

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 are entirely fictional and it is hoped that both pupils and teachers will find them humorous.

Teachers should read the texts 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 3** book there are first a series of Questions that require factual recall. Encourage children to respond in full sentences. The Word work sections will help to develop and stretch their vocabulary. The Extension work sections require more open-ended answers enabling the pupils to provide a more personal response. Children should write the answers in their workbooks or on separate sheets of paper. Answers are provided on pages 116–130. On pages 9–19 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 organisation 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 5–8 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 positive attitudes to reading and understanding of what they read by:	
listening to and discussing a wide range of fiction, poetry, plays, non-fiction and reference books or textbooks	A wide range of different types of fiction and non-fiction writing are covered in the book: stories, postcards, newspaper articles, announcements, adverts, poetry, letters, recipes, wills, witness statements. The passages have been written to engage pupils' attention and help to promote positive attitudes to reading.
reading books that are structured in different ways and reading for a range of purposes	Through reading and analysing the passages in this book, pupils will learn that text is structured in different ways, depending on the purpose of the writing. In addition to using the passages in this book, pupils should be given the opportunity to read a wide variety of books of different types.
using dictionaries to check the meaning of words that they have read	Every passage has a 'Word work' activity. Children should be encouraged to use dictionaries to look up the words that they don't know. If your pupils find it difficult to navigate a dictionary, practise singing/saying the alphabet. For a special challenge, try doing it backwards!
increasing their familiarity with a wide range of books, including fairy stories, myths and legends, and retelling some of these orally	Through reading the passages in this book, pupils will increase their familiarity with a wide range of texts. Pupils should be encouraged to read whole books in these different genres. Using the passages in this book, they will be able to compare and contrast the different genres as well as understand the conventions used in alternative genres.
identifying themes and conventions in a wide range of books	Themes: Stinkwort School for Girls (page 47) – bullying; Runner's Weekly (page 50) – perseverance; The Failed Potion (page 86) – coping with failure; The Tale of Sir Basil (page 92) – bravery; The Magic Football (page 95) – bullying; Secrets to Hide (page 107) – secrets; The Dress (page 113) – don't judge a book by its cover.

identifying themes and conventions in a wide range of books (cont)	Conventions: Forthcoming marriages (page 23) – announcements written in 3rd person; Local news (page 31) – headings in non-fiction text; Job vacancy (page 38) – bullet points to organise text; The Cup of Sylvester (page 62) – formally styled letter (compare with Postcard (page 26)); Making it Rain (page 71) – styling of recipe; Captain Flint (page 74) – will written in 1st person; Witness Statement (page 83) – details of who and when listed at top.
preparing poems and play scripts to read aloud and to perform, showing understanding through intonation, tone, volume and action	The two poems, ‘ Whose Tracks are These?’ (page 35) and Dreams (page 44) can be performed aloud.
discussing words and phrases that capture the reader’s interest and imagination	Many of the ‘Extension work’ (EW) activities encourage pupils to look at specific phrases. Some examples are: Local news (page 29) – EW1; Dreams (pages 44), EW1 and 2; The Highwaywoman (page 59) – EW3 & 4; The Cup of Sylvester (page 62) – EW6; The Magic Football (page 95) – EW1 & 3; A Peculiar Murder (page 104) – EW3 & 5; The Death of Colonel Foster (page 110) – EW1.
recognising some different forms of poetry	There are two poems in this collection: ‘ Whose Tracks are These?’ (page 35) is a rhyming poem; Dreams (page 44) is free verse. Questions in the ‘Extension work’ draw children’s attention to the way the poems are structured.
understand what they read, in books they can read independently, by:	
checking that the text makes sense to them, discussing their understanding and explaining the meaning of words in context	Teachers should read the texts with pupils and discuss them thoroughly before allowing them to proceed to the activities. Ask questions to check children’s understanding and explain any words that are unclear. The ‘Word work’ activities encourage children to think about the meaning of words and to look at how they are used in context.
asking questions to improve their understanding of a text	The ‘Questions’ activities require factual recall and will check pupils’ understanding. Specific activities requiring children to ask questions include: Runner’s Weekly (page 50) – EW7; Property for Sale (page 65) – EW3; Talented Violinist (page 68) – EW1; A Peculiar Murder (page 104) – EW7; The Dress (page 113) – EW1.

<p>asking questions to improve their understanding of a text (cont)</p>	<p>In pairs, use interview technique to ask questions and respond. In groups, discuss a particular theme the passage promotes. Get the children to video themselves while being interviewed about a book.</p> <p>Use guided reading to explore each passage thoroughly. Ask children to review text and prepare 4–5 questions they could ask about it.</p>
<p>drawing inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence</p>	<p>Many of the 'Extension work' (EW) activities provide opportunities for drawing inferences from the text. Special examples are: Postcard (page 26) – Q8 & 11; Runner's Weekly (page 50) – EW3 & 5; Save our Playground (page 54) – EW1 & 2; The Happy Sally (page 56) – EW 1 & 2; The Highwaywoman (page 61) – EW2; Captain Flint (page 74) – EW6; The Island of Zambo (page 80) – EW1; Tidal Wave Hits Zambo! (page 89) – EW1-3; The Tale of Sir Basil (page 92) – EW1; The Missing Gnomes (page 98) – EW1; Broken Window (page 101) – EW2; A Peculiar Murder (page 104) – EW1; The Dress (page 113) – EW1 & 4.</p> <p>In every passage there is the opportunity for role-play and hot-seating. Children can do this in pairs or groups. Drama lessons can explore thoughts and motives of a character. Children can pretend to be detectives and find evidence for inferential questions from the passage.</p>
<p>predicting what might happen from details stated and implied</p>	<p>Many of the 'Extension work' (EW) activities provide opportunities for predicting what might happen. Specific examples are: The Waglow (page 34) – EW3; The Cup of Sylvester (page 62) – EW2; Making it Rain (page 71) – EW1; The Failed Potion (page 86) – EW3; The Tale of Sir Basil (page 92) – EW3; The Missing Gnomes (page 98) – EW6</p>
<p>identifying main ideas drawn from more than one paragraph and summarising these</p>	<p>Many of the 'Extension work' (EW) activities provide opportunities for summarising ideas. Specific examples are: Local Pubs and their Lunchtime Meals (page 20) – preparing a guide to what is available in a local town; Forthcoming Marriages (page 23) – newspaper article/marriages section; The Happy Sally (page 56) – through reading the piece one can deduce that it was written a long time ago; The Dress (page 113) – EW4 Adanna's character</p>

<p>identifying how language, structure, and presentation contribute to meaning</p>	<p>Many of the 'Extension Work' (EW) activities provide opportunities for looking at how language, structure and presentation contribute to meaning. Most of the passages have a question about the language of the passage. Specific examples are: Whose Tracks are These? (page 35) – personification of snowflakes (Q6); The Tale of Sir Basil (page 92) – written in the style of a fairy tale; Tide Wave Hits Zambo! (page 89) – newspaper heading helps to convey meaning.</p>
<p>retrieve and record information from non-fiction</p>	<p>Pupils will need to look at non-fiction books to learn how to use contents pages and indexes to locate information. The non-fiction passages in this book provide pupils with opportunities to record information retrieved from non-fiction sources.</p>
<p>participate in discussion about both books that are read to them and those they can read for themselves, taking turns and listening to what others say.</p>	