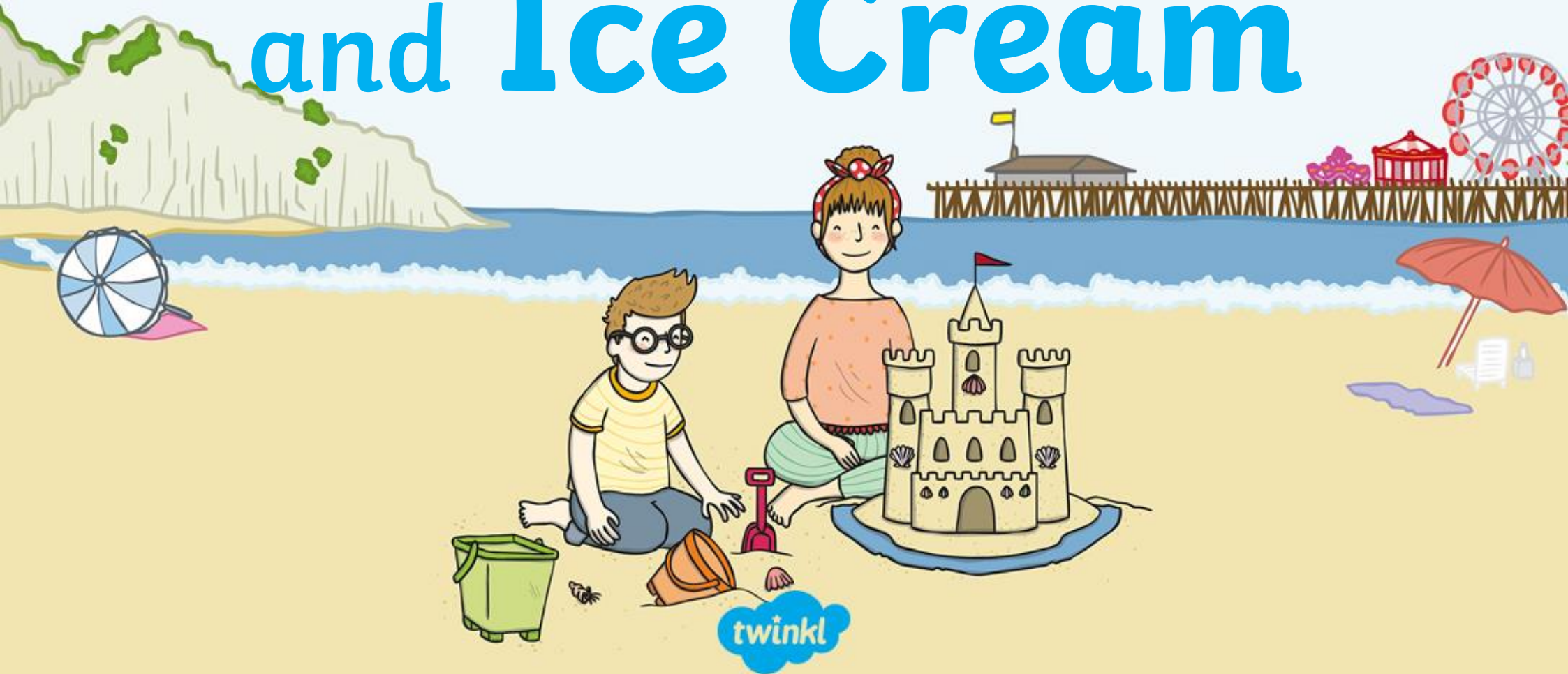
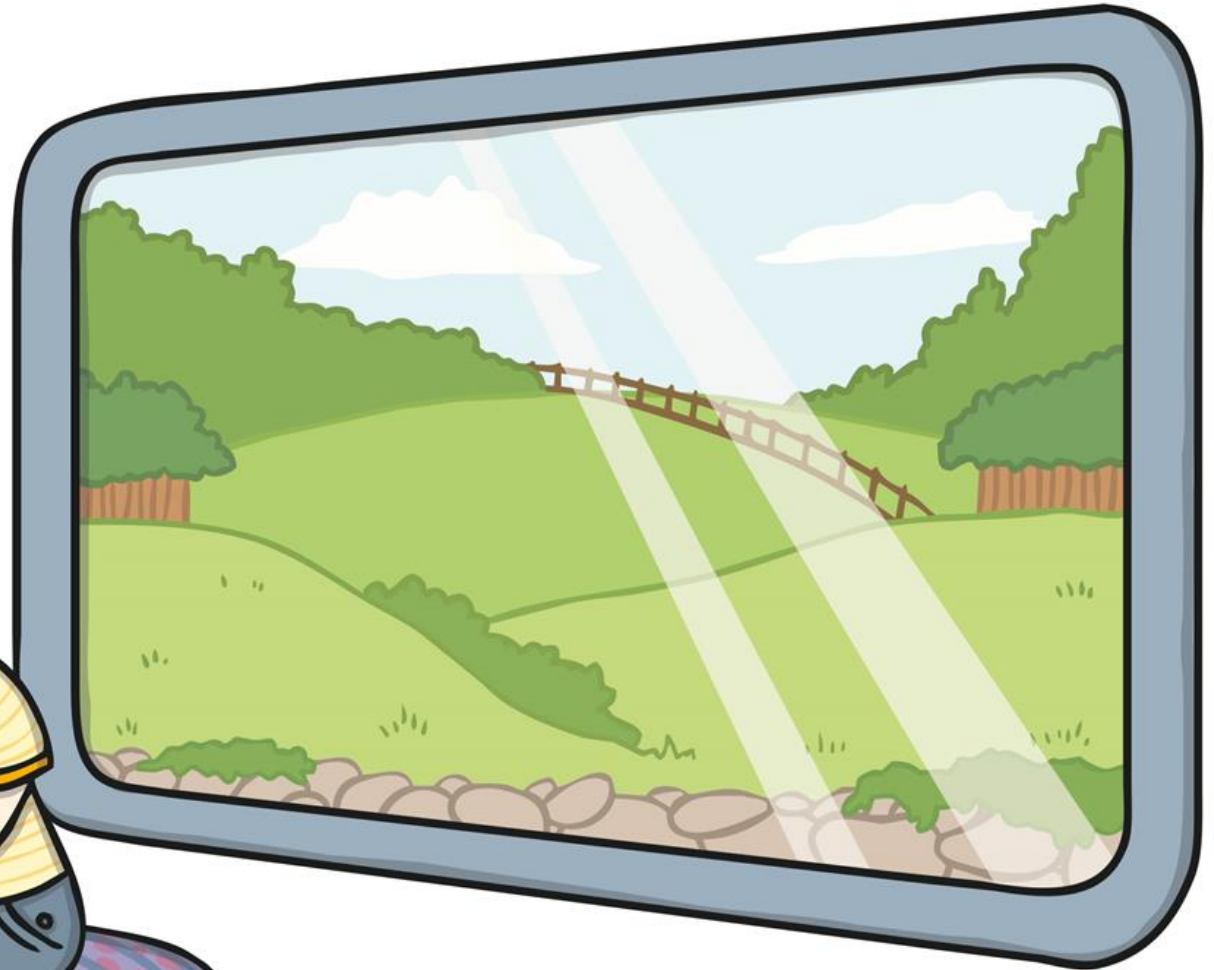


Sand, Waves and Ice Cream



Mum had told Michael about their day out a couple of weeks ago and he hadn't stopped thinking about it since. They had caught the train when it was still dark and he had dozed off, rocked to sleep by the gentle shake of the carriages.



Mum shook him awake a couple of hours later, and gone was the concrete forest which normally surrounded him, replaced by open fields and endless, clear sky. Michael's heart was beating quickly with excitement. Moments later, the doors slid open and after a short walk, there he stood, looking at the calm, quiet sea.

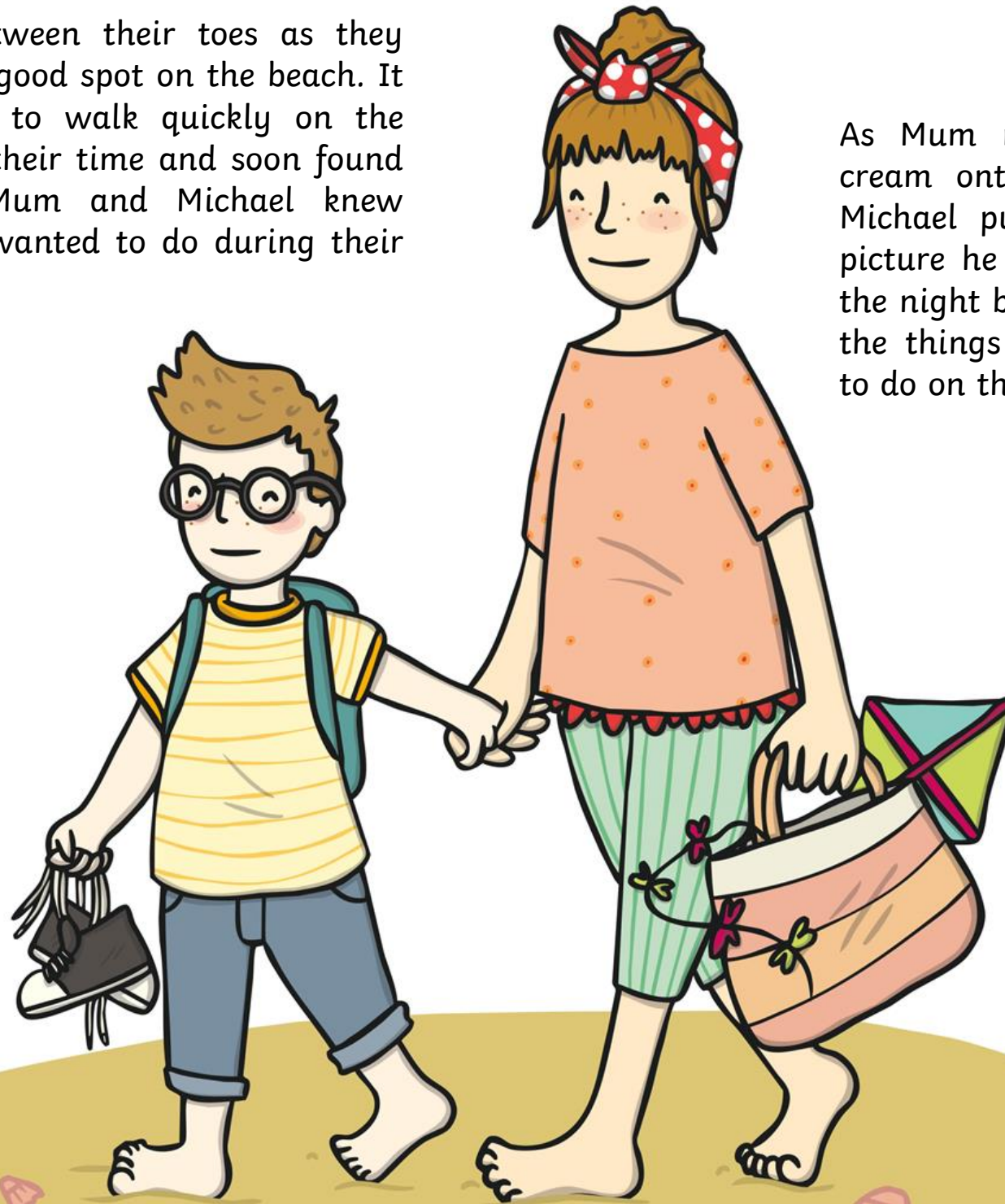
The beach was exactly how you'd imagine the perfect beach to be. There were no pebbles and rocks, just soft, tender sand that hugged your feet as you walked. It was a beautiful day, with a soft breeze blowing along the beach and a bright sun rising in the cloudless sky.

There were only a few people on the beach - some walking slowly, throwing balls for their excited dogs; others sitting quietly, enjoying the peaceful view.



The sand crept between their toes as they wandered to find a good spot on the beach. It was actually hard to walk quickly on the sand, so they took their time and soon found a perfect space. Mum and Michael knew exactly what they wanted to do during their day at the seaside.

As Mum rubbed sun cream onto his face, Michael pulled out a picture he had drawn the night before, of all the things he wanted to do on their trip.



1)



Paddle in the
Sea

2)



build a
sandcastle

3)



Get an icecream

4)



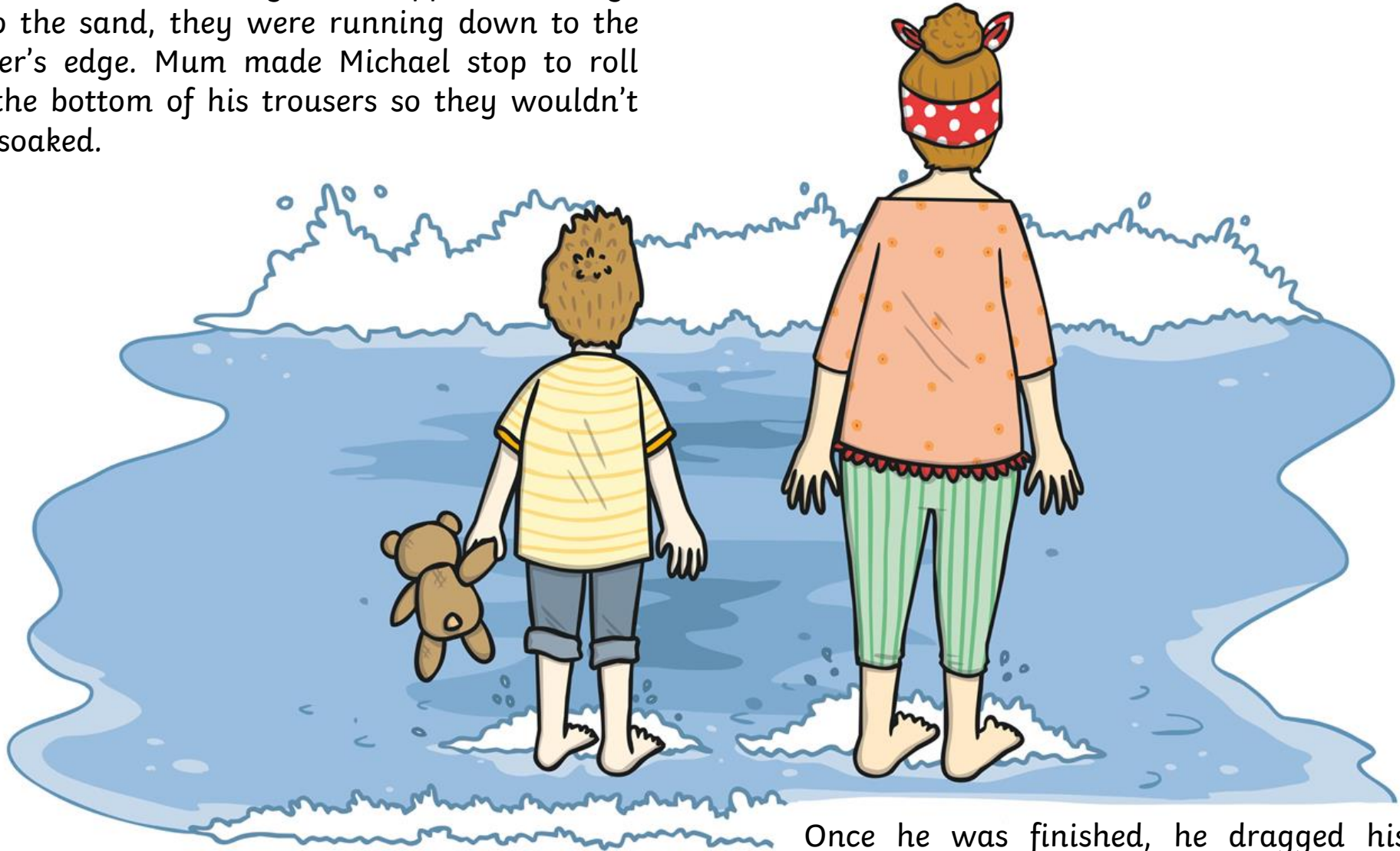
fly my kite

5)



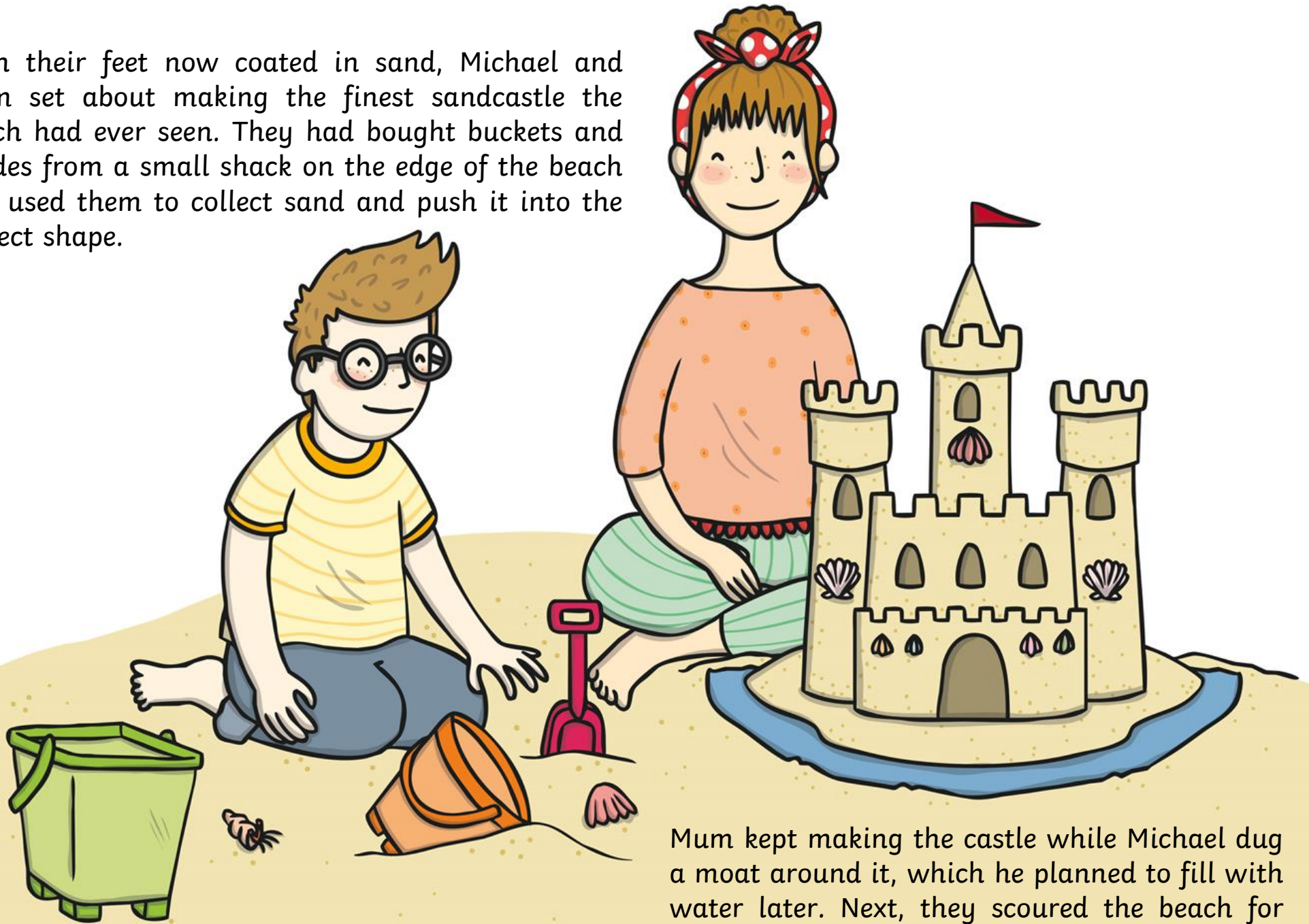
visit the funfair

Almost as soon as they had dropped their bags onto the sand, they were running down to the water's edge. Mum made Michael stop to roll up the bottom of his trousers so they wouldn't get soaked.



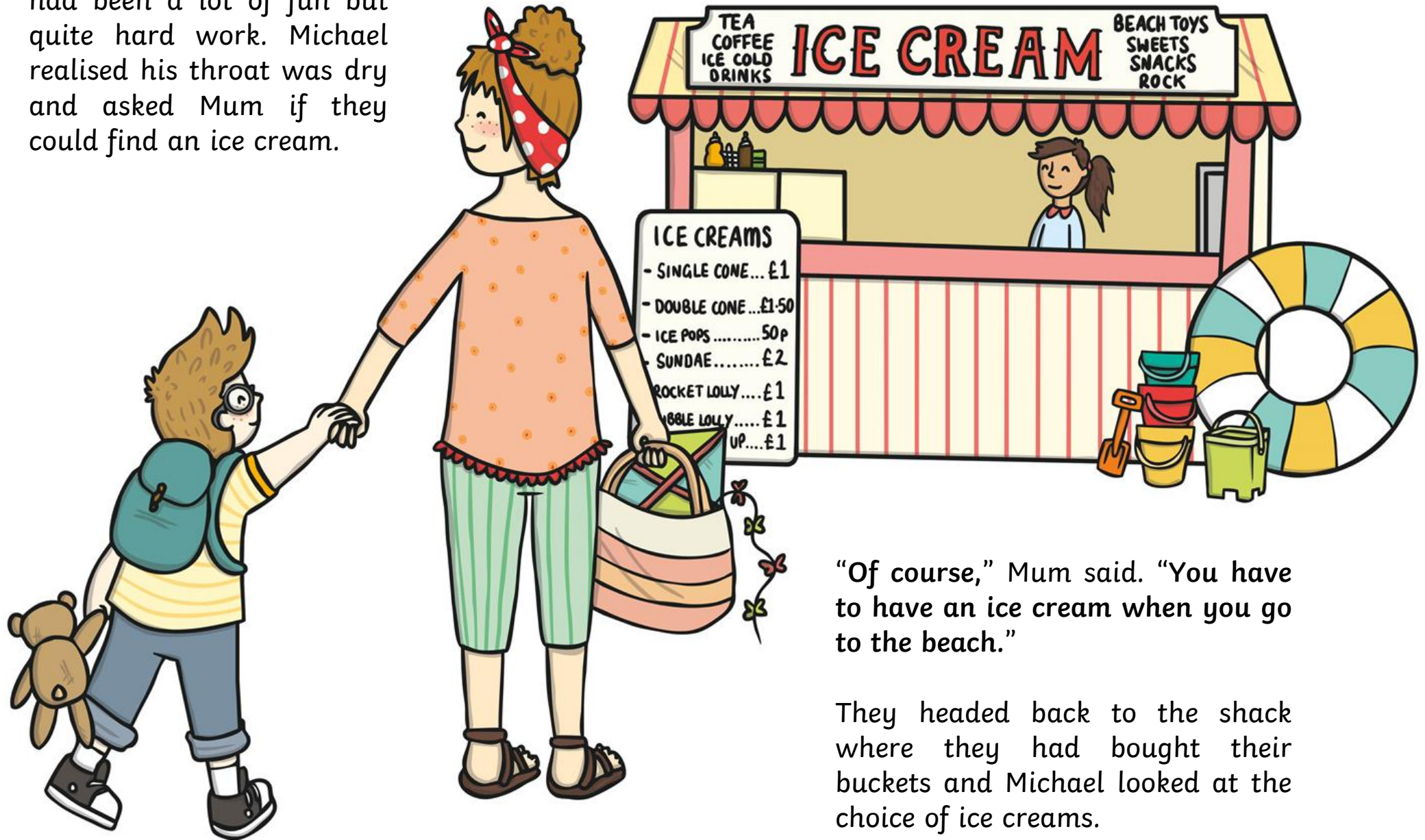
Once he was finished, he dragged his mother squealing into the waves. The water was icy-cold! He walked and splashed in the breakers happily until Mum told him she couldn't feel her feet and needed to warm up.

With their feet now coated in sand, Michael and Mum set about making the finest sandcastle the beach had ever seen. They had bought buckets and spades from a small shack on the edge of the beach and used them to collect sand and push it into the perfect shape.



Mum kept making the castle while Michael dug a moat around it, which he planned to fill with water later. Next, they scoured the beach for shells to finish the creation off and carefully decorated the towers and walls.

Building the sandcastle had been a lot of fun but quite hard work. Michael realised his throat was dry and asked Mum if they could find an ice cream.



“Of course,” Mum said. “You have to have an ice cream when you go to the beach.”

They headed back to the shack where they had bought their buckets and Michael looked at the choice of ice creams.

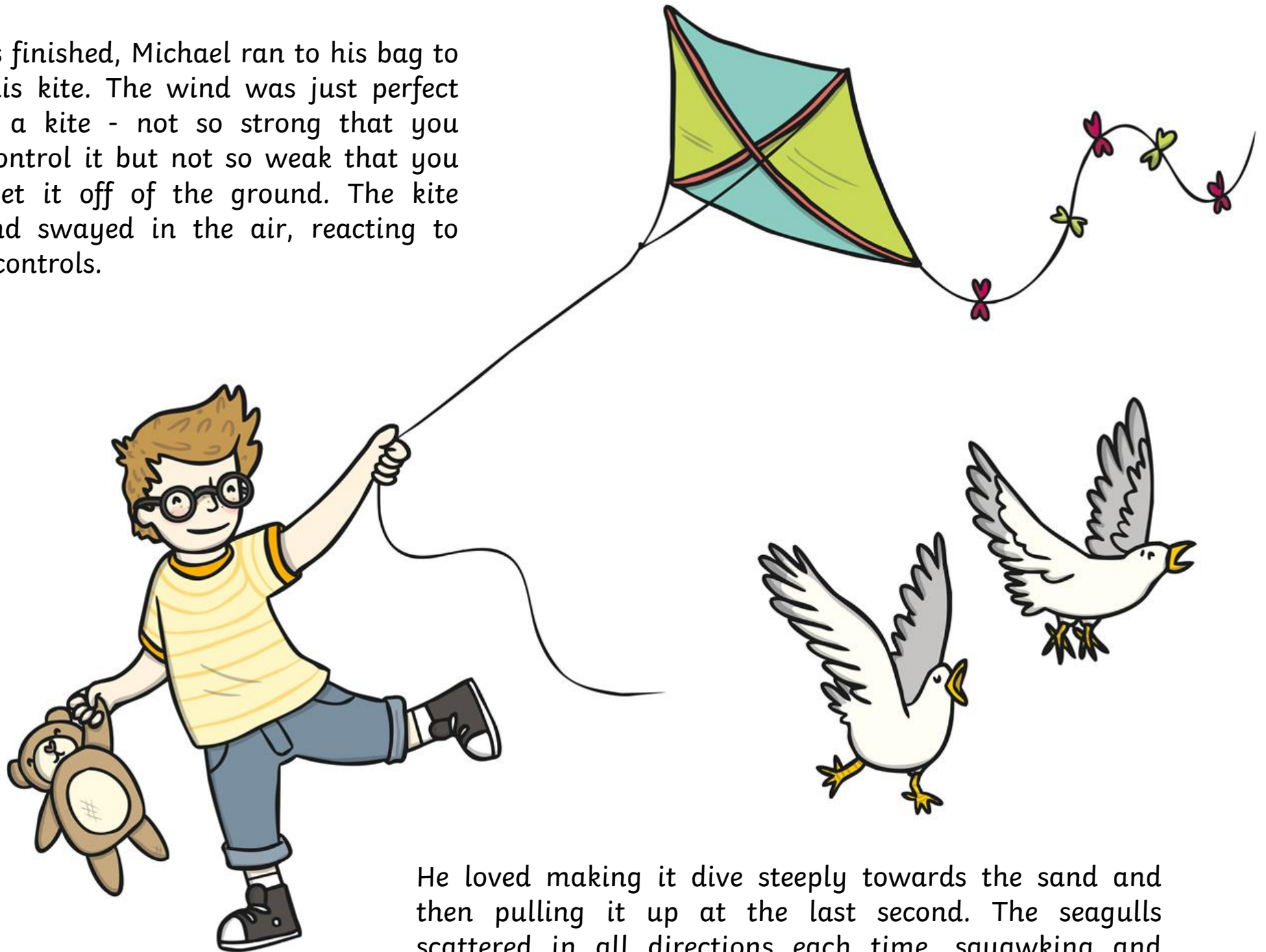
“What flavour would you like?” asked Mum.

“I’d like vanilla with a chocolate wafer, please,” Michael smiled.

It tasted amazing and Michael tried his best to make it last as long as he could but the warm sun made it melt quickly. Michael had to lick up the drips before they made his hands sticky!

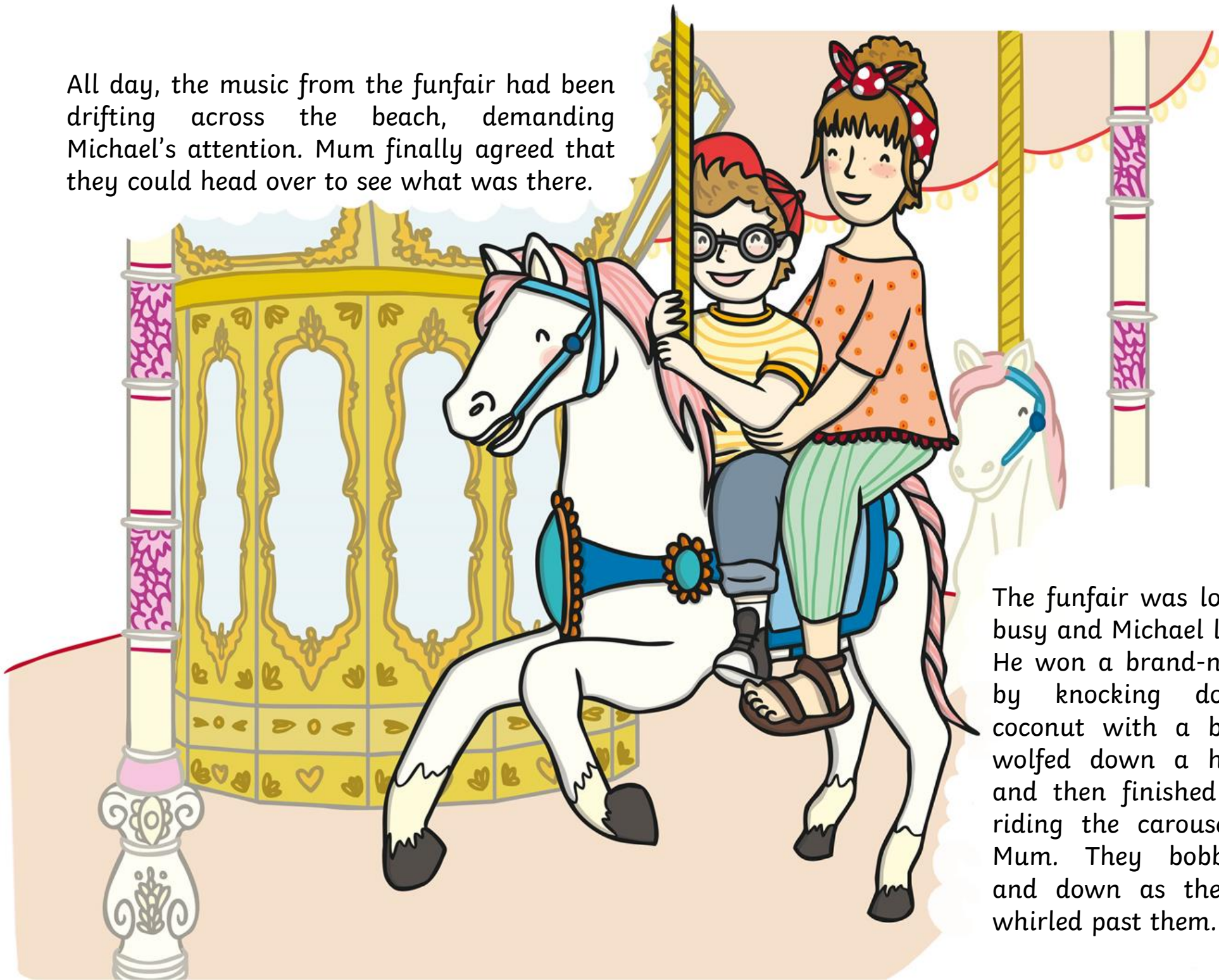


Ice creams finished, Michael ran to his bag to pull out his kite. The wind was just perfect for flying a kite - not so strong that you couldn't control it but not so weak that you couldn't get it off of the ground. The kite danced and swayed in the air, reacting to Michael's controls.



He loved making it dive steeply towards the sand and then pulling it up at the last second. The seagulls scattered in all directions each time, squawking and flapping with annoyance!

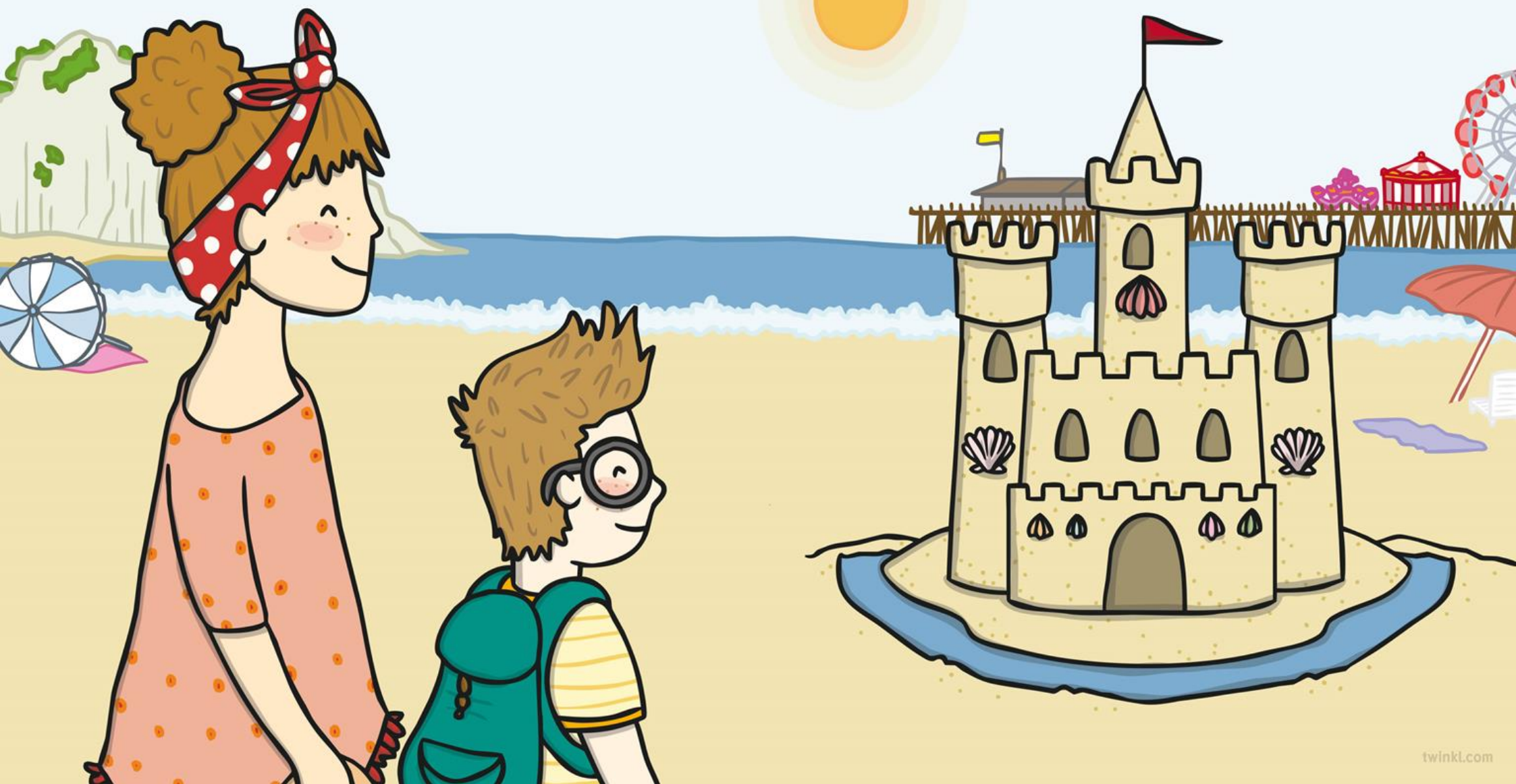
All day, the music from the funfair had been drifting across the beach, demanding Michael's attention. Mum finally agreed that they could head over to see what was there.



The funfair was loud and busy and Michael loved it. He won a brand-new cap by knocking down a coconut with a ball. He wolfed down a hot dog and then finished off by riding the carousel with Mum. They bobbed up and down as the world whirled past them.

After a final paddle in the sea, it was time for them to catch their train back to the city. They sat on the sea wall, brushing the sand off of their feet before they put their shoes back on. Michael cast a final look at the calm sea and their sandcastle, which still stood proudly in the sand.

He took in one more deep breath of sea air, doing his best to remember the salty, fresh smell, and they began walking to the station.



In what seemed like no time, they were on the train once more, heading home. It felt like the day had been a dream until he wriggled his toes and felt the sand still hiding there.



“Thank you for today, Mum.” Michael said, leaning in to give her a hug.

He knew it wasn't easy for Mum to get the time off work to take him away.



"It was my pleasure!" Mum smiled, hugging him back tightly.

She pulled the cap out from her bag and put it onto Michael's head.

"Now, you've got something that will always remind you of our special day at the beach," she said happily.