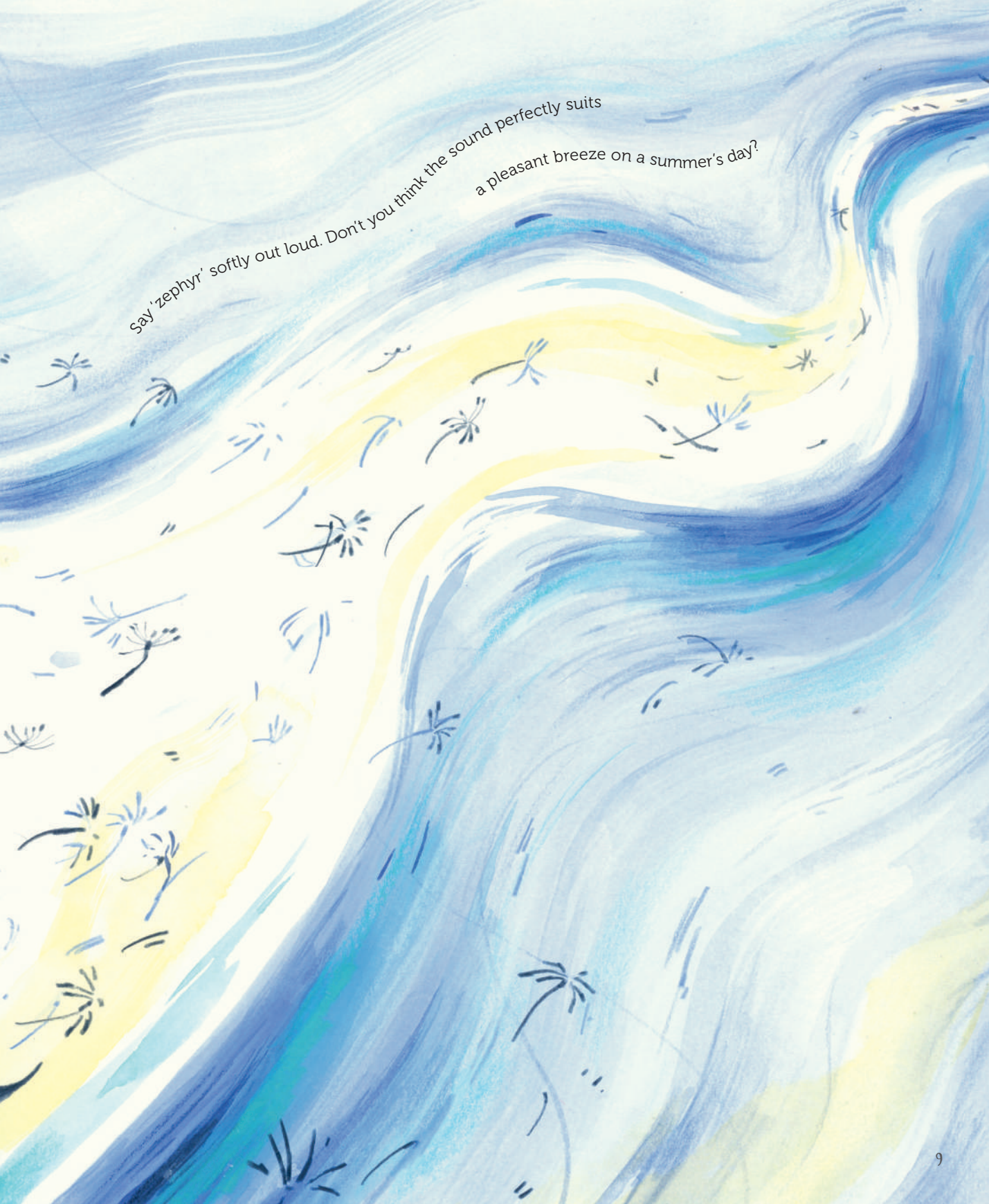
because these dogs love to

burrow in the earth

or terrain.

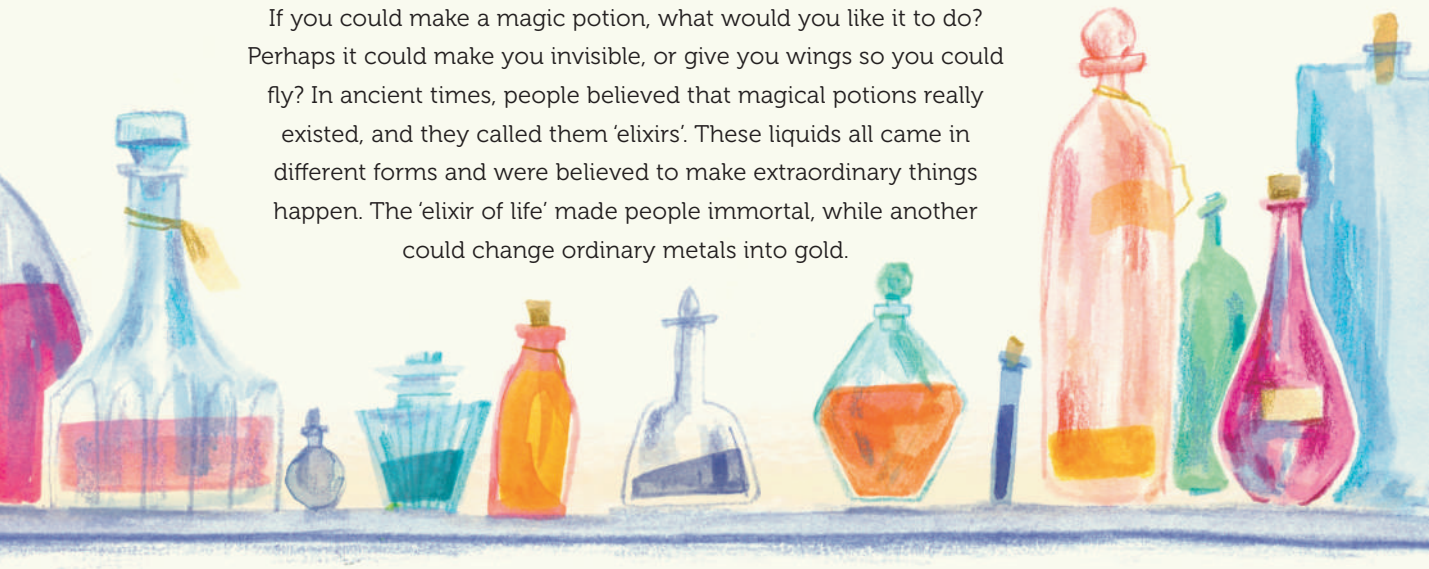
ZEPHYR

Imagine the feeling of lying on the grass on a hot day, staring up at the sky and enjoying the warmth of the Sun on your face. If you're lucky, as the summer heat beats down, a gentle breeze might waft over your skin. This joyous sensation is a 'zephyr', a beautiful old word for a very light wind. For the Ancient Greeks, Zephyrus was the god of the west wind, whose sweet breath was said to blow gently across the Earth.

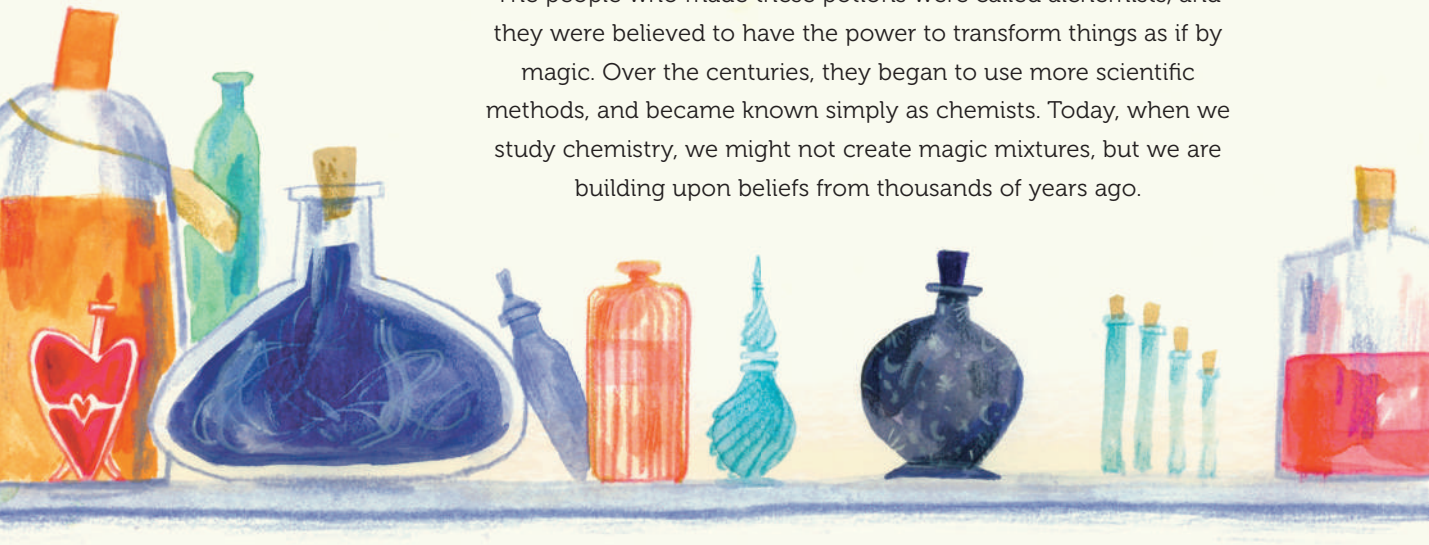

Say 'zephyr' softly out loud. Don't you think the sound perfectly suits
a pleasant breeze on a summer's day?

ELIXIR

If you could make a magic potion, what would you like it to do? Perhaps it could make you invisible, or give you wings so you could fly? In ancient times, people believed that magical potions really existed, and they called them 'elixirs'. These liquids all came in different forms and were believed to make extraordinary things happen. The 'elixir of life' made people immortal, while another could change ordinary metals into gold.



The people who made these potions were called alchemists, and they were believed to have the power to transform things as if by magic. Over the centuries, they began to use more scientific methods, and became known simply as chemists. Today, when we study chemistry, we might not create magic mixtures, but we are building upon beliefs from thousands of years ago.



HAPPY
To be happy is to be joyous,
glad or pleased.

CHARM

You can have a lot of fun with what are known as 'collective nouns' – words used to describe a group or collection of things. Many of them we already know – a 'gang of thieves', for example, or a 'bunch of grapes'. But what would you call a group of witches? A cackler, perhaps? How about a collection of Lego pieces – might that be a 'foot-hurt'?

A lot of collective nouns refer to animals and birds. You might find a 'pride of lions' prowling across the savannah, or a 'pod of dolphins' swimming through the ocean. If you're really lucky, you might have even seen a 'murmuration of starlings', which describes a group of hundreds of birds

that twist, turn and swoop together, making beautiful swirling patterns in the sky.

A 'charm' is another collective noun, this time for the goldfinch – a beautiful, bright yellow bird. The word for a group of these birds makes perfect sense, as there's something quite magical and charming about their golden feathers.