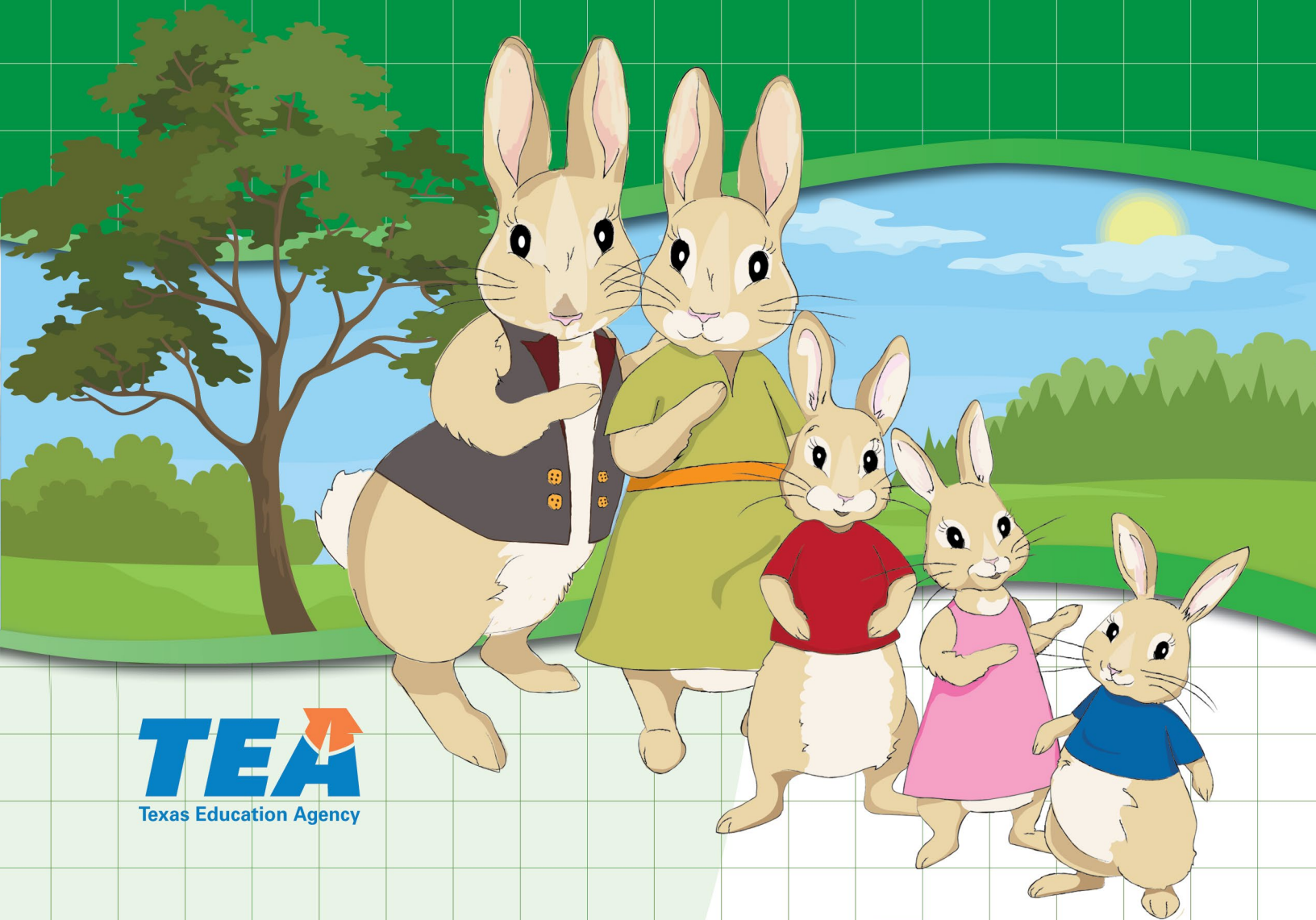
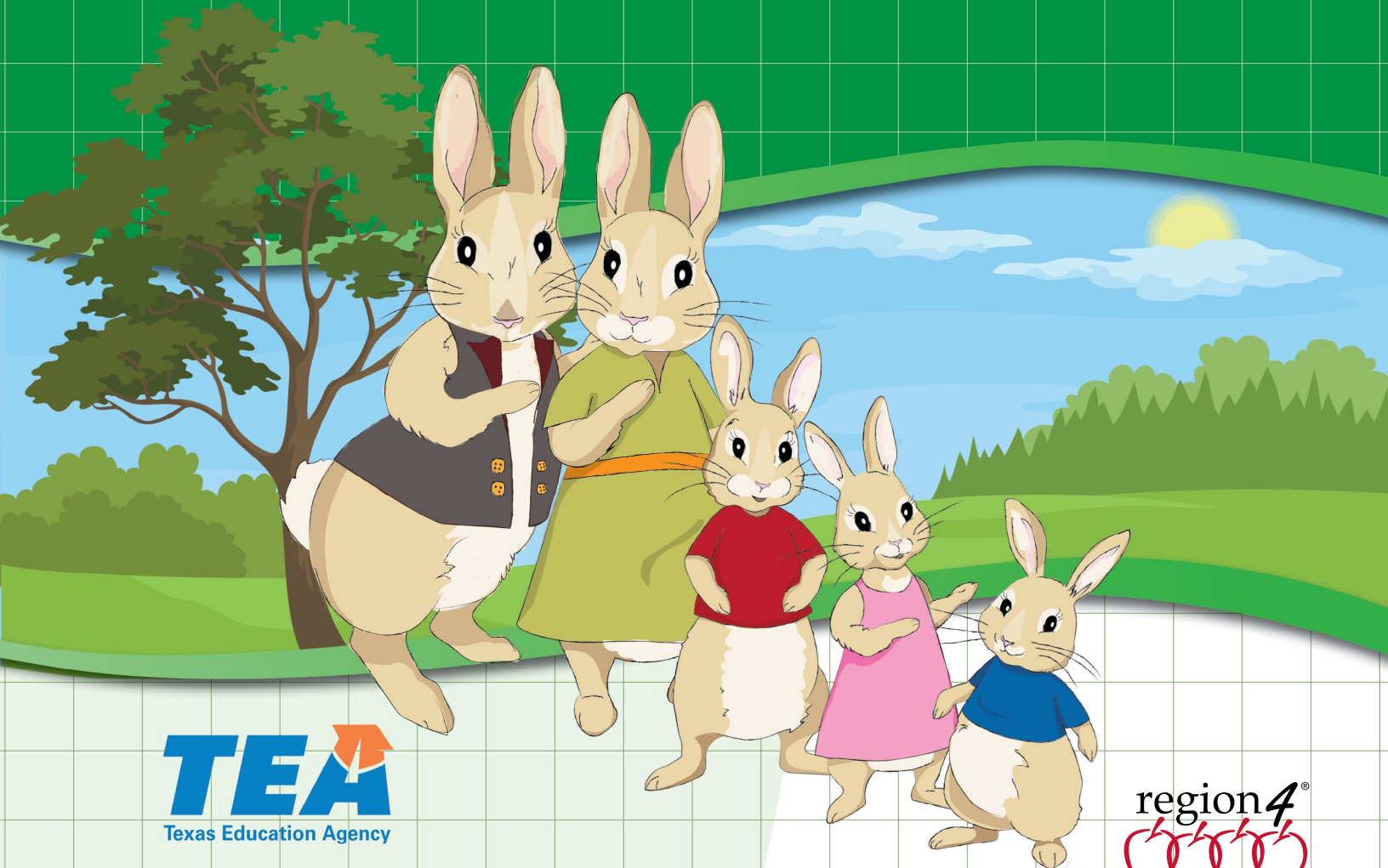


Home Sweet Home



Home Sweet Home



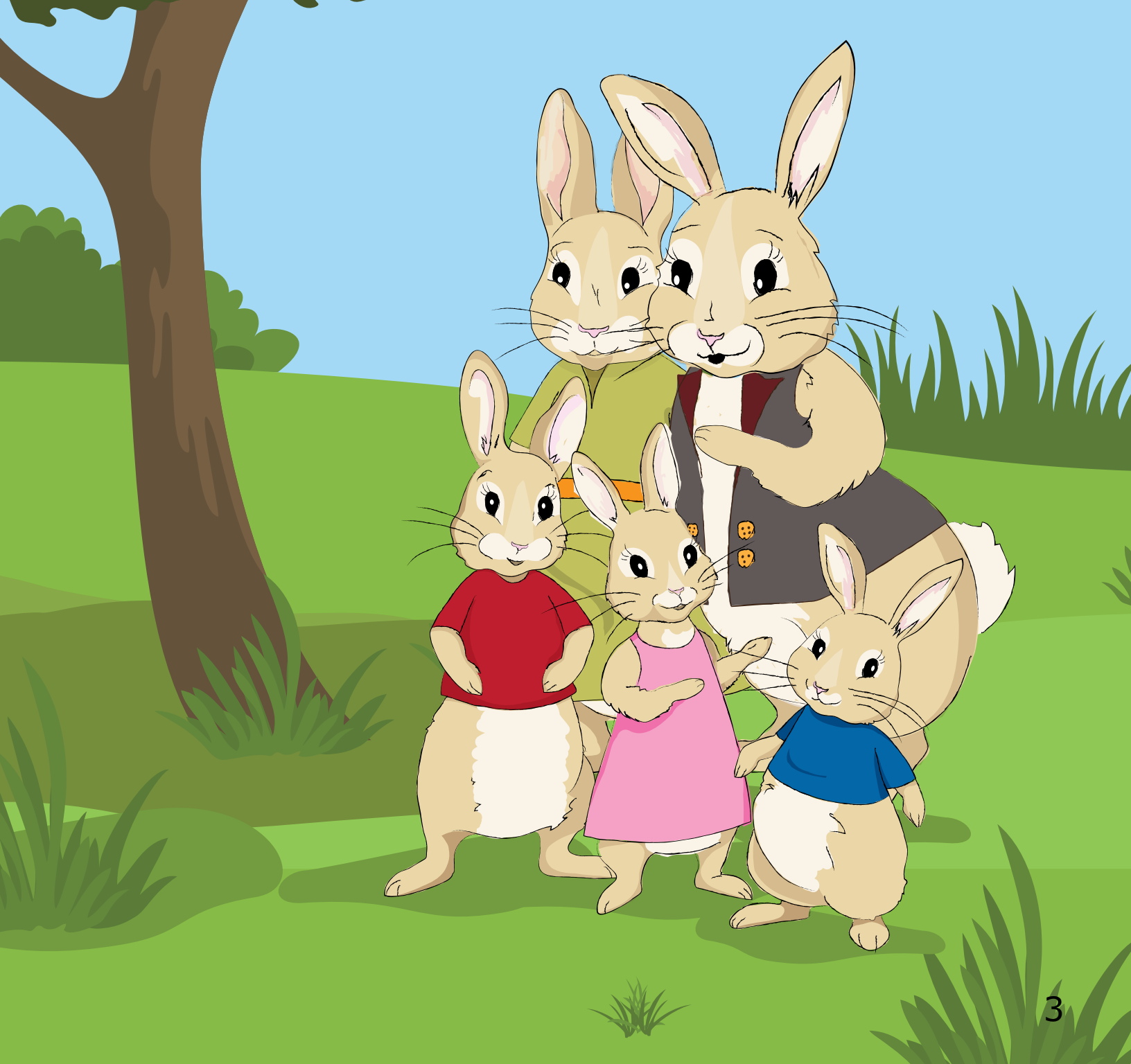
This book was developed in collaboration with Region 4 Education Service Center, Houston, Texas.

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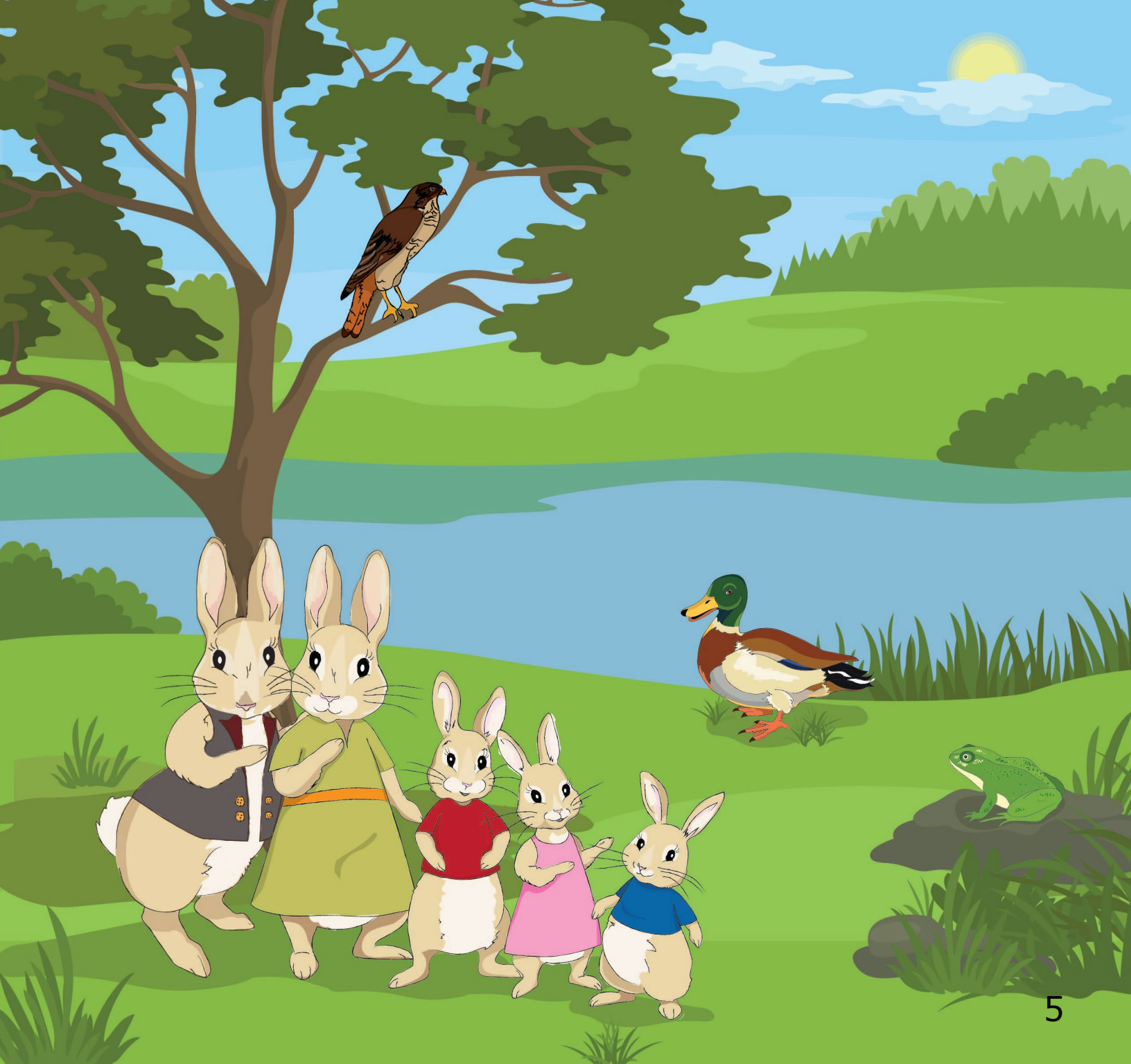
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Mr. and Mrs. Rabbit and their three children live in a meadow. The meadow is next to a forest and pond. It is a perfect place for the Rabbits and the other families who live in the community. The meadow ecosystem meets the needs of every organism that lives there.

The Rabbit family loves the characteristics of their home environment. The soil is perfect for digging the dens and tunnels that they call home. All the grasses, plants, and flowers are great to nibble on. The pond provides the Rabbit children a place to get a drink of water. The bushes are great for hiding under, and the trees provide shade on sunny days.



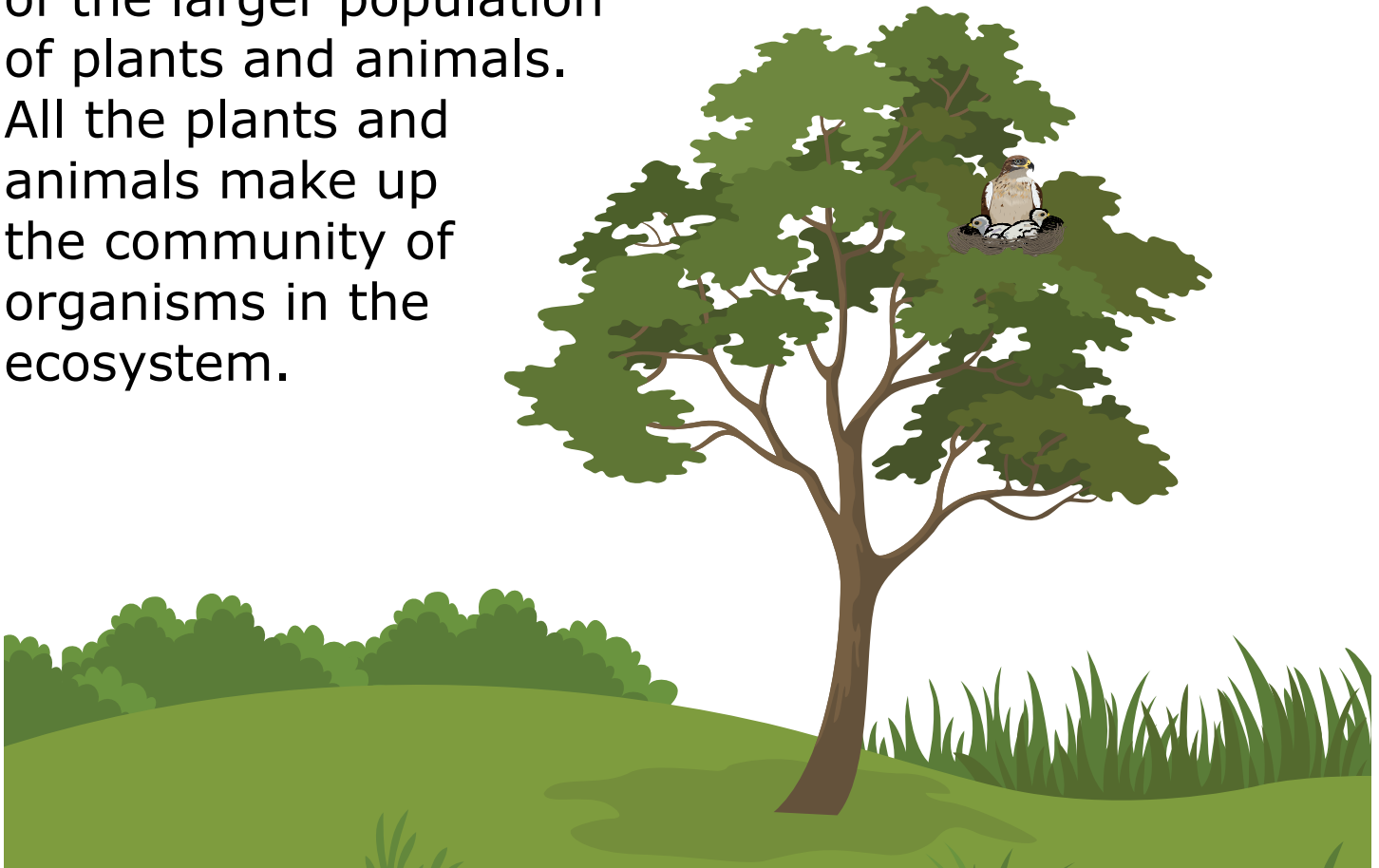
The Rabbits have many neighbors in their community. The Bullfrog family lives by the pond. They are just one type of frog that lives in the meadow. The Bullfrogs raise their tadpoles in the pond water. The Bullfrogs share the pond with the Ducks. The ducks swim around looking for insects and plant roots to eat. There are also fish and insect populations that live in and around the pond.





The Hawk family lives in the branches of the oak trees on the edge of the meadow. The hawks enjoy their tree-top view because it helps them in their hunt for food. The Oak tree family is one of the oldest members of the community. They've been here for decades! Each family in the meadow is part of the larger population of plants and animals.

All the plants and animals make up the community of organisms in the ecosystem.



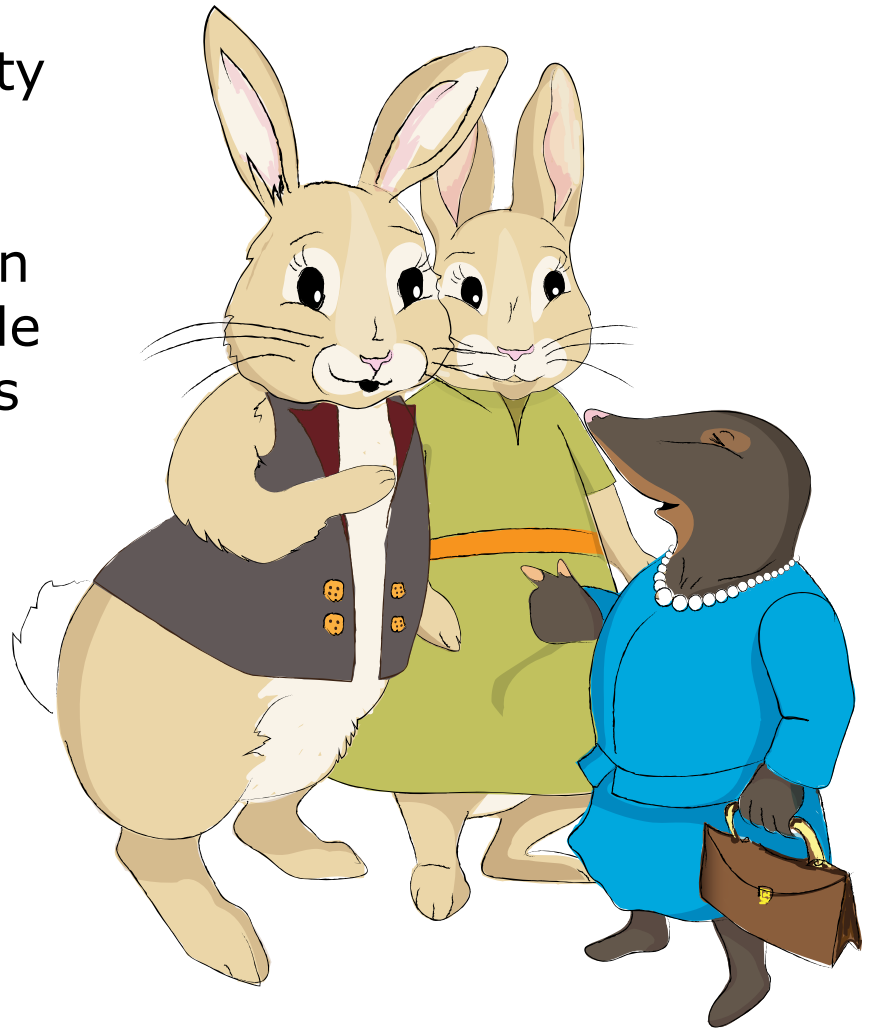
Counting the large number of populations of living organisms makes Mr. Rabbit think it is getting crowded. He thinks to himself, "My family is a growing family. Pretty soon we'll need more space. I wonder, is there an environment that better suits our needs?"



Mr. Rabbit turns to his wife and says, "It's great here, but I think it's crowded. It is time we move to a new community that has more space for our family." Mrs. Rabbit is shocked. She had been thinking the same thing. They talk and decide to call on their real estate agent, Myrna the mole.

Even though moles live below the ground and have poor vision, Myrna is the best agent around. Mr. and Mrs. Rabbit tell Myrna that they want to see environments that offer more space.

Myrna explains, "There's a whole world out there that offers plenty of space and many resources. I will take you to a great location I know. You can decide if the environment fits you and you fit the environment."



Mr. and Mrs. Rabbit think this is a grand idea. They gather their children, Gustaf, Cedric, and Lily. They all dive down into the tunnels with Myrna.



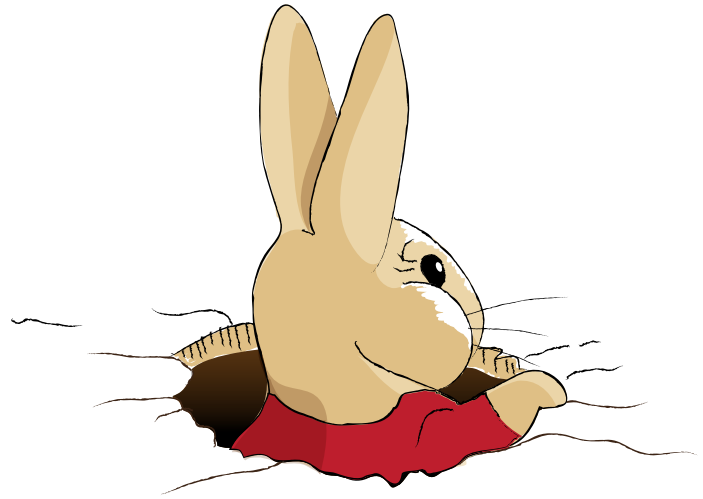
The little group scampers through the tunnel system.
They turn this way and that.



They turn to the left and veer to the right through the tunnels. Finally Myrna stops and whips around to say, "We're here. Welcome to the land of plenty of space! Let's pop up and see if this environment is a good fit for your family."



The Rabbits pop out of the hole behind Myrna. For the first few moments they can only stand there blinded by the bright sun. Myrna starts her sales pitch.



“Look at the space you have here. There is no pond taking up real estate. It is not crowded with trees or extra shrubs. In fact, there are only desert plants and various cactus populations out here.”

“I know the sunlight makes it hard to see the other community members. The Coyote family is nearby, and the Rattlesnake family lives just a few rocks away. You might even meet a cousin in the jackrabbit population. I know they are hares and not rabbits, but aren’t you related?”



When Myrna turns to ask the Rabbits what they think, Mrs. Rabbit pants, "How—pant pant—do the members—pant—of this community take this heat? What do they—pant pant—do for water? What does anyone eat? . . . All . . . we . . . see—pant pant—is sand, rocks, and cactus. Where's the shade?"



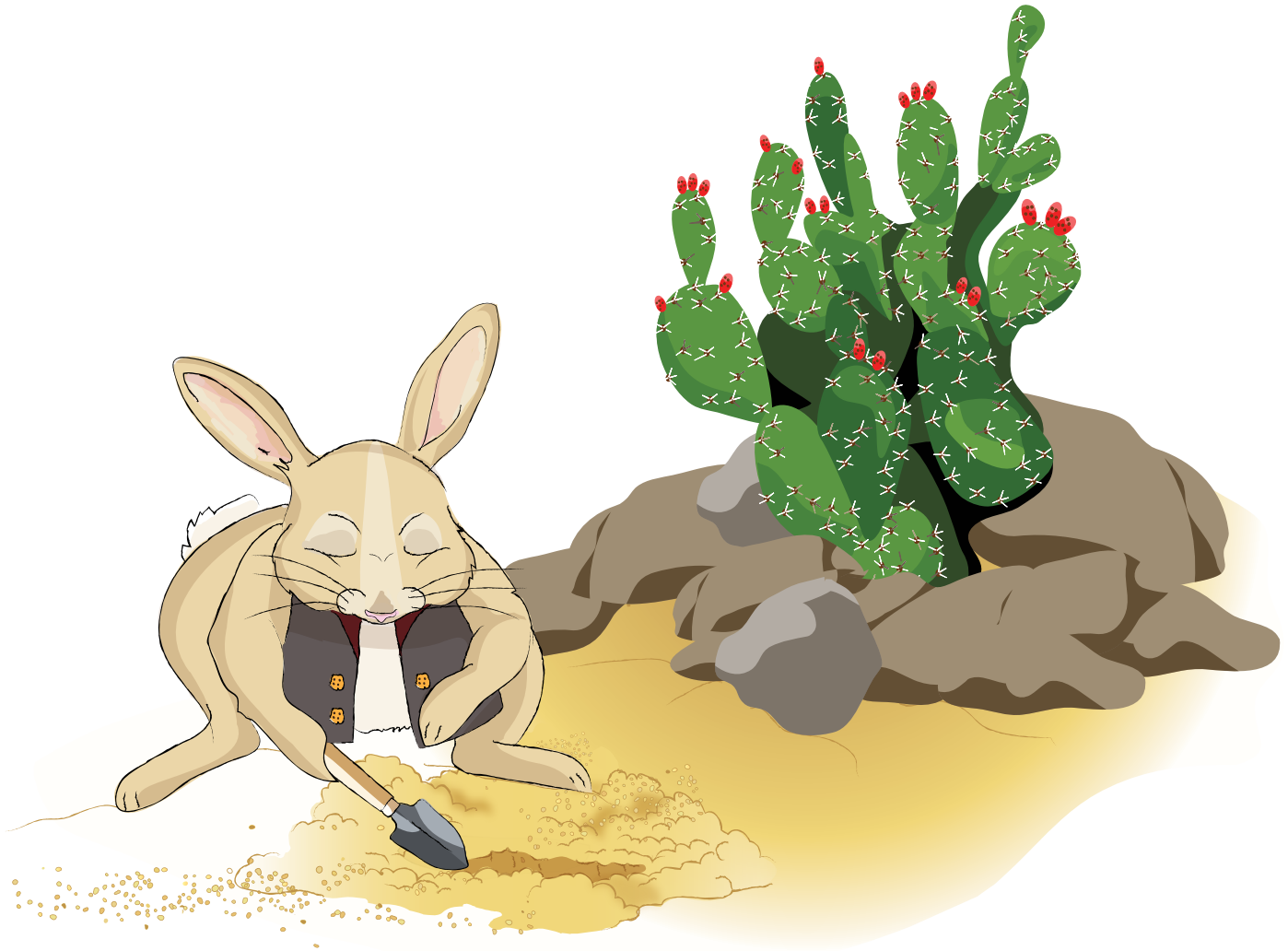
"Oh," says Myrna. "The jackrabbits eat sage plants and cactus. Their long ears help get rid of body heat. Plus, they dig shallow beds in the sand and rest during the day. They move about more in the cooler hours of the evening."



The Rattlesnake family stays tucked up in between the rock *crevices* when it's hot. They use the heat stored up by the rocks to stay warm. They become active later when the temperatures are cooler. The Cactus family really knows how to manage their water supply. They store most of it in their stems. Since they don't have true leaves, they don't lose much at all."



Cedric and Gustaf fight over the shade by the prickly pear. Lily digs in the sand, and Mrs. Rabbit and Myrna chat. Mr. Rabbit tries to dig a tunnel and den in the sand. Each hole he digs collapses.



Mr. Rabbit turns to Myrna and Mrs. Rabbit and says, "This desert environment works for the community members who live here, but I cannot build a den here. We don't like this high heat and low water."

"Okay," says Myrna, "I've got just the place for you where there is plenty of space. You will never have to worry about the heat."



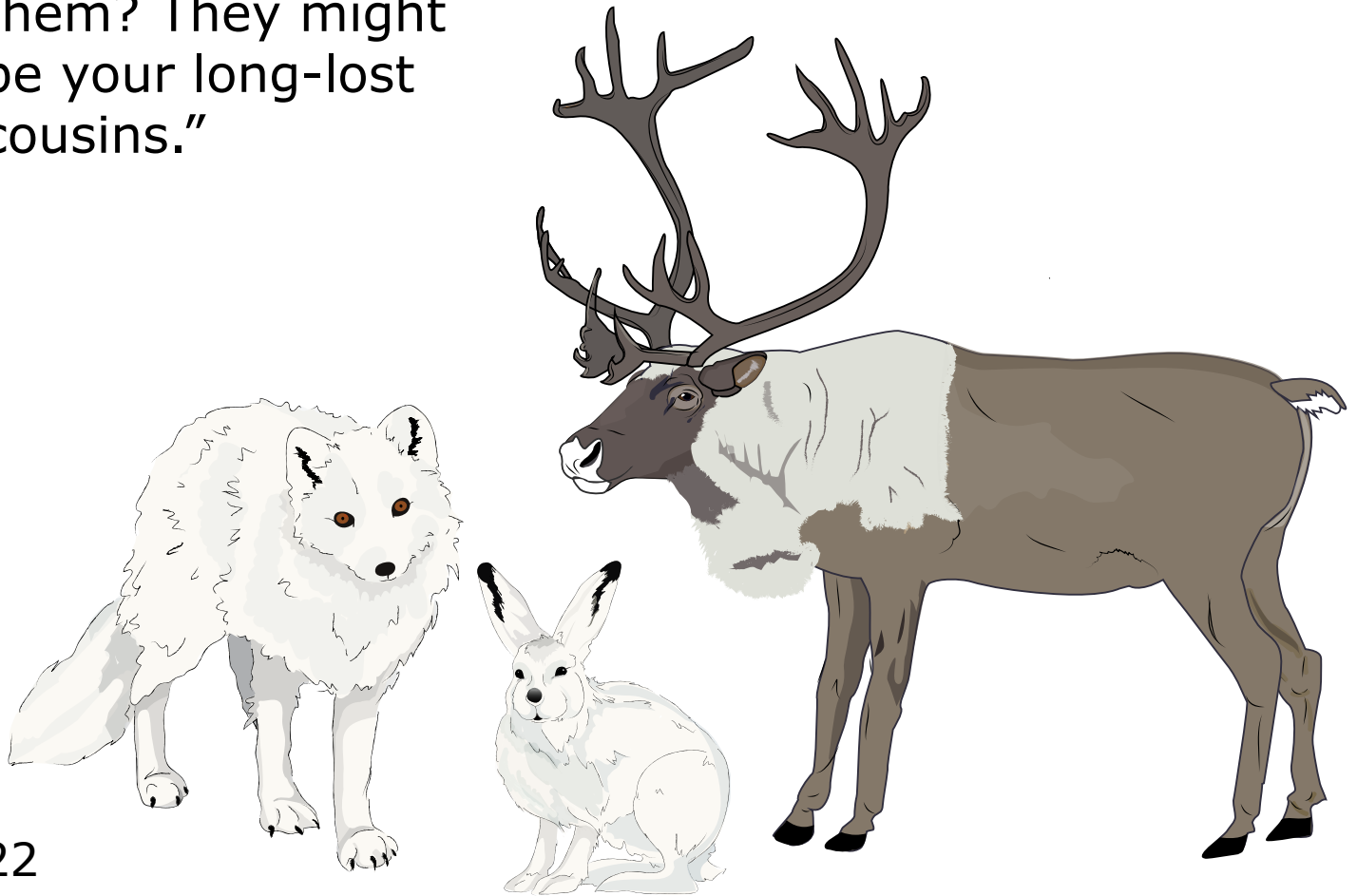
Myrna and the Rabbits drop back into the tunnels and make their way to the next place. The group scampers through the tunnels. They turn left and veer right. Finally Myrna stops, whips around, and says, "We're here. Let's pop up and see what we can see."



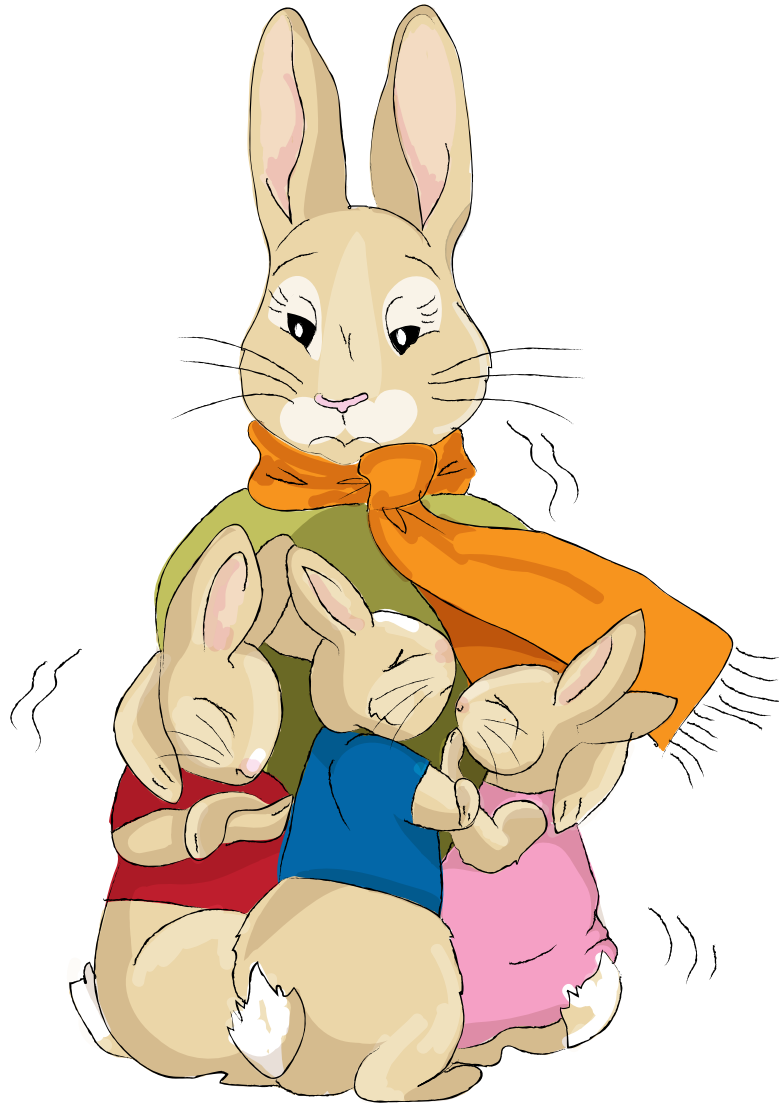
They each pop up and just stand there staring. The first thing they notice is the *barren* landscape. Then they notice the cold, frosty wind blowing and swirling through their fur coats.



"You can see there is plenty of space," says Myrna. "It is not as hot as it was in the desert environment. The Caribou family loves to eat the moss that grows here. The Arctic foxes have extra fat and thicker coats to help them enjoy the cool temperatures. Arctic hares have coats that turn white in the winter just to blend in with the snow. Are you related to them? They might be your long-lost cousins."



Mrs. Rabbit and the kids huddle together. They are shivering with teeth chattering loudly. "I d-d-d-don't th-th-th-think-k our c-c-c-c-coats are thick-k-k-k-k-en-n-n-n-nough," chatters Mrs. Rabbit.



Mr. Rabbit tries to dig test holes for their new den and cannot get more than an inch deep. "What's wrong with this soil, Myrna?" Mr. Rabbit asks.

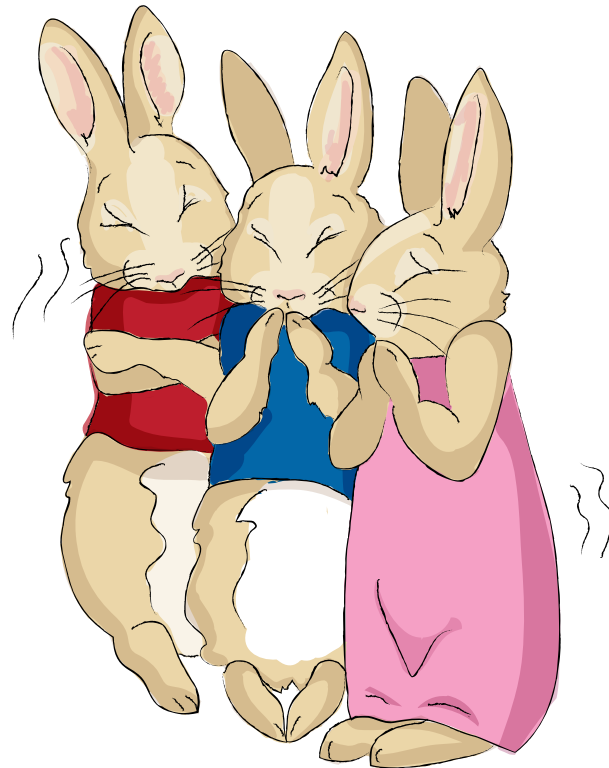
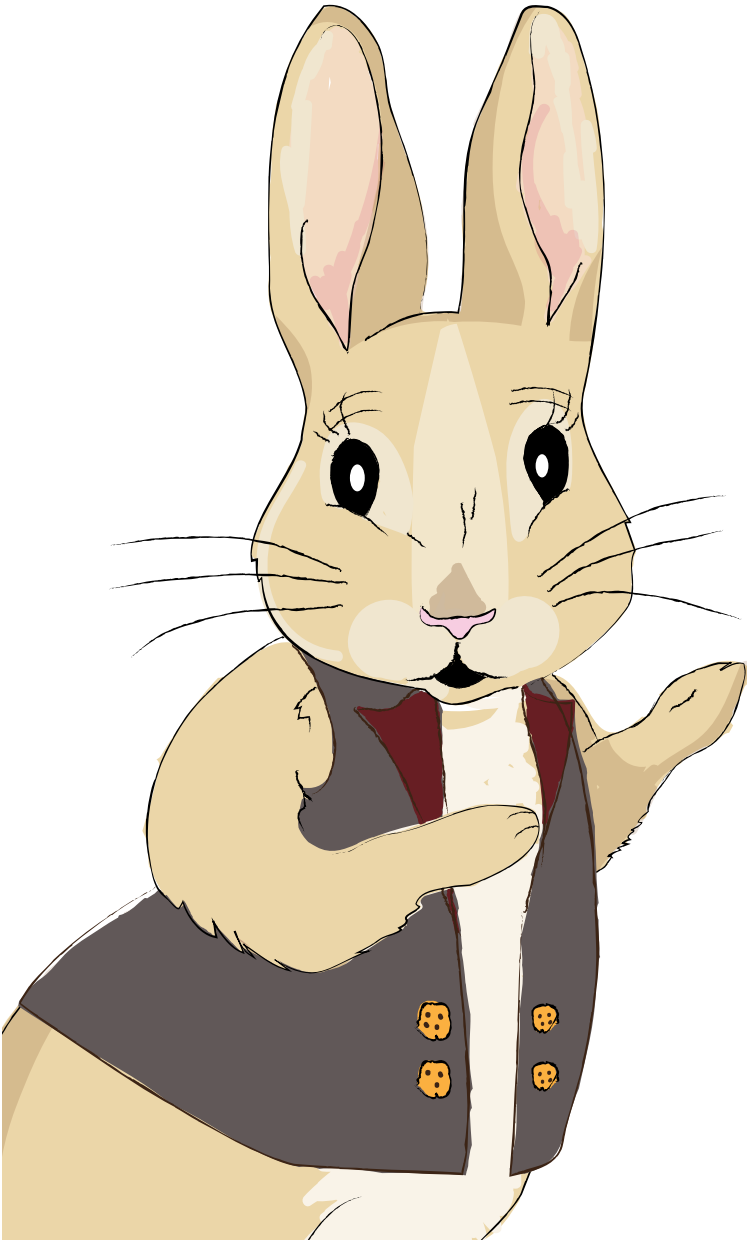
"Oh there's nothing wrong with the soil." says Myrna. "It's called permafrost because it's mostly frozen.

The plants here have networks of shallow roots to use the uppermost layer of the soil."

Mr. Rabbit explains, "This will never do. My family needs a place with plenty of space for our home. It cannot be too hot or too cold. We need a place where we can have a nice burrow to live in."

"I have the perfect place for you! It is a nice warm temperature all year. There is 100% access to water. It is beautiful!" says Myrna.

"Okay," says Mr. Rabbit.
"Let's go before my kids
turn into bunny pops!"



All the Rabbits shiver and shake as they pop down the hole. They follow Myrna to the next location. They scamper and jump through the tunnels. They turn to the right and veer to the left. They hop and scurry down long passages. Finally, they enter a strange room with strange-looking devices in it.



Myrna turns to the family and says, "This is the place you'll love. It is beautiful and filled with lots of soft plantlike forms. It has plenty of water and is really exotic. There's only one catch. To see your new home, you have to put on this special gear."

The rabbits have never even seen anything like the gear Myrna asks them to wear. They want to see the new location, and they hope it meets their needs. They follow Myrna's lead and put on the gear.

"Your family will love this," Myrna says. "I will talk to you using the speaker in this mask. You can ask questions by clicking the button on the side of the mask to talk."



Myrna waddles in her swim fins over to the hatch. She turns the wheel and opens the lid. Then she says, "Come on, everyone. Jump in!" The Rabbits jump into the hole, and Myrna jumps in after them.



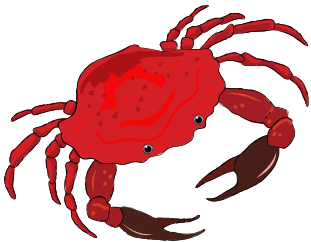
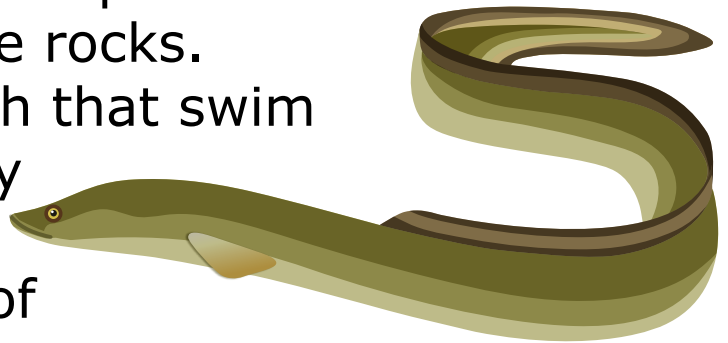
They are surprised to see they are underwater in a coral reef community. Myrna clicks the button on her mask and says, "The temperatures are really moderate. There is plenty of space. There is plenty of water. You will not need shade on a hot day because the water filters the light for you. You can dine on any seaweed you find in the area."



"This coral reef community is home to populations of fish, eels, crabs, and coral," Myrna says. "Coral are small animals that build and live in colonies called reefs. The coral eat a feast of plankton that floats by in the water. Some fish hunt other fish for food, but the Clown Fish family actually eats algae that live in the coral. I'm sure it makes for a crunchy lunch."

"Ms. Moray Eel hides in the spaces between the coral and the rocks. She darts out to catch fish that swim too close. The Crab family goes along the bottom.

They feed on the scraps of everyone's meals. They are a true clean-up crew. What do you think? How do you like it? Isn't it beautiful?"



Mr. and Mrs. Rabbit cannot answer. They are busy watching their children play hide and seek around the coral beds.



Mrs. Rabbit turns to Myrna and asks about the yearly cost of refills for scuba gear. Mr. Rabbit swims over to the first patch of ground he sees. He tries to dig a hole. Water floods the space as Mr. Rabbit digs.



He turns around and slowly swims back to his wife and Myrna. "This isn't going to work. It's beautiful here, and there is space. The temperature is perfect, and there is plenty of water. Unfortunately, there are several issues. The water is too salty to drink, and the scuba gear is too expensive. The seaweed is chewy, and I can't build a home in a flood zone. What are we going to do?"

Myrna squints up at Mr. Rabbit and says, "Your home does need to support your family's needs. I guess this community isn't the best fit. I have only one more place for you to see. I don't know if this is a good idea, but it's the last option."

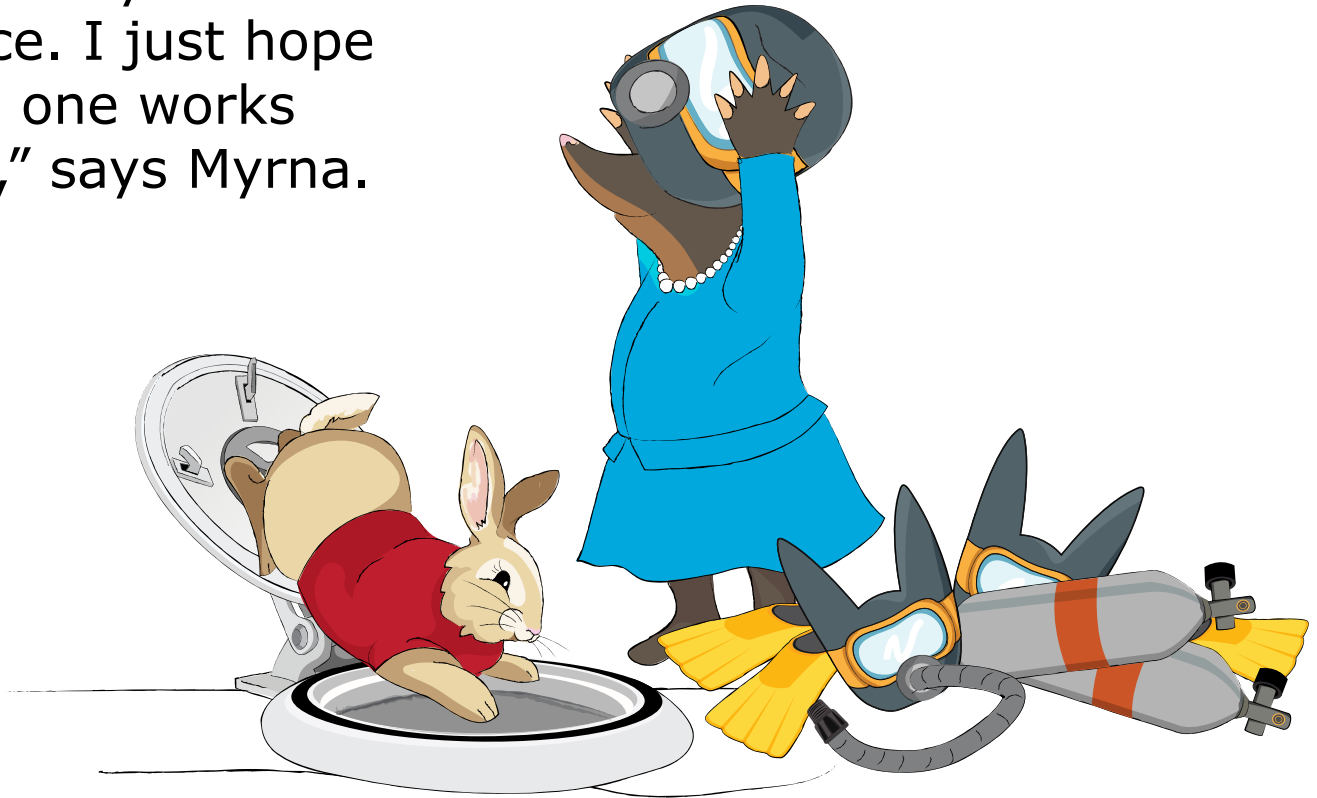
"Anything but this," says Mr. Rabbit.



They round up the Rabbit children with their coats soaked through and through. Then they go back up through the hole into the tunnel system.

Myrna and the wet Rabbits put away the scuba gear. They dry off enough so that they don't leave puddles and wet paw prints everywhere they hop.

"Let's try this last place. I just hope this one works out," says Myrna.



Myrna takes the lead. They dash and scamper down the tunnels. Just as everyone is starting to get tired, Myrna stops and says, "I want to remind you that this is absolutely the *last* place I have to show you. I just hope it meets your needs. Let's have a look."



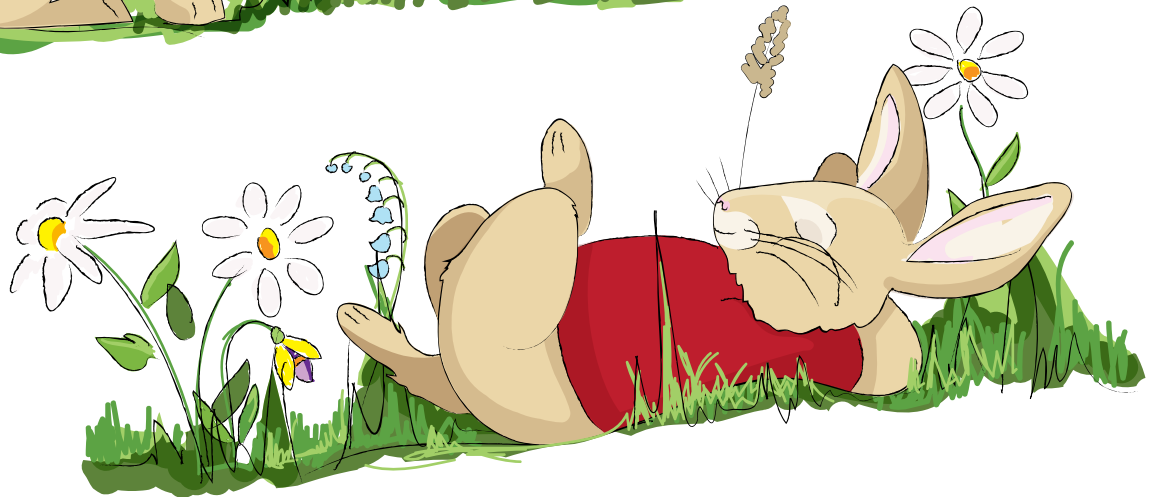
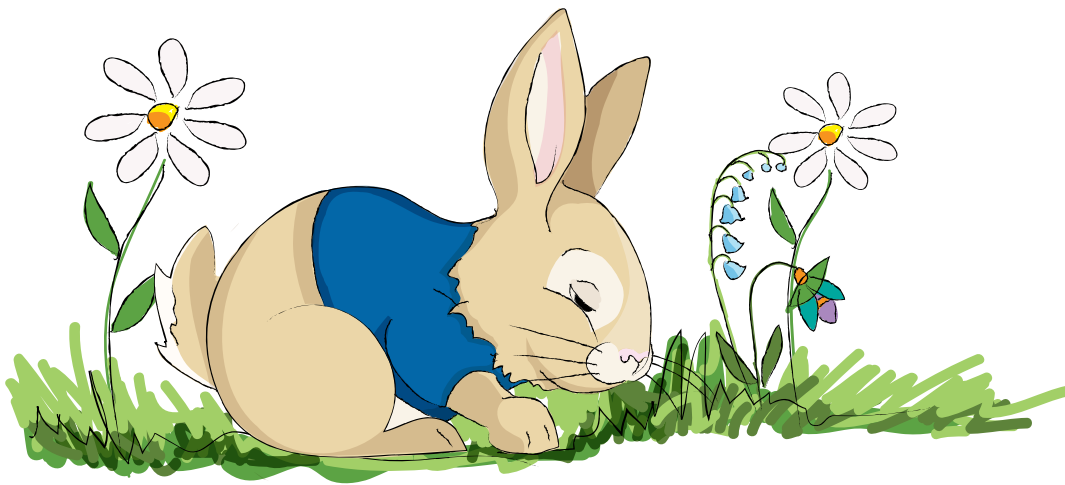
They each pop up out of the tunnels and stand there in shock but with big smiles on their faces.

"We're home!" says Lily. "Look Momma, there's our pond. Let's go get a drink."



Gustaf nibbles the tender grass. "Ooo, this grass tastes so juicy and tender," he says.

Cedric hums to himself as he rolls around in the grass under the trees.



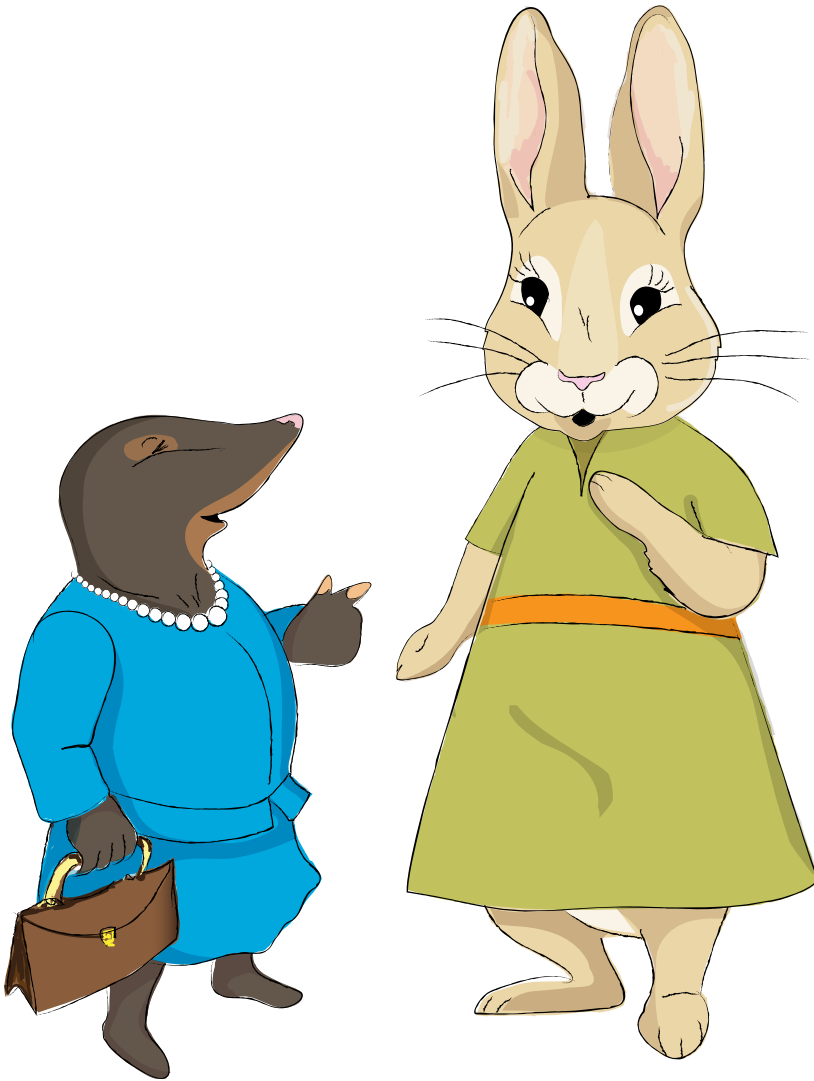
Mrs. Rabbit says, "We're back home. We can do our part in the community of plants and animals."

Mr. Rabbit says, "I think the soil is perfect for adding more space to our old home."



"My job is to make sure your home environment meets your needs," said Myrna. "I've always said you fit your home and your home fits you!"

"You're a genius!"
says Mrs. Rabbit.
The Rabbit family is
happy to return to
their meadow home.



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