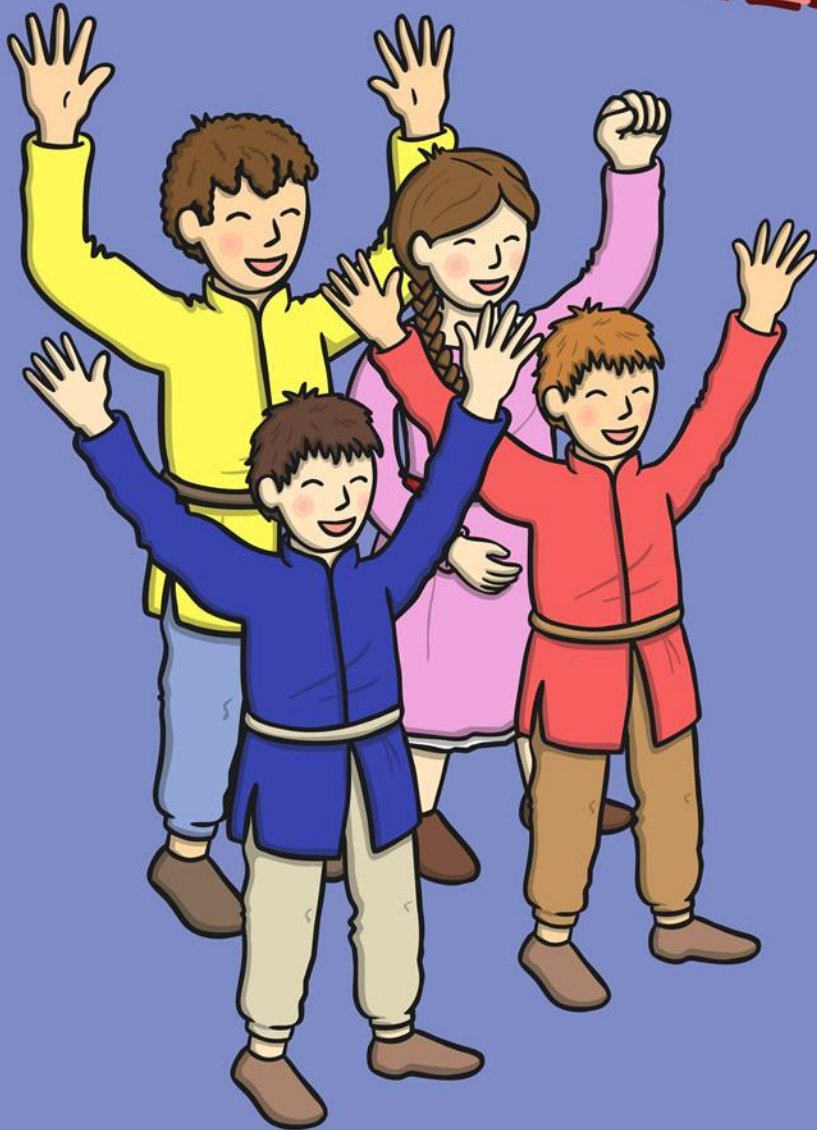


The Children of Lir



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Many years ago, there lived a king called Lir. He lived in a beautiful castle with his wife and four children, Fionnula, Fiachra, Aodh and Conn. Lir's wife became sick and died. Everyone was very sad.



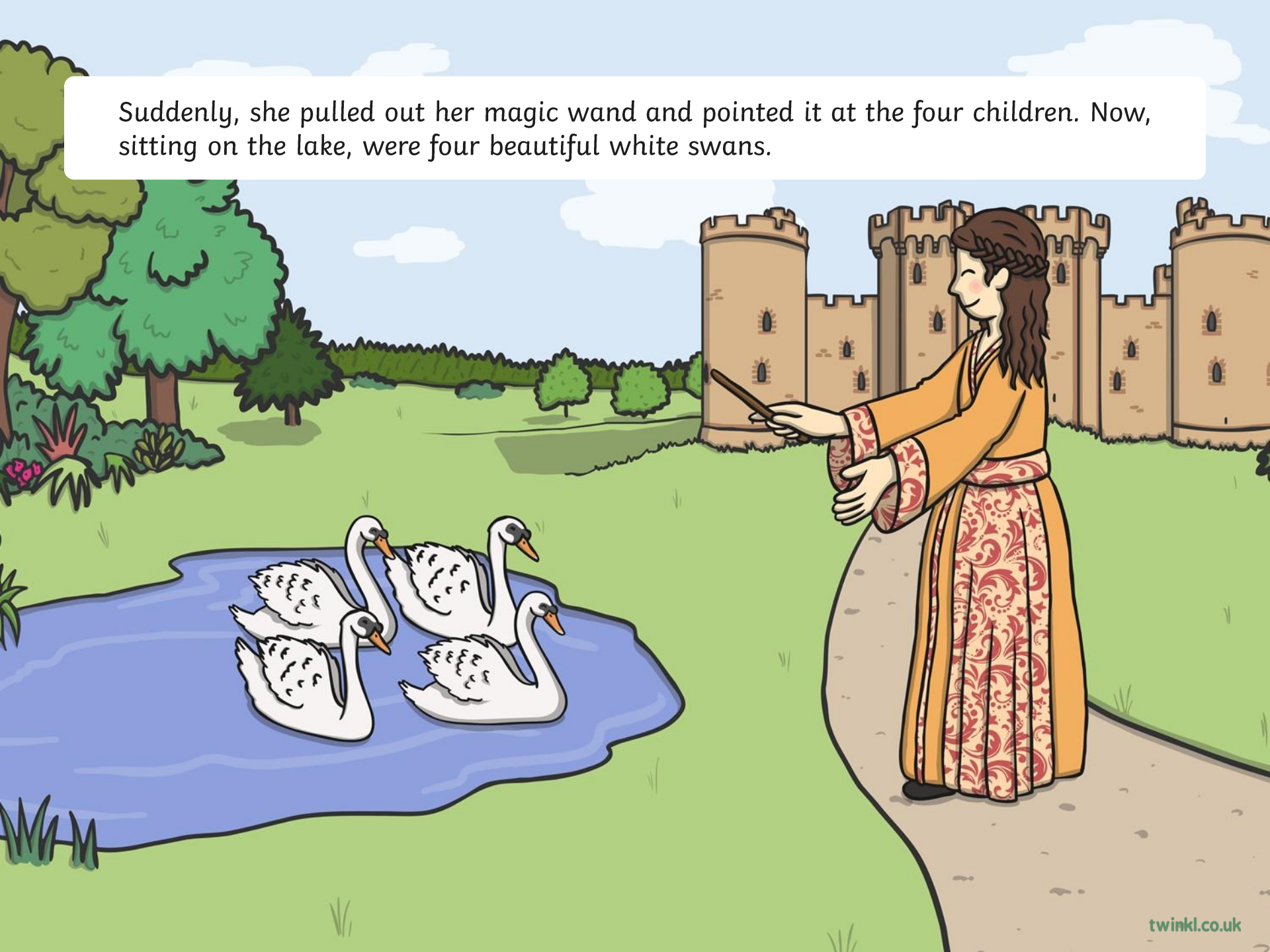
Lir did not want his children to grow up without a mother, so he got married again. His new wife was called Aoife. She was very mean to his children. She was jealous of how much Lir loved them. She came up with a plan to get rid of them.



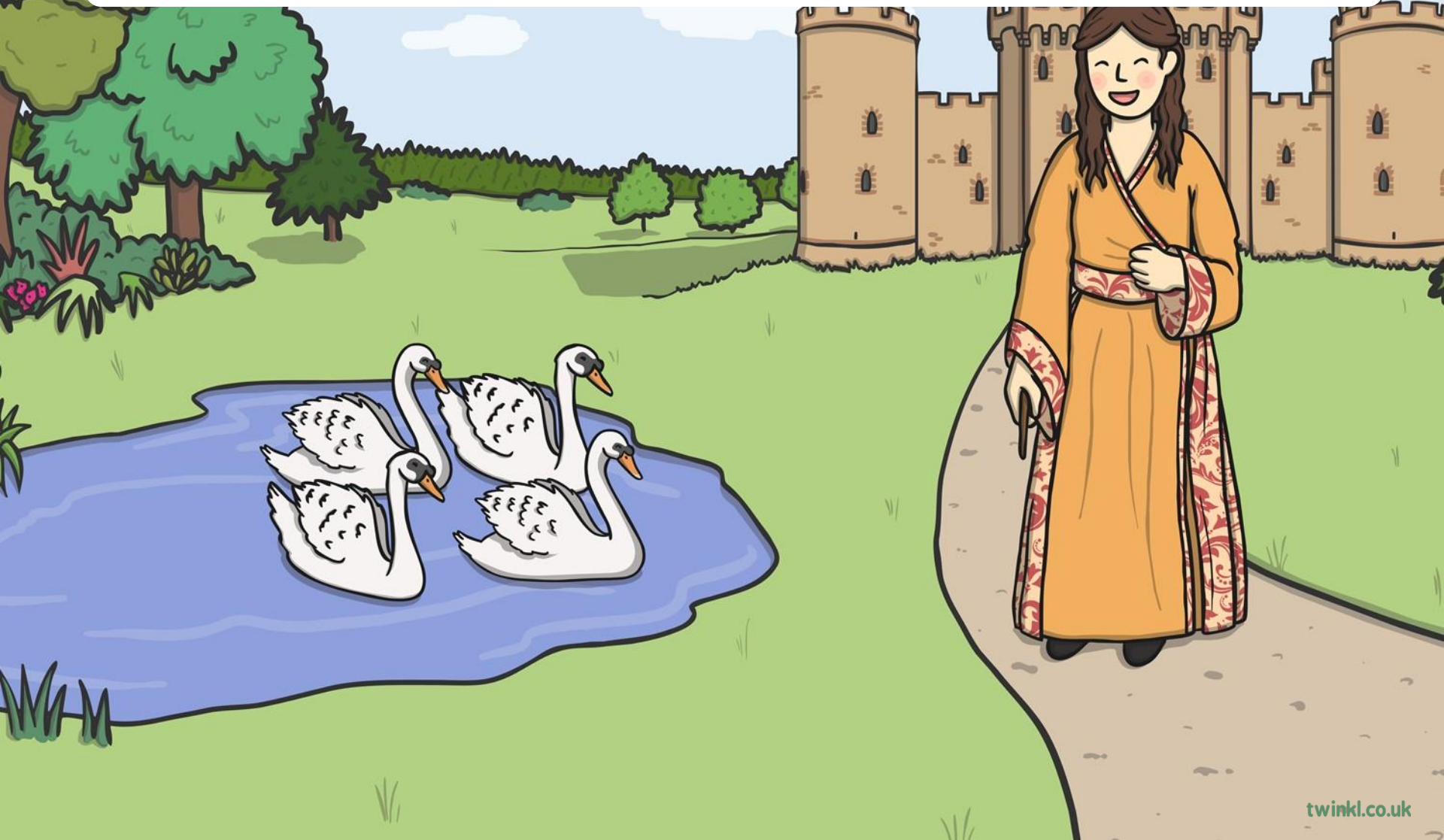
One day, Aoife took the children to a lake which was beside the castle. The children were excited, as they loved to go to the lake. As the children swam in the lake, Aoife's plan began to take shape.



Suddenly, she pulled out her magic wand and pointed it at the four children. Now, sitting on the lake, were four beautiful white swans.



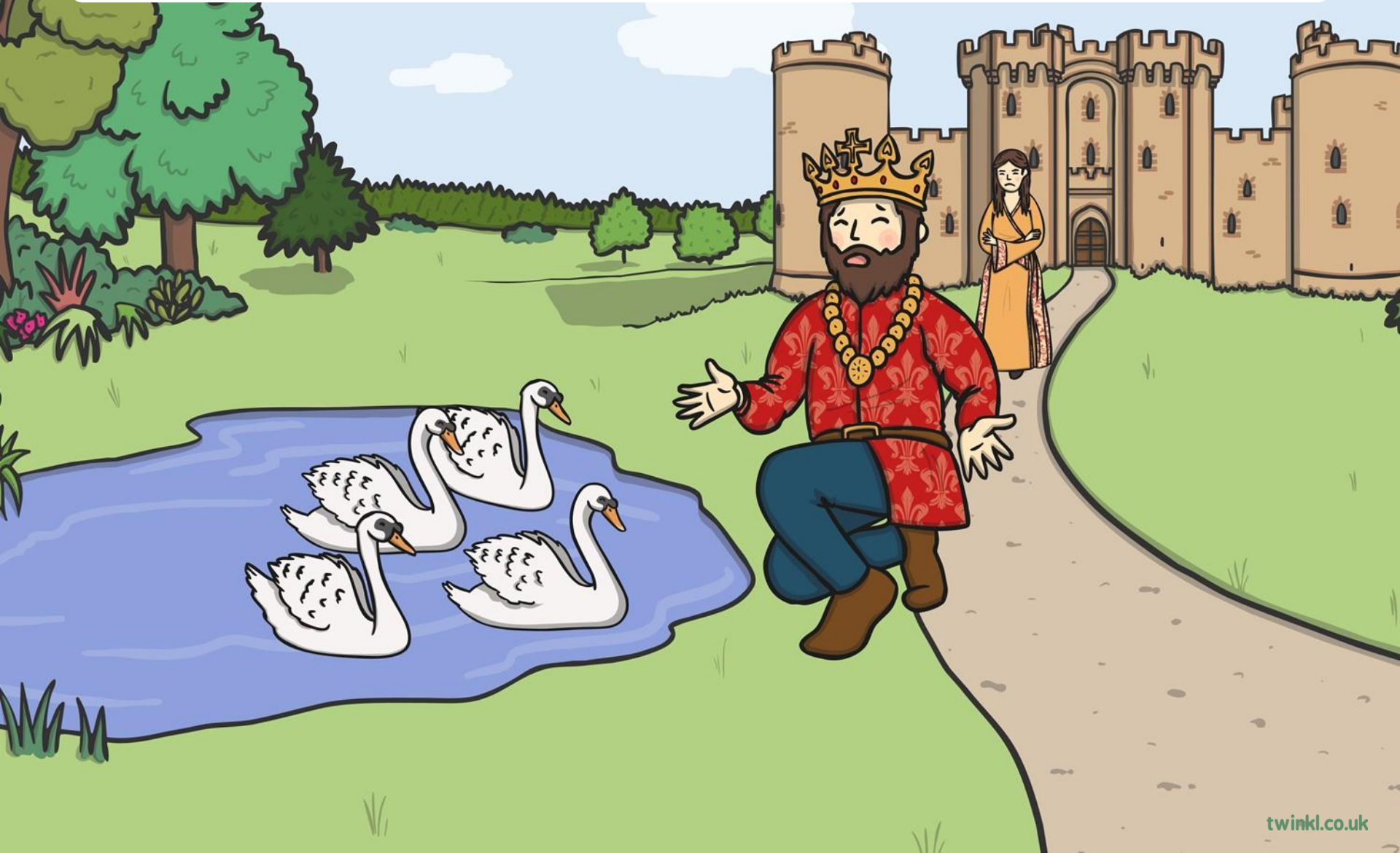
The children were shocked. 'Aoife, what have you done to us?' cried Fiachra. 'I have put a magic spell on you,' said Aoife, laughing. 'You must live on this lake for the next nine hundred years. Only when you hear the sound of a church bell will the spell be broken'. With that, Aoife left the lakeside, happy that her plan had worked.



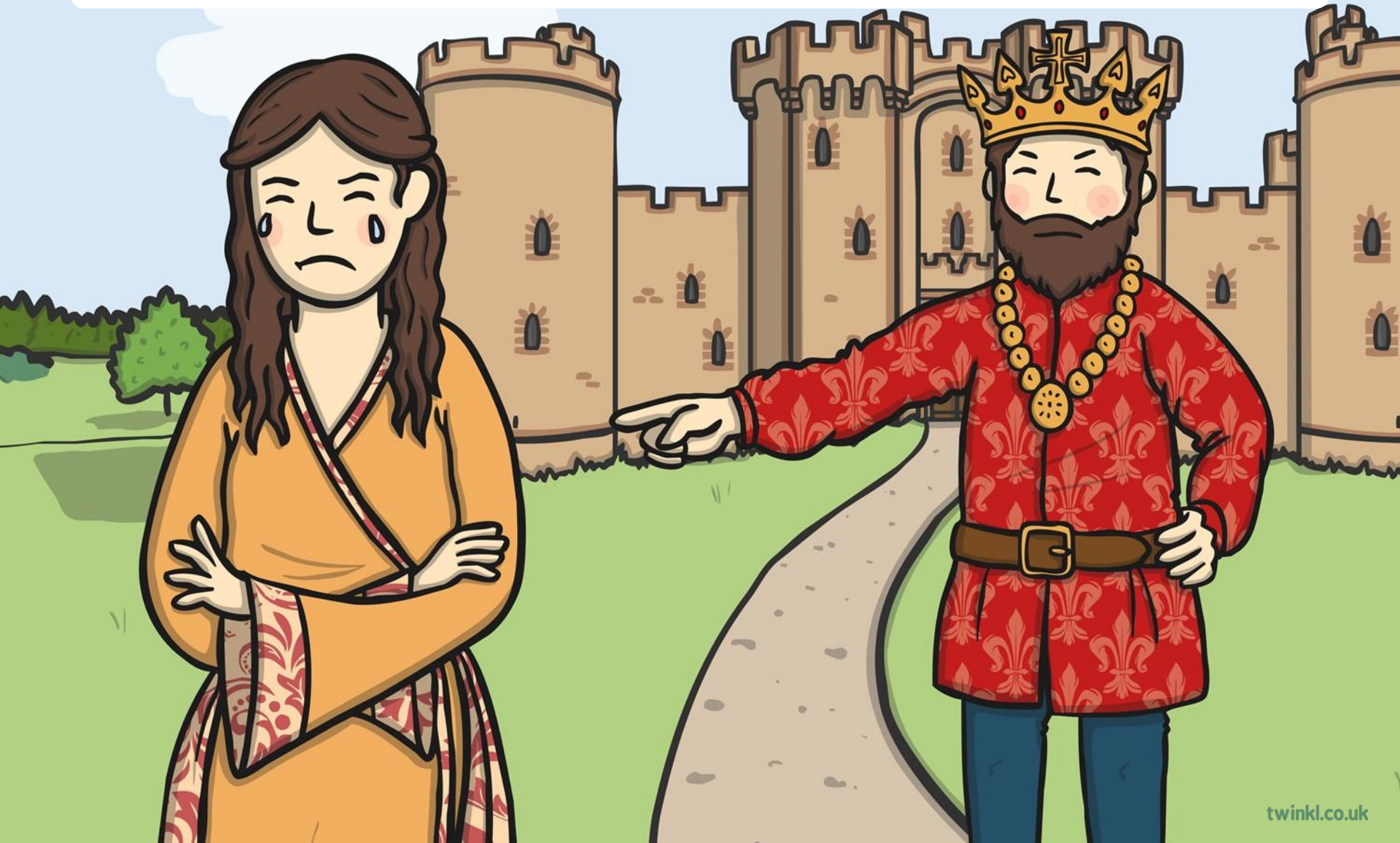
When Aoife returned to the castle, she pretended to cry. She told Lir that his children had drowned. Lir was very upset and ran to the lake as fast as he could.



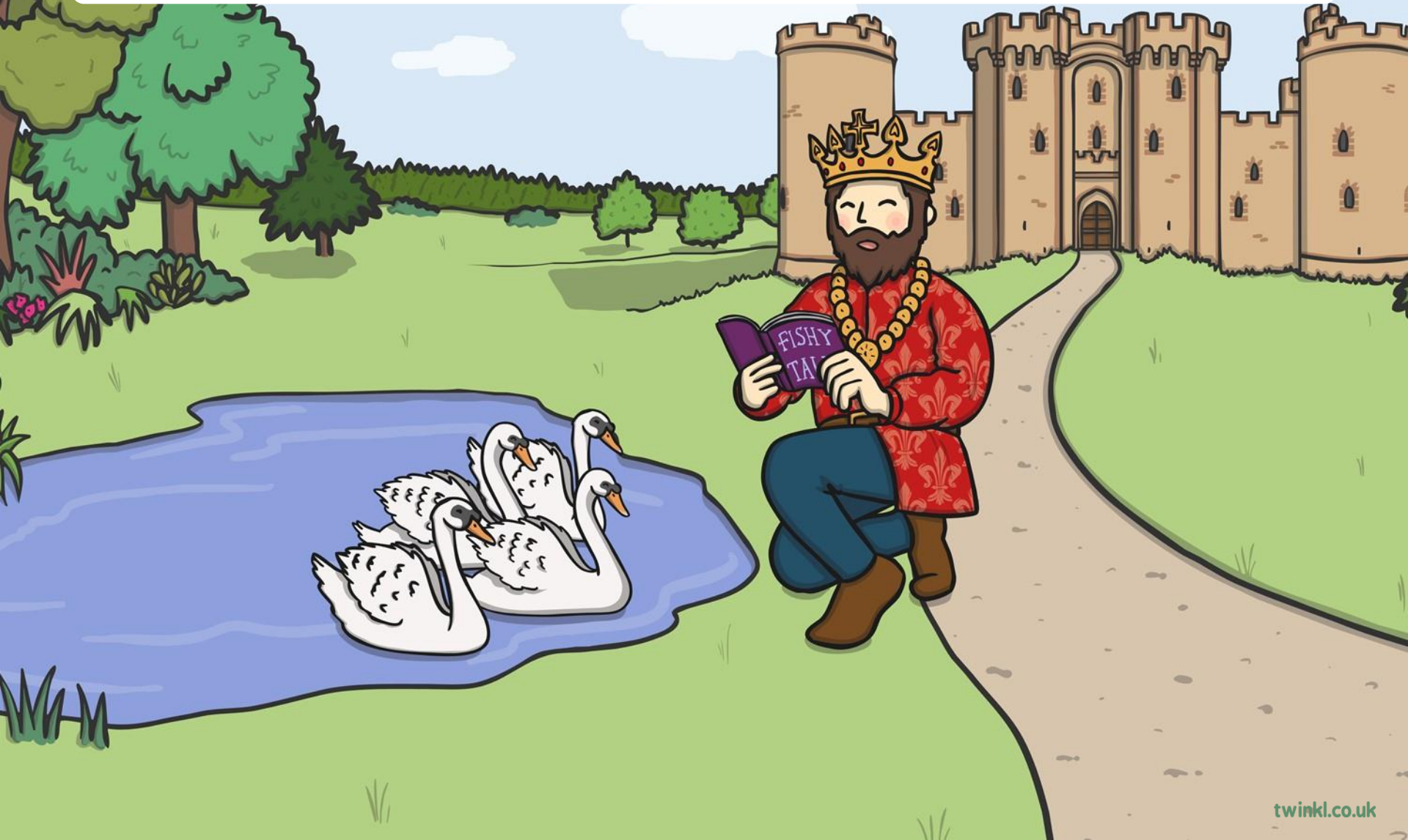
When he arrived, he saw four swans. They swam up to him immediately. He couldn't believe it when one of the swans called his name. 'Father!' exclaimed Fionnula.



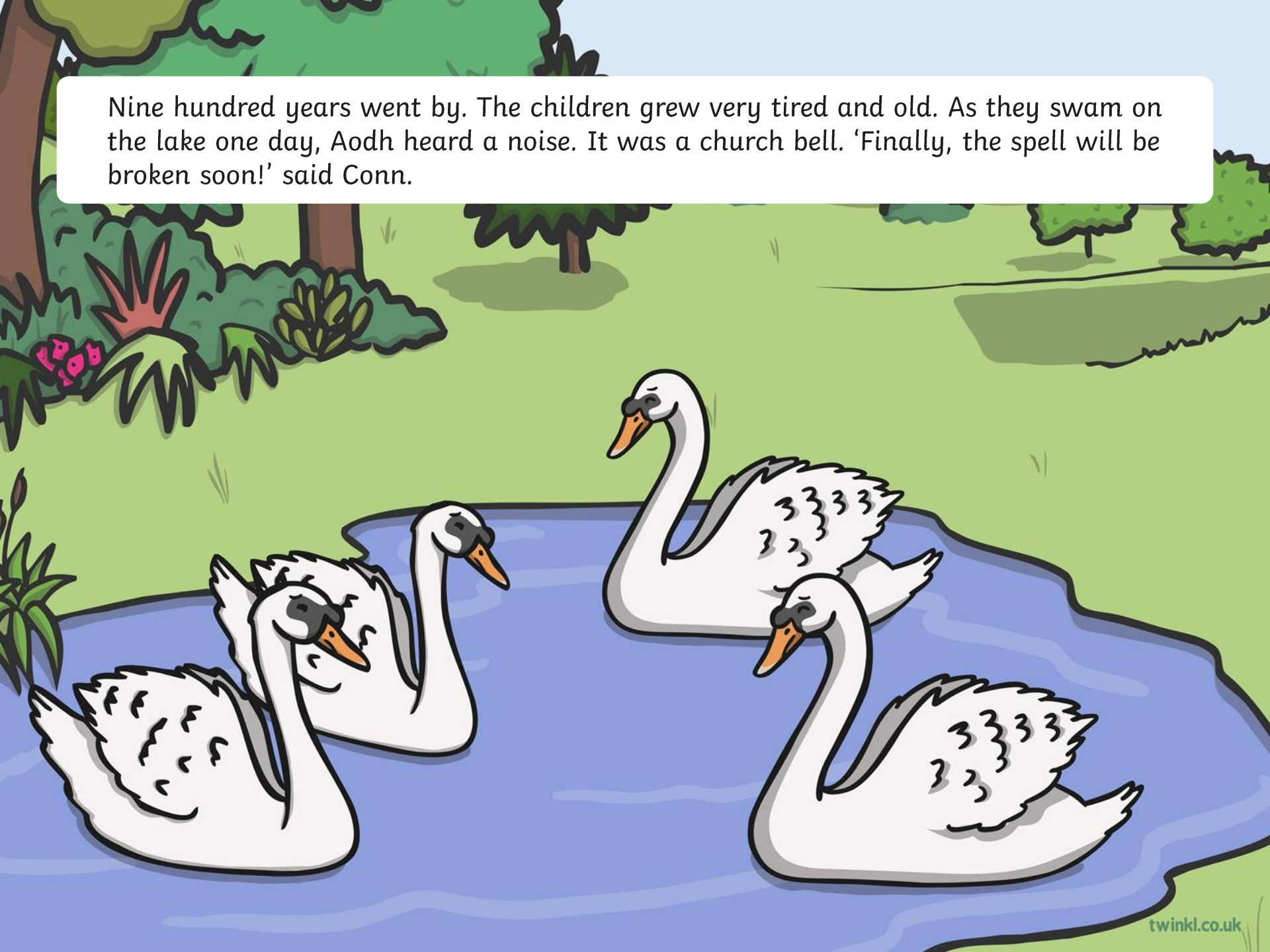
The children told Lir of Aoife's evil spell. Lir returned to the castle. He was furious! He banished his wicked wife from his Kingdom forever.



King Lir visited his children every day. He read them stories and sang them songs. Some years passed and Lir died. The children were very sad. They had nobody to visit them anymore. They became lonely.



Nine hundred years went by. The children grew very tired and old. As they swam on the lake one day, Aodh heard a noise. It was a church bell. 'Finally, the spell will be broken soon!' said Conn.



Soon after, a monk walked by the lake and saw the swans. He was astonished to hear them speak. The children told him their sad story and he blessed them. As the monk touched their foreheads, the spell was broken.



On the grass stood four beautiful children once again. Aoife's magic had been broken and the children were free.



