

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 5** 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 112-125. On pages 8–17 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 5–7 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	
maintain positive attitudes to reading and understanding of what they read by:	
continuing to read and discuss an increasingly wide range of fiction, poetry, plays, non-fiction and reference books or textbooks	<p>A wide range of different types of fiction and non-fiction writing are covered in the book. The passages have been written to engage pupils' attention and these help to promote positive attitudes to reading.</p> <p>Have class debates and discussions on books they have read. Discuss major themes arising. Pupils should continue to apply the knowledge and skills they have already learnt to more complex writing.</p> <p>Even though pupils can now read independently, reading aloud to them is still important and should include whole books so that they meet books and authors that they might not choose to read themselves.</p>
reading books that are structured in different ways and reading for a range of purposes	<p>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. Continue to explore different texts by reading journals and newspapers and discussing current affairs. Compare and contrast texts.</p>
increasing their familiarity with a wide range of books, including myths, legends and traditional stories, modern fiction, fiction from our literary heritage, and books from other cultures and traditions	<p>Ensure the pupils know the specific criteria which make a story a myth or legend. Look at Old English texts and Shakespeare texts to see/ evaluate how language has changed.</p>
recommending books that they have read to their peers, giving reasons for their choices	<p>Have a book reading group or a public speaking debate on books where they compare/contrast texts and recommend a favourite.</p>
identifying themes and conventions in a wide range of writing	<p>Pupils should be taught to recognise themes in what they read, such as loss or heroism. They should have opportunities to compare characters, consider different accounts of the same event and discuss viewpoints (both of authors and fictional characters), within a text and across more than one text. Examples of themes covered in this book include: Trick or Treat (page 46) – rumours may not be true; A Self-made Man (page 82) – prejudice; Strike at the Workshop (page 88) – good manners/behaviour.</p>

identifying themes and conventions in a wide range of writing (cont)	Pupils should continue to learn the conventions of different types of writing, such as the use of the first person in writing diaries and autobiographies. Examples of conventions used in this book include: diary format – Game Ranger Diaries (page 43) and The Diary of Lord Ambrose Pagett (page 55); play script – The Bathroom (page 61) and Strike at the Workshop (page 88); letter format – Letter of complaint (page 18) (formal letter) and Visit to Bath (page 91) (letter written in the past).
making comparisons within and across books	Compare and contrast the different passages in this book. Look at well-known books and explore themes and ideas and issues arising. Hold class discussions on the book(s) they are reading.
learning a wider range of poetry by heart	Have a poetry competition. Learn a poem and say it aloud.
preparing poems and plays to read aloud and to perform, showing understanding through intonation, tone and volume so that the meaning is clear to an audience	Have a class assembly on poems they have written on a specific theme/genre.
understand what they read by:	
checking that the book makes sense to them, discussing their understanding and exploring the meaning of words in context	Use paired or guided reading to ensure understanding. 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	The 'Questions' activities require factual recall and will check pupils' understanding. Specific activities requiring children to ask questions include: The Body in the Greenhouse (page 23) – EW2; Topleigh Manor (page 35) – EW3; Maya (page 64) – EW3.
drawing inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence	Many of the 'Extension work' (EW) activities provide opportunities for drawing inferences from the text. Special examples are: The Body in the Greenhouse (page 23) – EW6; Trick or Treat (page 46) – EW2; The Honourable Percival Soames (page 58) – EW1 & 5; Maya (page 64) – EW2; The Painting (part 1) (page 67) – EW2; Storm over Skullbone Island (page 73) – EW2; The Painting (part 2) (page 76) – EW1; The Wrong Spell (page 85) – EW2; The Wind (page 106) – EW1. Use hot seating of a character to explore thoughts and feelings.
predicting what might happen from details stated and implied	Many of the 'Extension work'(EW) activities provide opportunities for predicting what might happen. Specific examples are: Letter of complaint (page 18) – EW1 & 2; The Evil Genie Strikes (page 20) –EW2 & 3; The Foreteller Casket (page 29) – EW5; The Time Machine (page 32) – EW3;

predicting what might happen from details stated and implied (cont)	Game Ranger Diaries (page 43) – EW2; Treason (page 49) – EW3; The Diary of Lord Ambrose Pagett (page 55) – EW7; The Appalling Day (page 70) – EW1; Storm over Skullbone Island (page 73) – EW6; A Self-made Man (page 82) – EW5; Friday 11st March 2011 (page 97) – EW5.
summarising the main ideas drawn from more than one paragraph, identifying key details that support the main ideas	Provide opportunities for children to chunk text and then scrutinise it carefully to identify key ideas.
identifying how language, structure, and presentation contribute to meaning	Look at different texts to compare and contrast. Pupils should be taught the technical and other terms needed for discussing what they hear and read, such as metaphor, simile, analogy, imagery, style and effect. Some examples from this book include: The Body in the Greenhouse (page 23) – Q5; A Self-made Man (page 82) Q4; The Wrong Spell (page 85) – Q10; Visit to Bath (page 91) EW3; The Young Egyptian Scribe (page 100) – Q2.
discuss and evaluate how authors use language, including figurative language, considering the impact on the reader	
distinguish between statements of fact and opinion	
retrieve, record and present information from non-fiction	When using reference books, pupils need to know what information they need to look for before they begin and need to understand the task. They should be shown how to use the contents pages and indexes to locate information. The skills of information retrieval that are taught should be applied, for example, in reading history, geography and science books, and in contexts where pupils are genuinely motivated to find out information, for example, reading information leaflets before a gallery or museum visit or reading a theatre programme or review. Teachers should consider making use of any library services and expertise to support this.
participate in discussions about books that are read to them and those they can read for themselves, building on their own and others' ideas and challenging view courteously	Look at a huge variety of texts to explore the style of writing and understanding. Classes can be broken down into groups to look at specific things and then feed back to the rest of the group.
explain and discuss their understanding of what they have read, including through formal presentations and debates, maintaining a focus on the topic and using notes where necessary	Pupils should have guidance about and feedback on the quality of their explanations and contributions to discussions.
provide reasoned justifications for their views.	