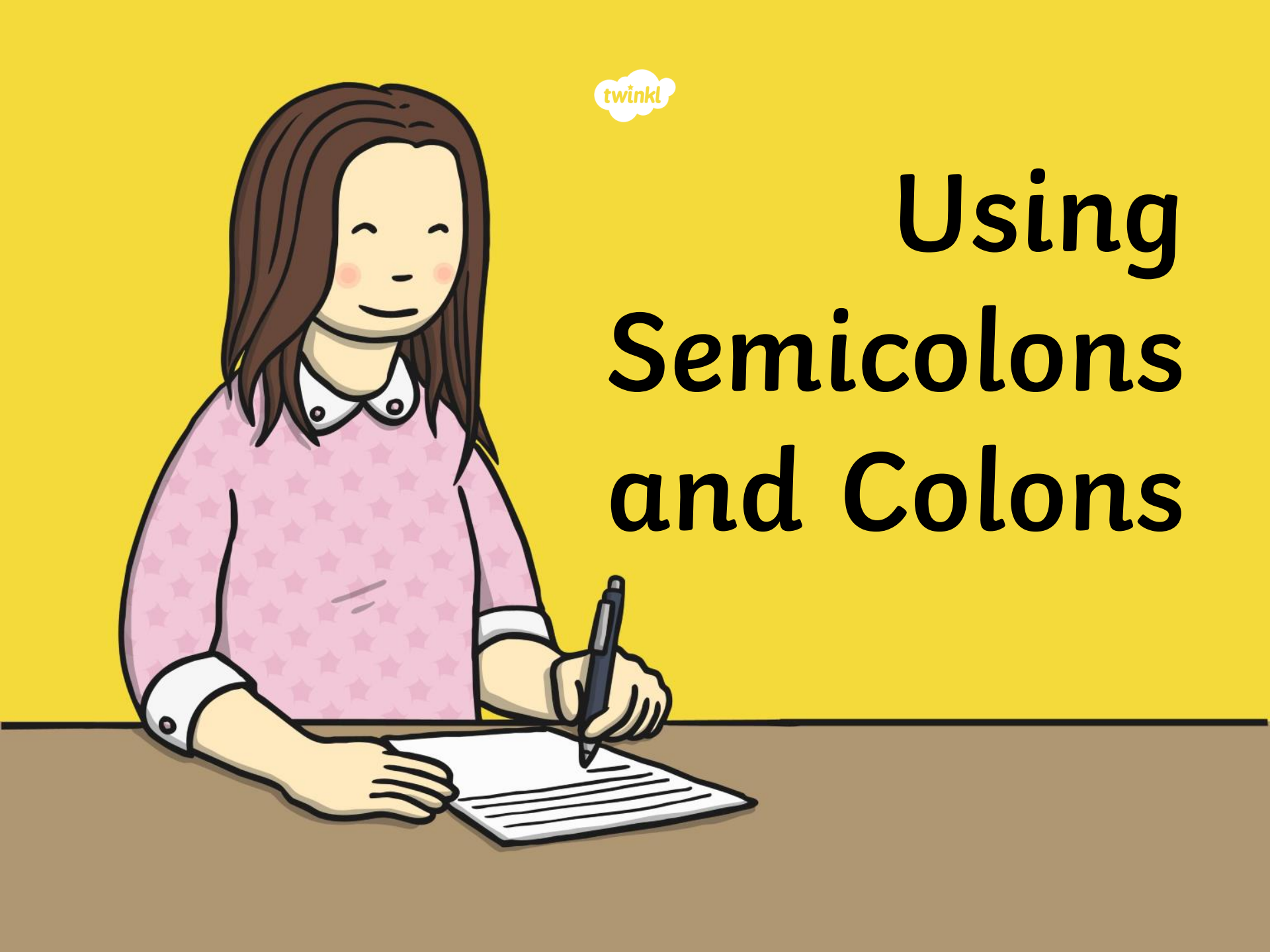
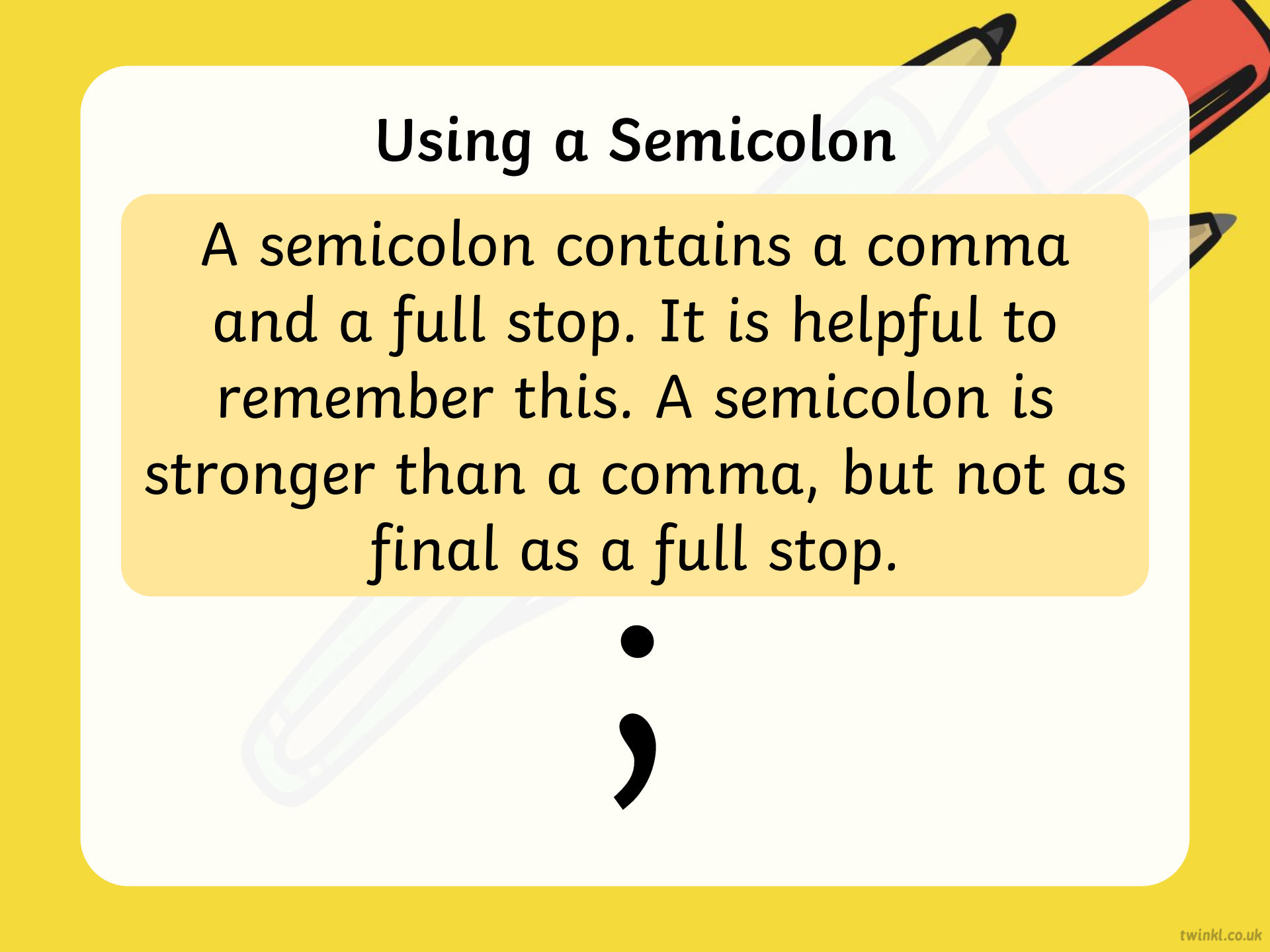

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Using Semicolons and Colons

Using a Semicolon

A semicolon contains a comma and a full stop. It is helpful to remember this. A semicolon is stronger than a comma, but not as final as a full stop.



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Semicolons are used to link sentences that are closely related.

For example:

The wood was silent and absolutely still; Little Red Riding Hood realised that she had not truly seen its beauty until now.

A semicolon works perfectly here to allow a smooth transition between sentences.

A full stop between the sentences might detract from the impact of Little Red Riding Hood's observation and create too great a 'stop'. Using a comma here would be incorrect; a comma cannot be used to link two independent sentences.

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Semicolons can also be used to link one sentence to another closely related sentence that uses a **conjunctive adverb**.

For example:

The wolf liked Little Red riding Hood. Nevertheless, he was looking forward to eating her.

The wolf liked Little Red riding Hood; nevertheless, he was looking forward to eating her.

Little Red Riding Hood didn't like the forest much. However, she did like visiting Grandma.

Little Red Riding Hood didn't like the forest much; however, she did like visiting Grandma.

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Other examples of conjunctive adverbs which could be preceded by a semicolon:

otherwise

therefore

moreover

nevertheless

thus

besides

accordingly

consequently

instead

hence

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A semicolon can be used to separate items in a list (where the list also contains commas).

For example:

There are lots of characters in the story: Big Bad Wolf, the baddie; Little Red Riding Hood, the heroine; Grandma, the victim and Mr Woodcutter, the rescuer.

We spoke to the main characters: Grandma, 81; Big Bad Wolf, 30; Little Red Riding Hood,11; and Mr Woodcutter, 55.






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Using a Colon

Using a colon adds precision to writing. You can think of a colon as the language version of an equals sign (=) in mathematics. The information on the left of the colon equals the information on the right.

:

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Colons are used to expand a sentence.
A colon is used to introduce an idea that is an explanation or continuation of the one that comes before the colon.

For example:

There was only one thing the wolf wanted to do now**:** eat that juicy Little Red Riding Hood.

The flaw in the wolf's plan was clear to see**:** he looked nothing like Grandma.



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Colons are used to introduce a list.

For example:

There were a few reasons that the wolf did not make a convincing Grandma**:** his eyes, his ears, his gruff voice and his sharp, pointy teeth.

Little Red Riding Hood carried a selection of provisions for Grandma**:** a loaf of bread, some apples and a freshly-wrapped pat of butter.

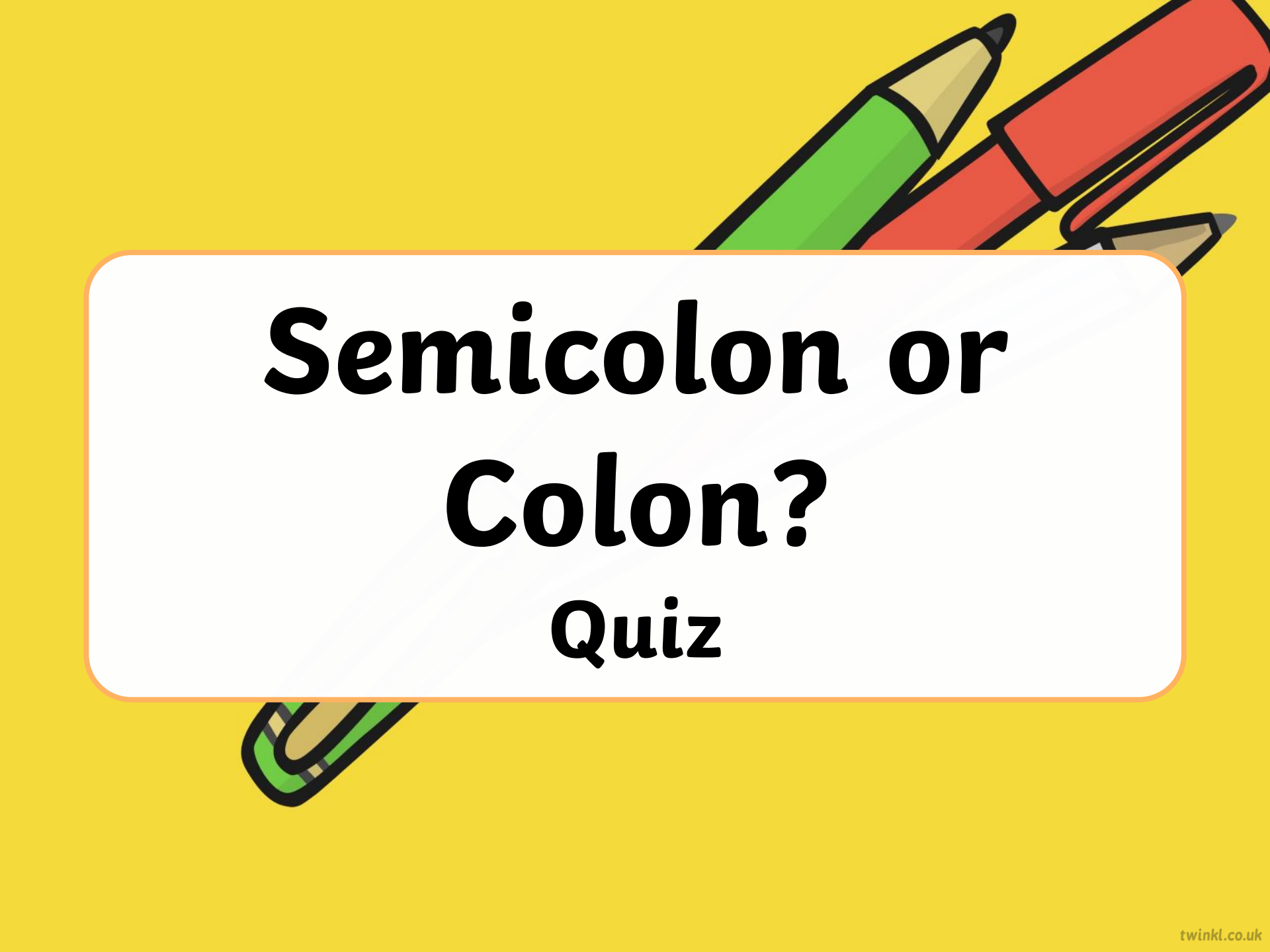


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Useful Summary

Context	Semicolon?	Colon?
To introduce a list		✓
To separate items in a list	✓	
To link closely related sentences	✓	
To expand a given idea		✓
To introduce a quotation		✓
To join sentences which use an adverbial	✓	

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Question 1

A or B: which is punctuated correctly?

A

I love the sound of the birds singing; however, I hate being woken up by them.

B

I love the sound of the birds singing: however, I hate being woken up by them.

= **correct**

= **incorrect**

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Question 2

A or B: which is punctuated correctly?

A

The woods here are beautiful; peaceful, quiet and lush.

B

The woods here are beautiful: peaceful, quiet and lush.

= **correct**

= **incorrect**

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Question 3

A or B: which is punctuated correctly?

A

Mother's words came to me; 'Take care in the woods!'

B

Mother's words came to me: 'Take care in the woods!'

= **correct**

= **incorrect**

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Question 4

A or B: which is punctuated correctly?

A

Little Red Riding Hood took the map with her; it was not very helpful.

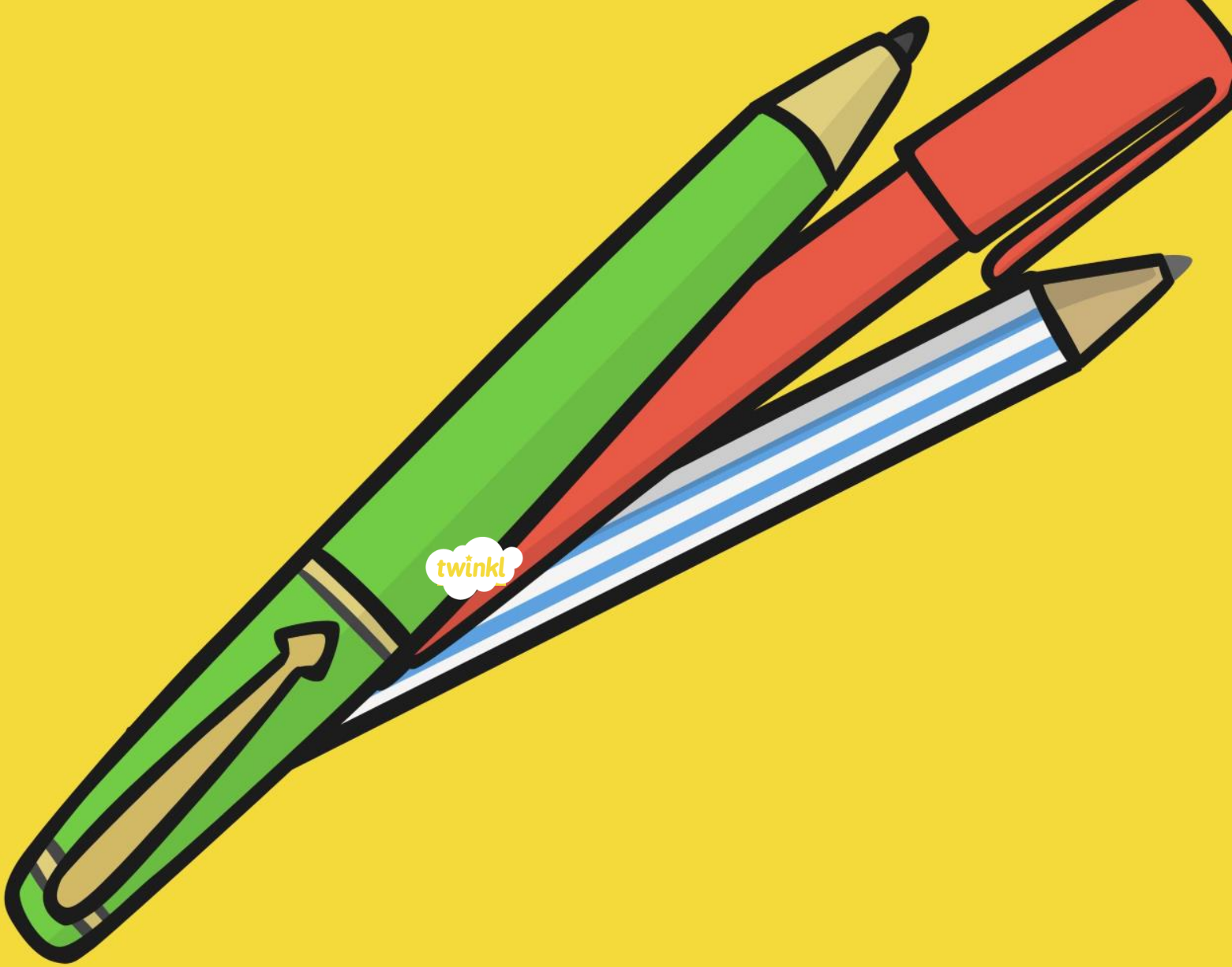
B

Little Red Riding Hood took the map with her: it was not very helpful.

= **correct**

= **incorrect**

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