

Introduction

The importance of reading for meaning should never be underestimated. Whilst many young children might be able to decode quite complex texts, it is vital that they understand what they read. More importantly, it is fundamental that they enjoy what they are reading.

Over my 15 years of experience, I have used a number of comprehension books as part of my English teaching. Very few of them have engaged the children who are being asked to read and understand them. I decided that if we are asking children to read, understand and answer questions from a passage, that passage should at least engage their attention, and indeed their teacher's attention as well.

The passages in the **Brilliant Activities for Reading Comprehension Series** are designed to give children valuable reading practice through varied, enjoyable texts. The passages begin in the **Year 1** book with simple picture comprehension. They gradually increase in difficulty as you progress through the book, and through the series, encouraging pupils to use a range of decoding strategies and to develop their ability to read for meaning. The passages in this series are entirely fictional and it is hoped that both teachers and pupils will find them humorous.

Teachers should read the texts (or, in the case of this book, look at the pictures) with the children and discuss them thoroughly before allowing them to proceed to the activities. If you are using the e-book version, you can display the pages on the interactive white board.

In the **Year 1** book there are first a series of True/False questions and then a range of questions that require a full sentence as a response. The Extension work sections require more open-ended answers enabling the pupils to provide a more personal response. Space has been provided for them to answer on the page, but you could ask them to write the answers in their workbooks. Answers are provided on pages 119–124. On pages 7–16 there are some suggestions for ways in which the passages can be linked to writing, speaking and other literacy activities, as well as to other areas of the curriculum. These activities are ideal for children who finish their work early.

The **Brilliant Activities for Reading Comprehension Series** provides the teacher with a basis for ensuring progression. The activities give pupils:

- ◆ the ability to select or retrieve information in order to answer the questions successfully using a full sentence
- ◆ the opportunity to deduce, infer or interpret information, events or ideas from the texts
- ◆ the opportunity to identify and comment on the structure and organization of the text and comment on the writer's use of language at word and sentence level
- ◆ the chance to comment on cultural, social or historical traditions and the impact the text may have on the reader.

The **Brilliant Activities for Reading Comprehension Series** provides an invaluable resource for assessing pupil progress in reading. The chart on pages 5–6 shows how the activities link to the relevant Programmes of Study in the National Curriculum for England (September 2014).

Links to the National Curriculum

Pupils should be taught to	
develop pleasure in reading, motivation to read, vocabulary and understanding by:	
listening to and discussing a wide range of poems, stories and non-fiction at a level beyond that at which they can read independently	Have a wide range of different types of fiction and non-fiction books available and read frequently to the class.
being encouraged to link what they read or hear read to their own experiences	Through reading and analysing stories and books, pupils will learn that text is structured in different ways, depending on the purpose of the writing. Take a story like <i>Not Now Bernard</i> or <i>Whatever Next</i> make a collage and ask them what it reminds them of. Brainstorm own experiences.
becoming very familiar with key stories, fairy stories and traditional tales, retelling them and considering their particular characteristics	Compare and contrast stories and discuss with children which they preferred and why. This will help them to identify and empathise with assorted characters. Act out scenarios involving fairy tale characters.
recognising and joining in with predictable phrases	Take a specific rhyme/poem/song and join in with chorus. Compose their own chorus or jingle. Give the children a chance to become familiar with a story and join in with predictable phrases.
learning to appreciate rhymes and poems, and to recite some by heart	Three poems are given in this book (pages 113–118). They are designed to be read to children, rather than for them to read independently. Questions are given to promote discussion of the poems. The children will learn that poetry varies and that not all poetry rhymes. They will understand that poetry can entertain and identify key issues that might occur in life. Have a class competition to see if they can all learn a rhyme or verses of a longer one.
understand both the books they can already read accurately and fluently and those they listen to by:	
drawing on what they already know or on background information and vocabulary provided by the teacher	Play vocabulary games, such as drag and drop games, on the interactive whiteboard.
checking that the text makes sense to them as they read and correcting inaccurate reading	In groups discuss the story and characters.
discussing the significance of the title and events	Discuss any themes arising and the thoughts and feelings of the characters. Ask the children to predict what will happen next. Use speech bubbles to get the children to write what the characters might be saying.
making inferences on the basis of what is being said and done	

predicting what might happen on the basis of what has been read so far	Make a board game where there are a number of options of how the story will end and what will happen.
participate in discussion about what is read to them, taking turns and listening to what others say	Have interviews to ask the children what will happen next.
explain clearly their understanding of what is read to them.	Hot seating and role-play pretending to be the character will help to assess children's understanding.