

Professional Development Series

ICTWAND

READING COMPREHENSION Assessment



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Add a touch of magic to your reading assessments

Vicky Crane



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ASSESSING READING COMPREHENSION

Utilising this resource



Vicky Crane

For several years I have devoted time to researching and developing resources to support the teaching of reading, both word reading and reading comprehension. I want all pupils to be able to access books, enjoy stories, connect with poetry, and learn from experts who have published works across many fields, from different cultures and even from different centuries. Wherever the printed word can be found, I want pupils to be able to access that communication and be in a position to fully understand it and connect to the author. The National Curriculum describes reading as feeding pupils' imagination and opening up a treasure-house of wonder and joy for curious young minds. At the heart of any assessment strategy should be a commitment to a set of overarching goals. We want to create strong, confident, competent readers who can embrace a wide variety of texts for many different reasons.

"All the skills of language are essential to participating

fully as a member of society; pupils, therefore, who do not learn to speak, read and write fluently and confidently are effectively disenfranchised." National Curriculum for England.

Poor reading, both word reading and reading comprehension, can be a barrier for disadvantaged pupils in achieving academic success. When you analyse why pupils do not achieve in education, an underlying factor is often their levels of reading comprehension and engagement with books and texts. This is what drew me to investigating progression in reading and the impact it has across all areas of the curriculum.



Assessment



When pupils are struggling, it can be hard to know how to help them. The information contained in this booklet tries to demystify the complexity of reading comprehension to help teachers pinpoint issues and plan next steps. I hope that it is particularly useful for teachers working to support pupils who are not yet flourishing readers. For some, assessment is seen as a 'tick the box exercise' providing information for someone else. For me, assessment is a tool that can be used by teachers and leaders to steer towards learning goals. It can be rich, provide powerful insights, and reveal routes to success. It raises questions and, when used in conjunction with professional dialogue can be a spark for future success. This is the spirit in which this booklet is created.

Best wishes,

Vicky

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SECTION 1

What beliefs, values and principles are underpinning your assessment approach?

Underpinning principles

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ASSESSING READING COMPREHENSION

Underpinning principles



Before digging into the detail and complexity of assessing reading comprehension, ask yourself what beliefs, values and principles are underpinning your assessment approach. What is your assessment philosophy? This will be the biggest factor in how you choose to use assessment, and even how you choose to use this booklet!

If you are a leader, ask yourself: what is the school's assessment philosophy, can you articulate it, and is there a shared understanding across the school?

Your philosophy becomes the compass by which you make assessment decisions. If you believe in the importance of authentic assessment, it will influence the types of assessment you set. If you believe in involving stakeholders, such as pupils, it is likely to lead you to choose more self and peer assessment activities. If you believe that all pupils can succeed in reading comprehension, it may lead you to invest in diagnostic assessment and 1:1 assessments that drill down into the issues struggling learners are experiencing.

Ask yourself questions such as: What should be the balance between summative and formative assessment? Who do you believe assessment is for? What purposes does assessment serve? What does good assessment look like? What does effective use of assessment look like?

If your assessment philosophy centres on measuring impact and accountability, you may place a higher value on periodic, summative assessment with an emphasis on reliability and validity. This might lead to greater use of published tests, particularly where national comparison data may be available. Where this is the case, you are more likely to desire outcomes that can be compared and ranked, and devote time to analysing data and linking this back to teaching, and perhaps to whole school policies. Whilst, if your philosophy sees assessment as central to pupil learning, then you may be more interested in formative and diagnostic assessment and want to generate assessment information that can help personalise learning, address gaps, inform teaching, and enable the teacher to respond in the moment to pupil needs as learning unfolds. This might result in a wider range of low-stakes assessments conducted more frequently.

Your assessment philosophy will impact on: the importance you place on knowing the end of Key Stage standards; how interested (or otherwise) you are in the breakdown of skills for each of the Big 10 reading comprehension strands; the commitment you make to planning for assessment; how you utilise the assessment outcomes; who you assess and the methods of assessment you choose; the timing of assessment and the frequency of assessment; if assessment is integrated into teaching or stands alone; if assessments are holistic or hone in on specific skills; what role stakeholders, such as pupils, play in assessment.

A shared philosophy helps everyone be empowered to act.

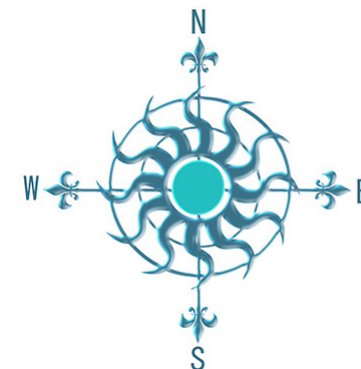


Because of the importance I believe philosophy has on assessment, I will share with you my philosophy and perhaps this will help you to consider your own beliefs, and think through how you want to use this booklet.

How is your philosophy driving your assessment practices?

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WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE? WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU?

Each school should create its own assessment philosophy and use examples, case studies, and questions to exemplify this. Your beliefs about LEARNING should be taken into account when designing your assessment philosophy. Below is a summary of my beliefs and on the subsequent pages I outline what this means to me, what this might look like in practice and raise some questions that might help you to ascertain the extent to which you agree / disagree. I hope it helps you to discuss and debate the central tenants for your school’s assessment philosophy.

Your beliefs about LEARNING impact on your assessment philosophy.

1. I believe that **reading comprehension can be taught** and that quality comprehension teaching, both stand alone and threaded across the curriculum, is essential in both primary and secondary schools. To this end, I want an assessment system that helps me to break comprehension into **components** and enables me to **drill down into the issues**. It leads me to value **assessment at strand level as well as assessing the bigger picture**.

2. I believe it is important to have **high expectations** and this leads me to want an assessment system that enables me to challenge pupils and ensure that **all pupils are well-equipped for their next stage in education**. It is important to me to have indepth knowledge of the National Curriculum standards and End of Key Stage Assessments. As Steven Covey recommends ‘start with the end in mind’.

3. I believe in **responding in the moment, as the learning unfolds**. To do this you have to pay close and constant attention to pupils’ learning in lessons.

4. I believe in **not making assumptions** about the learning that has been achieved.

5. I believe in **not wasting time** and this means being **crystal clear about the purpose of assessment**.

6. I believe that there are **four important elements to take into consideration when assessing progress** in reading comprehension:

- a) The level of text challenge - leading me to ask ‘Am I assessing comprehension against a sufficiently challenging text?’
- b) The quality of answer - leading me to ask ‘Is the quality of answer what I am looking for at this stage in the pupils’ reading journey (e.g. breadth, depth, precision, reasons, justification, evidence)?’
- c) Checking that comprehension difficulties are not confused with other problems, - leading me to ask, ‘Is there a barrier to comprehension (e.g. genre knowledge, background knowledge, vocabulary, working memory, pronoun tracking)?’
- d) Experience - leading me to think ‘there are some elements of reading comprehension that are likely to only be achieved in older year groups / and are perhaps only evident when using a complex text’?

7. I believe that **effective teachers are reflective**.

8. I believe that **reading assessment can be a catalyst for professional development and school improvement**.



WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE AND HOW WOULD WE RECOGNISE THIS IN YOUR PRACTICE?

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'Big 10' Reading Comprehension

Your beliefs about **LEARNING** impact on your **assessment philosophy**.

1. I believe that reading comprehension can be taught and that quality comprehension teaching, both stand alone and threaded across the curriculum, is essential in both primary and secondary schools.

Whilst I agree with researchers about the enormous impact background knowledge, genre knowledge and the sheer volume of reading has on a pupils' ability to comprehend a text, I also believe that we, as educators, have the power to help pupils be successful readers. I also believe that learning to comprehend texts is complex, and that as such teachers need a high degree of knowledge and understanding about the skills of reading comprehension. How does this impact on my assessment philosophy?

First, when something is complex, it drives me to try and break it down into components (hence 'the Big 10'). Next, it drives me to dig deep into the complexities (hence the details contained in this document and in the online CPD course). The more difficult and complex it is to achieve the learning outcome, the more I want to analyse it and get under the skin of the problems. **'Break it down into components, drill down into the detail, work to increase my knowledge of the issues'** has been a successful approach for me not just in supporting teachers with improving outcomes in teaching reading comprehension, but in many aspects of school improvement and wider life. How might this approach help you?

My beliefs about learning leads to **valuing assessment at a strand level**. For example: How skilled are the pupils in visualisation and how is it helping them to comprehend and enjoy the texts they are reading? What mental pictures are they creating in their minds? What processes are they using to help them form these images? How accurate / true to the texts are the pictures in their mind? How vivid and detailed are the mental pictures - or how fluid and open are the images? Are they thinking about all 5 senses as they visualise? Assessment practices that focus on discussion, annotation of texts, observing pupils describe their mental pictures to a classmate, and teacher Q&A might all help to assess the level of 'visualisation' pupils are achieving.



My belief in the complexity of reading also leads to a desire to **assess the bigger picture**. I want to understand how pupils are drawing on a wide range of skills as they read. How, for example, are the skills of inference, making connections and visualisation coming together, alongside vocabulary and background knowledge to make the text come alive? I believe it is necessary to consider how 'the sum is greater than the parts'. Holistic skills might be best assessed through dialogue (e.g. group discussion, adult questioning) with an aim to reveal the thought processes pupils are undertaking as reading unfolds. This may lead to using assessments that take place 'during reading' as well as assessment that happens 'after reading'.

Quite a number of researchers have found that younger pupils find it easier to answer questions about a text as they are reading, rather than at the end of the chapter / book. And knowledge, such as this, would help me to design assessments.

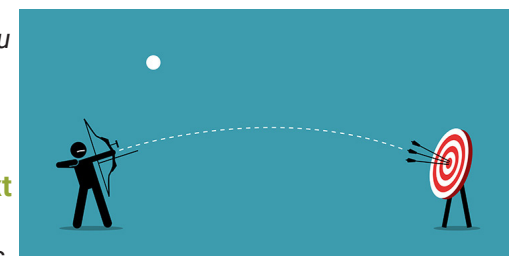
How are your beliefs about learning influencing what you assess, how you assess and when you assess?

2. I believe in having high expectations and want all pupils to be well-equipped for their next stage in education.

This means I desire to create well-pitched lessons, provide opportunities to stretch pupils, and continue to refine my practice, seeking to find the most effective ways of moving pupils (be that whole class or individuals) from their current position to the desired position. Whenever I have started teaching something new, the first thing I look for is the **curriculum specification**. I want to know the learning objectives to be achieved. I want to analyse **examination papers**. *I have always found knowing the goal to be critical in setting out a path to success.* The first part of this booklet provides information on the National Curriculum for reading. If you are not familiar with the end of Key Stage test papers, I suggest that you a) sit the papers for yourself, b) review the test specification (question types, reading objective coverage, mark allocations), c) analyse past pupil performance at question level - nationally and for your school.

In wishing to move pupils from their current position to the desired goals, it becomes important to **know their current strengths and weaknesses**.

A base line assessment is needed. Using past assessment information, talking to the pupils' previous teacher, engaging in



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discussion with parents, observing pupils closely, testing out skills - all become important in the first few weeks of a new academic year. As I believe in pupils having self efficacy, I would also be keen to share with them, in a child friendly way, the goals and target skills, and provide ideas as to how they could help themselves make progress towards these both in and out of class.

With a desire to keep on track, periodic assessment becomes important.

Milestones can be checked and any pupils who have drifted off course can be identified. Consideration can be given to the progress that is being made. This can aid decision making, e.g. how much curriculum time may need to be devoted



to the goal, whether the next few lessons need to be whole class or split into groups, the role homework might play, what interventions may be necessary.

What value do you place on knowing the goals and end of key stage tests? How does this influence your approach to assessment?

3. I believe in responding in the moment, as the learning unfolds. To do this you have to pay close and constant attention to pupils' learning. How? I purposefully seek to check understanding in the lesson and plan this into my lesson. I ask questions that probe skill levels. I encourage thinking aloud to help reveal the processes pupils are using. I am alert to all the 'clues' that pupils provide during lessons as to their level of understanding, e.g. engagement, enthusiasm, concentration levels, responses to questions, confidence in the task, pupil-to-pupil interactions, facial expressions. When they are reading, I consider how they are using intonation and if this provides any insights into their levels of comprehension. I also consider when and why they might pause when reading, the questions they stop to ask, and any inner dialogue they reveal. I ask myself questions to reflect on learning in the moment, e.g. 'What skills are at work here?' 'What do the pupils' answer reveal?' 'Is the answer sufficiently accurate?' 'Does the answer reveal they understand the nuances of what they are reading?' 'Does the answer illustrate a particular strand of the Big 10, such as making connections?' I observe how they interact with a text, e.g. how they read a non-fiction text with a partner; what they do when reading a wordless book.

How do you check understanding in lessons?

Classrooms that place a high priority on responding to learning as it unfolds are likely to be categorised by plenty of talk, e.g. teacher think alouds, teacher

modelling, pupil think alouds, pupil discussions, pupil-to-pupil conferencing. It is likely that the teacher will pause the lesson to address issues arising or to check levels of understanding. Lessons might also be categorised by gradual release of responsibility model: I do, we do, you do together, you do independently - so that the teacher can make adjustments at each stage in response to pupil learning and only move on to the next stage in the model when everyone is ready.

When checking learning during a lesson, a teacher might use a variety of long texts, short extracts, paragraphs or even sentences. Pupils may be provided with more than one opportunity to demonstrate a skill before teaching moves on.

It should be noted that the level of 'assessing in the moment' might vary depending on the type of lesson. It should not 'get in the way', e.g. making the pace too slow, making the learning disjointed, preventing pupils from achieving periods of high task concentration. It is also likely to take different forms, e.g. a question set to the whole class, circulating to listen to a group discussion, 1:1 dialogue with a pupil.

How is collecting 'in the moment' assessment important to you? How do you know that the skills being taught in the lesson are leading to a change in pupils, e.g. a change in their skills, a change in their understanding, a change in their ability to discuss a text, a change in the way they read a text? Do you make adjustments to teaching as it takes place, or stick to the plan? Do you make changes immediately, or use the intelligence gathered to influence the next lesson? What methods do you use to check learning in the lesson? Can you give an example of when you have altered your teaching because of what you noted about learning during a lesson?

4. I believe in not making assumptions about the learning that has been achieved.

It can be easy to think at the end of a lesson, 'that was a great lesson and the pupils made excellent progress' but find later, when reviewing pupil books, that actually it was only a percentage of the class who made progress, not all pupils. After lessons, it is useful to



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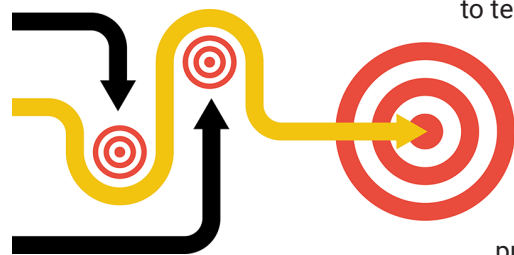
think about the hypothesis that is forming in your mind, e.g. I think pupils have really grasped the commonalities of fairy-tales and can see connections between stories, or I think pupils are now able to use prepositional phrases to aid visualisation, or I am really pleased with how pupils are able to track the emotions of characters as a story unfolds. **Ask yourself how confident you are that this applies to all learners and all learners equally? Do you need to test out your judgement at class level, group level or individual level.** Maybe I am not quite sure that one or two pupils could actually track the emotions of the characters, or perhaps I am not sure to what extent they picked up on nuances, and this might lead me to gather together a few pupils for a group discussion, perhaps using a stimulus to aid discussion about the class text such as an emotions graph, or perhaps I might set a few short written test questions next lesson to judge the security of learning.



Sometimes you can see how your conclusions after a lesson don't align with the answers in pupils' books. It is not always easy to judge if learning has occurred and if learning is secure.

Are you making assumptions about learning? How important is it to check that everyone is making progress, not just a core group of pupils? Do you set any activities or tests to help you check that specific objectives have been achieved? Do pupils have the opportunity to demonstrate skills more than once? If you think learning has not been achieved by all pupils, are you able to mix and match whole class teaching, individual independent activity and small group input?

5. I believe in not wasting time and this means being crystal clear about the purpose of assessment. If I am primarily interested in checking the effectiveness of my teaching, I might assess a representative sample of the class, rather than assessing all pupils. If I am interested in testing my hypothesis that Ben is struggling with inference, particularly in identifying the emotions of characters when the author uses 'show not tell', I would opt for 1:1 question and answer (perhaps with a set of sentences specifically designed



to test inference skills). If I wanted to consider how pupils would perform in an external assessment using written rather than oral answers, I would set individual questions or perhaps use a past examination paper. If I was interested in how pupils used their skills holistically and the level of independence they were achieving, I might assess

reading outcomes by observing and listening to a group discussion. If I was interested in assessing synthesis in non-fiction reading, I might use the outcomes

of a task, e.g. asking pupils to produce a booklet about 'snakes' after they have read several non-fiction texts. If I was concerned that I had accurate information about the skills of disadvantaged pupils, I might see them in groups of two or three to read and discuss a short story.

Do all pupils need to be assessed?

Do all pupils need to be assessed in the same way?

Why are you assessing?

How will you utilise the information?

6. I believe that there are four important elements to take into consideration when assessing progress in reading comprehension.

One: An important factor is the **complexity of the text**. An objective may remain the same across different key stages (e.g. to visualise, to evaluate, to make connections), but the text is more challenging. You will see the similarities in the National Curriculum statements between year groups. The key change is the types of texts that pupils are grappling with. *Are the books and texts sufficiently challenging? As the challenge increases, what difficulties do pupils experience?*

Two: The **quality of answers**: As pupils progress through the key stages, answers are likely to become more precise, more sophisticated, deeper, broader, cite more evidence, give more reasons and provide better justification. For example, a pupil in Year 1 may be able to describe the visual picture they create in their mind as the teacher reads, but as pupils progress through the Key Stages they will be able to discuss what techniques the author used to help the reader create that mental image, and will go beyond just 'visuals' to also include other senses such as sounds and smells. The mental pictures are likely to be more detailed. *How do you judge the quality of answers? How do you support pupils with achieving better quality answers as they move through the key stages?*

Three: There are a few elements that you might expect pupils **only to perform in later year groups** (although there are always exceptions), such as pupils being able to infer complex relationships between characters, evaluate the author's use of figurative language, use a wide range of strategies for reading to achieve a specific goal. Where possible, an indication of the differences you might expect between key stages has been outlined for each of the Big 10, *but it must be remembered that this is to promote professional judgement, not replace it.*

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Four: Take care to **watch out for barriers that are not comprehension related**, e.g. the reason a child can't infer might be due to a lack of background knowledge rather than an inability to make inferences; the reason a child is struggling with general comprehension might be an inability to track pronouns across sentences; a pupil's lack of genre knowledge might stifle their ability to read and respond to a text such as a newspaper or poem or a sophisticated non-fiction text; low consumption of texts outside of class may mean pupils have limited vocabulary which then hinders comprehension; or perhaps a child's low reading speed and difficulties with word reading mean there is no working memory left to focus on higher order thinking. Make sure that issues pupils are struggling with are correctly identified so that the source of the problem can be tackled.

7. I believe that effective teachers are reflective. This means ensuring I **set aside time to think** about how I have been teaching reading and the comprehension levels achieved for my class. Sometimes this is dedicated time, e.g. working with a colleague and using a large sheet of flip chart paper to capture our thoughts. Sometimes, it is mulling things over in the car on the way home. I think it is important to be analytical, to reflect on what is going well and consider how the different elements of teaching are impacting on learning, e.g. the quality of my explanations, the usefulness of examples, the clarity of modelling, the accessibility of instructions. *Do you think about what pupils found easy or hard? Do you reflect on levels of engagement? Do you consider the quality of pupil discussion on the class novel? Do you analyse assessment outcomes, e.g. question level analysis on written test papers, look for patterns when observing groups of pupils discussing a text?*

Discussion extract after a written in-class test:

Teacher A: I am surprised that so many pupils struggled to answer question 5 across both of our classes.

Teacher B: Yes, I thought I had really covered visualisation and that my class would be skilled in making mental pictures. Perhaps pupils struggled because they had to think about sound. The text required the reader to link the sound of the wolf howling to knowing the wolf's location and movement.

Teacher A: Yes. We could do further activities that look at all five senses, including more emphasis on smells and sounds. Perhaps picking a story extract set in a busy environment, like a market might help.

Teacher B: Do you think we could tie this to pupils writing their own descriptions in advance of the upcoming story writing unit? If we collect a range of short stories that have different settings, pupils could make



comparisons on sights, sounds, smells, taste and touch.

Teacher A: Good idea. I think my class would benefit from that, particularly if we link it to other techniques the author is using in creating vivid scenes.

The above extract of a conversation between two teachers shows how **reflecting on assessment outcomes can help pinpoint the focus of future lessons**.

How can assessment provide insights into the impact of your teaching? How might assessment help you improve your effectiveness? How might assessment help you identify practice that can be shared with others? What role do you feel assessment has in helping teachers to reflect on their practice?

8. I believe that reading assessment can be a catalyst for professional development and school improvement. As such, time needs to be set aside for **a) analysis** - such as question level analysis, or reflection on class strengths, and **b) professional dialogue**. Teachers and leaders can work together to consider the many variables at play, e.g. time devoted to teaching, the curriculum, the teaching approach, the resources available, teacher knowledge base, text choices and text combinations, levels of adult support, barriers to comprehension. Leaders can also consider wider elements that might be impacting on assessment, e.g. access to books at home, tracking home reading, use of iPads, the utilisation of the library, the link between reading comprehension assessments and writing, the link between reading comprehension and word reading assessments.

What insights can be gained? How can assessment information help to drive whole school improvements? How are struggling learners being supported? What is being celebrated and shared? What is working well / so-so / not working well? Does a particular strand of reading comprehension need to be improved? Are pupils equally skilled in reading comprehension across novels, short stories, poems, newspaper reports, information texts, biographies? What training and professional development might have the biggest impact on pupil outcomes?

Concluding thoughts:

Assessment is complex and multifaceted. As such, I believe time, support and professional dialogue is needed to harness its potential. This has been the driver for the creation of this booklet. I hope it will inspire quality assessment that impacts on pupil outcomes. I hope it will help you to pinpoint the next steps for pupils in your class. I hope it supports you in tackling barriers to progress. I hope it gives you confidence to assess both individual strands of reading comprehension and assess skills holistically.

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READING COMPREHENSION Assessment

INFERENCE

Inference is the best indicator of reading comprehension and therefore should be weighted to reflect this. Aim for 30-40% of assessment to focus on inference. The assessment should be a mix of verbal (all Key Stages) and written assessments (KS1, KS2). *Written tests are important because it allows the teacher to assess the accuracy of answers, and evaluate answers provided on a text that pupils have read for themselves, whilst verbal answers will allow pupils to demonstrate breadth & depth.* Inference questions should become increasingly challenging across the Key Stages.

RETRIEVAL & SUMMARISE

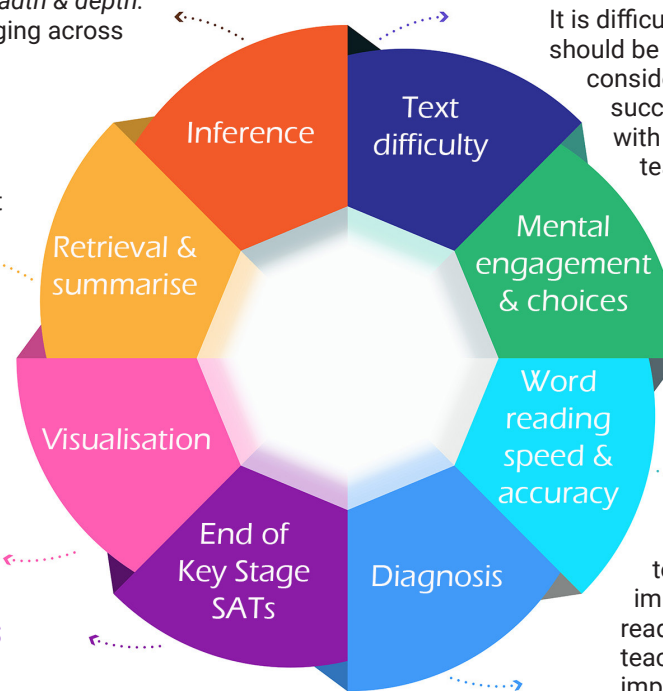
It should be noted that retrieval is 'retrieval with interpretation', e.g. the vocabulary used in the question is not always the same as the vocabulary used in the text; it may require pupils to explain the meaning; it often requires pupils to find information across more than one paragraph. Retrieval requires pupils to select evidence in the text, extract relevant points and show they can use the information. If pupils can summarise the text in their own words, it is a good indication that understanding has been achieved. This strand of the Big 10 is particularly important for assessing how well pupils will be able to utilise texts across the curriculum and 'read to learn'. Aim for 25-30% weighting and include written assessments.

VISUALISATION

Visualisation is difficult to test through a written assessment and instead the focus should be on hearing verbal answers. Visualisation is vital for the enjoyment of texts. Research shows that interventions that focus on visualisation have a positive impact on reading comprehension outcomes, including improving inferences. It is therefore important to diagnose visualisation issues and provide very specific support. *There is a very small percentage of the population that can not visualise - the majority of pupils can be taught to achieve good levels of visualisation.*

End of KS SATs

It should be remembered that not all reading comprehension skills can be easily assessed through a written test, and therefore this influences the test framework and specification. *Teachers should consider the full reading skill set in considering how prepared pupils are for their next stage of education.* Word reading speed is also part of the test (as it is time limited). Teachers should aim to fully understand the tests, carry out question level analysis on results, and teach pupils examination technique.



TEXT DIFFICULTY

Reading comprehension, as set out in the National Curriculum, is very similar across all the Key Stages. The key difference is the level of text complexity and who is reading the text. For example, in EYFS the focus is on 'language comprehension' and much of the focus is on understanding 'text read aloud' by the teacher, either 1:1, in a small group or with the whole class. Whilst the nature of questions will become more sophisticated, it is the text itself which is the major difference. It becomes harder, or not as straight forward, to find the answer. When assessing pupils, the text difficulty they can successfully comprehend should be heavily weighted.

GOAL, PREVIEW, QUESTION, CONNECT, EVALUATE

It is difficult to assess these in written tests. Instead, they should be assessed through application in the classroom with consideration for how pupils are using these skills to a) be successful in independent reading, b) engage mentally with the text. This set of skills work in tandem and enable teachers to predict the long term success of pupils with reading. Observation, discussion, question & answer, think alouds, reflection, explanation of a pupils' approach to reading - are all ways of considering pupils' level of knowledge and skill across these areas.

WORD READING SPEED (with accuracy)

Word reading speed impacts on the direct comprehension of a text, e.g. ability to complete a text in the allotted class time, working memory, stamina for reading lengthy texts. It also impacts indirectly, e.g. the QUANTITY of reading undertaken by a pupil tends to link heavily to their ability to read easily. Sheer volume of reading improves comprehension and increases vocabulary. Word reading should be assessed and tackled separately, but teachers should acknowledge the short term and long term impact it has on pupils text comprehension.

DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT

Pronoun tracking, alternative word tracking, lexical inferences, cohesive inference, conjunctions and subordinating conjunctions, multi-clause sentences and function words (omissions, substitutions, insertions) are all elements that should be checked for pupils struggling with comprehension.

*It is important to note the **IMPACT OF BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE** on pupils' ability to comprehend a text.*

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DIALOGIC OR WRITTEN?

Advice for carrying out reading assessments:

WRITTEN ASSESSMENTS

There are times when you need to assess pupils through written answers.

1. Pupils need to be able to produce very accurate and precise answers. Written tests and written activities allow teachers to assess this aspect of pupil performance.
2. Pupils need to learn examination technique. This includes familiarity with question types such as true/false, matching, sequencing, short answer, multiple choice. Pupils performance on written questions enables teachers to consider the extent to which examination technique is developing. Pupils can be involved in marking test papers and be involved in setting goals.
3. Accuracy of assessment of individual pupils. If the written answers are produced individually and under assessment conditions, the teacher knows the answers are a product of the individual pupil's skills, knowledge and understanding. This can be useful for triangulating other types of assessment, e.g. insights gained about pupil performance during whole class activities, insights gained from group reading activities.
4. Written answers allow teachers to spend more time thinking about and analysing pupils' responses. This is useful for diagnosing specific issues, identifying next steps and thinking about the needs of the class as a whole. Question level analysis can reveal useful information about the whole class which can be used to inform class planning and ensure lesson adaptations meet the needs of individual pupils.

Vocabulary, retrieval, inference, summary, and prediction can easily be assessed through written questions. To some extent, making connections and visualisation can also be tested.

DIALOGIC ASSESSMENTS

Teachers can also make assessments of reading comprehension through discussion with pupils in small groups or 1:1.

1. **Plan your questions** in advance.
2. **Decide on the focus**, e.g. will it be one element of reading such as inference,



or several skills at the same time (e.g. visualisation, connection, goal, evaluation)?

3. **Select an appropriate text:** story, poem or non-fiction based (or a combination).
4. **Choose how you want pupils to read the text.** For example, you might want pupils to read the text silently so that you know pupil responses are based on the individual pupil's knowledge and understanding of the reading material. Alternatively, you might ask pupils to read aloud, perhaps each child reading a section of the book, so that you can gain an insight into how pupils are using their understanding of the text to read with intonation, or spot when they are monitoring their understanding and using strategies to make adjustments to how they are reading. Or you may ask pupils to read in pairs, perhaps to observe how they tackle the text together. This might be particularly revealing when using a non-fiction text and observing not only how they read, but perhaps how they tackle some of the retrieval questions.
5. **Decide on group size and composition.** Groups of 2-4 work well for detailed assessments, groups of up to six pupils are useful for lighter touch, conformational assessment. 1:1 is better for more intensive, diagnostic assessment.
6. **Decide on resources required.** It is important for pupils to be able to give examples and cite evidence from the text. Some questions may require pupils to look at a very specific section, e.g. a particular paragraph. If you have one copy of the text, small groups seated in such a way as to be able to point to the text may suffice, but in most cases pupils will need their own copy of the text.
7. No matter what questions are being asked, the teacher should use their **professional judgement on assessing 'reading for understanding'** and how pupils are using a range of skills to achieve meaning. Think 'the sum is more than the parts'.
8. It is useful to use both questions and discussion, encouraging pupils to build on each other's answers. **Adapt questions** as the assessment unfolds. It may be necessary to ask **follow-up questions** and push pupils for **deeper, broader** or more **accurate** answers or for more **evidence**. Ask **open questions** to the group, and **target** questions at specific pupils. "What do you think, Tom?" "To what extent do you agree?" "Is there more than one answer to this question?" "How could you build on this answer?" "How could this answer be backed up with evidence from the text?" "Is there an alternative viewpoint?"
9. **Avoid teaching.** Keep the focus on assessment. Address issues arising later.
10. **Make notes as you assess or allocate 5 minutes at the end to record** important assessment information and consider next steps for the class and individuals whilst it is still fresh in your mind.



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BIG 10 READING ICTWAND

DIALOGIC ASSESSMENT

Year 6 discussion using the class novel assessing 4 of the Big 10.

Teacher: (GOAL) “Ben, tell me about how you prepared to read today.”

Ben: “Jane and I talked about the last chapter and reminded each other of what had happened.” Jane: “And we looked at the map at the front of the book.”

Teacher: “Why is this important?”

Ben: “You have to be able to link back to previous events and it is sometimes hard to remember the detail after a break. In fact, we stopped part way through and went back to chapter 1 to check that Mr Greggs was the PE teacher.”

Teacher: “Did anyone have a different approach?”

Sarah: “I thought about the characters. I thought about the last thing that happened before we stopped reading and I wondered what would happen next. I thought about the tension in the book between the characters.”

Teacher: (INFERENCE) “Chapter three starts with Molly heading home. How was she feeling at this point in the story?”

Sarah: “She was scared.” Teacher: “I agree but how do you know she was scared?”

Sarah: “Her heart was pounding and her mouth was dry.”

Teacher: “What else makes you think she was scared?”

Sarah: “She kept looking over her shoulder.”

Teacher: “Ben, why do you think she kept looking over her shoulder?”

Ben: “To see if Maggie was following her.”

Teacher: (INFERENCE & CONNECTION) “Ben says that Molly was looking to see if Maggie was following her. Why would that make her scared? Sarah, what do you think?”

Sarah: “She was worried Maggie was going to attack her. She knew Maggie wanted a fight.”

Jane: “Maggie was furious after the incident in the school dinner hall. She was after blood.”

Teacher: “That’s a strong phrase - she was after blood. Tom, what had caused Maggie to be so furious?”

Tom: “Hmm. I think she felt really embarrassed. Molly had made her look stupid in front of everyone. Everyone laughed. The other pupils are going to remember it for a long time and will keep teasing her about it. Maggie has already pushed a classmate for mimicking the incident.”

Teacher: “What does this mean for the girls relationship?”

Tom: “I don’t think their friendship can be easily repaired.”



An effective way to assess reading comprehension skills is through group question and answer sessions. This can be conducted as part of a lesson, or can be a separate, more formal activity. Notice the teacher doesn’t comment, but sticks to questions and uses follow up questions to probe understanding. Dialogic assessment can allow pupils to demonstrate broad understanding, pick up on nuances, make more sophisticated connections than they can explain in writing.

Teacher: (VISUALISATION) “Turn your attention to the next scene. Molly is making her way through the boatyard. What helps you to visualise the scene. Name the technique and give me specific examples from the text.”

Ben: “The author uses precise nouns such as anchor, sail, hull, barnacle, mast and propeller. This helps to visualise objects.”

Tom: “The author uses a simile for atmosphere, he writes - it was as foggy as a dream. I like the way the author talks about being cocooned in fog and how her voice doesn’t travel just fades and is consumed by the denseness of the fog.”

Sarah: “The author uses prepositional phrases and uses action to help picture the scene. For example, she ducked *beneath* the elevated hull, and later, she cowered, shaking, *under* a large piece of tarpaulin.”

Jane: “And there are sounds. The cables clanging against the masts and the deep sound of the fog horn.”

Teacher: “There’s a lot of vocabulary in this scene. Jane, what helped you with the vocabulary and visualisation?”

Jane: “I was glad we had read the non-fiction books. I’ve never been to a real boatyard. The books really helped to visualise the vocabulary. And the photos we looked at in our groups last lesson helped me to picture the whole scene. I could see her moving about the structures in my mind. And the video we watched helped with sounds. I felt right there with her.”

Teacher: (RETRIEVAL) “Who does she meet at the boatyard?”

Sarah: “Captain Jack.”

Ben: “It reminded me of the ghost story about the pirate treasure. I’m wondering if Captain Jack is a ghost.”

Teacher: (INFERENCE & RETRIEVAL) “Are there any other clues?” Ben: “His clothes perhaps.” Teacher: “What did you notice?” Ben: “They were old fashioned. The author describes

a long velvet jacket, taffeta breaches and ribboned stockings and buckled shoes.”

Teacher: (RETRIEVAL) “What does he give to Molly?” Sarah: “A velvet bag with three gold coins and a ruby ring inside.” Tom: “The coins are not modern coins. They are Spanish doubloons.” Teacher: “Ah, what makes that interesting?” Tom: “Well, where did he find them? How valuable are they?”

Teacher: “What does Molly later discover about the ring?” Jane: “That the ring had once belonged to her grandfather. It has a real ruby stone.”

Teacher: “Who does Molly suspect later steals the ring?” Jane: “Maggie.”

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SECTION 2

What aspect of assessment is the focus for your professional development?

Setting clear goals

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BIG 10 READING ICTWAND

ASSESSING READING COMPREHENSION

Be clear on your goal...why are you reading this booklet?

An increased understanding of Key Stage expectations

Utilising assessment information to increase the impact of teaching

Improving dialogic assessment

Increase quality of professional dialogue related to attainment

Be more precise in identifying next steps for the class and individuals

Increased knowledge of how to assess a specific strategy from the Big 10

There are many different types of assessment, e.g. summative, formative, diagnostic. Do you have a particular focus? There are many different ways of assessing, e.g. written tests, through classroom activities, through dialogue and questions, through outcomes from tasks. Which do you use most often? Do you need to explore other options?

Assessment information can help gauge the impact and effectiveness of teaching, enabling teachers to refine their methods, and plan for how to support pupils who are experiencing difficulties in one or more aspects of reading comprehension. How is assessment leading to better outcomes for pupils?

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ASSESSING READING COMPREHENSION

Be clear on your goal...



How would you rate your current approach to assessment? What goal(s) are you trying to achieve?

Precise goals are essential if continuous improvement is to be achieved. Wherever you are on your journey with assessing reading comprehension - what is the most important next step for you? How will taking this step support pupil attainment and pupil progress?

When you read this booklet with a clear goal in mind, you will be better attuned to the relevant information and messages. It makes the reading process more efficient and effective. Reading with a goal in mind includes considering how you will mentally interact with the material, and what you will do with the information afterwards. For example, will you be skimming this booklet to get an overall view of assessment, or really digging into how to assess a specific reading skill such as inference? Will you read the information and then engage in professional dialogue to deepen your understanding, or use the booklet to help you plan for an upcoming assessment? Whilst there is much to be gained from reading the booklet cover to cover, I suggest identifying the sections that link to your goal. Refer to the booklet often, and seek to utilise the content.

1. Are you sufficiently familiar with the National Curriculum statements for your Key Stage?

The National Curriculum is a framework to guide your teaching. It describes performance 'in the round'. Whilst it is not assessment criteria, it can help you to consider what will be important in assessing pupils. For example, ensuring you keep the assessment focus on pupils 'understanding what they read'. You will find a copy of the NC statements from page 18. Whilst there are some incremental changes to the statements, the biggest difference in reading comprehension as pupils move through the key stages is the level of text complexity.

2. Are you sometimes unsure what expected performance looks like for the Big 10 in each key stage?

On pages 20, 22 and 24 you will find descriptors for each of the Big 10 reading comprehension strategies that match to, and expand on, the National Curriculum Key Stage statements. These can help to ensure your teaching and assessment is sufficiently challenging and well pitched.

3. How aware are you of factors to take into consideration when assessing?

Some key points are shared on page 11, e.g. the difficulties of assessing some skills through written tests alone; the importance of weighting inference within the Big 10 framework; the significance of reading speeds.

4. Do you need advice on how to assess through small group and 1:1 dialogue?

You can find advice starting on page 12.

5. Do you need support in fine tuning your assessments? Do you want to drill down to one aspect of the Big 10? Do you need to identify next steps for an individual or your class?

You will find a section for each of the Big 10 that is written specifically with assessment in mind starting on page 26.

In addition to using this booklet, please refer to the end of Key Stage SATs specification, past papers and question level analysis both nationally and for your school. This booklet focuses on assessment in addition to end of KS written tests.

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SECTION 3

How well do you know the National Curriculum?

What does progress look like between key stages?

Integrating the National Curriculum with the Big 10

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BIG 10 READING ICTWAND

Page 17

READING COMPREHENSION National Curriculum

YEAR 1: 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
 - being encouraged to **link what they read or hear to their own experiences**
 - becoming very familiar with key stories, fairy stories and traditional tales, **retelling** them and considering their particular **characteristics**
 - recognising and joining in with predictable phrases
 - learning to appreciate rhymes and poems, and to recite some by heart
 - **discussing word meanings**, linking new meanings to those already known
- 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
 - **checking that the text makes sense** to them as they read, and correcting inaccurate reading
 - discussing the significance of the **title** and **events**
 - 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
 - **participate in discussion** about what is read to them, taking turns and listening to what others say
 - **explain clearly their understanding** of what is read to them

Comments: Summarising / retelling can be assessed in various ways, including the use of physical objects, images and prompts. When pupils can retell or summarise the story, particularly in their own words, it is a good indication that they have achieved comprehension. When pupils understand the story they are better at visualising which helps them to then remember the story.

In Year 1, concentrate on achieving fluency, teacher modelling of comprehension skills & verbal answers. This will aid transition between EYFS and Year 1. Build strong foundations for Year 2. Immerse pupils in texts of different types and emphasise reading for understanding, reading to learn and reading for enjoyment.

To make assessments, teachers need to engage pupils in book talk, working with pupils in either small groups or one-to-one. Teachers should:

- Provide prompts for open ended discussion;
- Ask specific questions;
- Encourage pupils to build on and respond to what others say;
- Ask follow-up questions to enable pupils to expand or deepen answers, or to gain greater clarity.

In Year 1, pupils working at the expected standard are likely to be able to handle a book and notice elements on the front and back cover, e.g. identifying that there are farm animals on the cover and saying what they think the book will be about. They are aware that there are different types of books, e.g. ones that provide information, ones that are stories, ones that are rhymes and songs.

They can discuss books, e.g. make connections to their own experiences (such as linking a story about farm animals to a recent farm visit) or making connections to other books they have read (such as remembering what a character did in a previous book). They can identify simple emotions based on inferences, such as recognising the character is sad because they are crying. They can draw meaning from what is said and how it is said, e.g. identifying that a character is angry from the dialogue. They can make simple inferences from a characters actions, such as understanding why a character might be running or hiding. They can consider what they think will happen next and make reasonable predictions based on what has been read to them.

The questions to ask will very much depend on the book. How might you encourage pupils to make connections, talk about what is happening in the book, show they understand different elements of the story, be able to describe the ending?

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READING COMPREHENSION

National Curriculum

YEAR 2: Pupils should be taught to:

develop pleasure in reading, motivation to read, vocabulary and understanding by:

- listening to, discussing and expressing views about a wide range of contemporary and classic poetry, stories and non-fiction at a level beyond that at which they can read independently
- discussing the **sequence of events** in books and **how items of information are related**
- becoming increasingly familiar with and **retelling** a wider range of stories, fairy stories and traditional tales
- being introduced to **non-fiction books** that are structured in different ways
- recognising simple **recurring literary language** in stories and poetry
- **discussing and clarifying the meanings of words**, linking new meanings to known vocabulary
- discussing their **favourite words and phrases**
- continuing to build up a repertoire of poems learnt by heart, appreciating these and reciting some, with appropriate **intonation** to make the meaning clear
- understand both the books that they can already read accurately and fluently and those that they listen to by:
- drawing on what they already know or on background information and vocabulary provided by the teacher
- **checking that the text makes sense** to them as they read, and correcting inaccurate reading
- making **inferences** on the basis of what is being said and done
- **answering and asking questions**
- **predicting** what might happen on the basis of what has been read so far
- participate in **discussion** about books, poems and other works that are read to them and those that they can read for themselves, taking turns and listening to what others say

An emphasis on highly accurate reading and fluency will support pupils with the End of Key Stage reading assessment, particularly for paper 2 where reading stamina is required. Make sure there are opportunities to listen to the teacher reading non picture books so that pupils are challenged to comprehend the words and not be over reliant on images.

explain and **discuss** their **understanding** of books, poems and other material, both those that they listen to and those that they read for themselves.

Commentary: In Year 2, pupils should be able to provide both short and long statements about the texts they are reading both through discussion and when answering questions.

Pupils should now be able to not only retell stories, but also consider how elements of a story are linked. For example, they can explain why Cinderella needed to leave the palace before midnight, remembering what will happen and why this is significant. And later, they know why the Prince is travelling around the land with a glass slipper asking all the ladies to try on the shoe. Pupils can say what happened at the end of a story.

Pupils can also identify key elements from non-fiction, e.g. answering retrieval questions. More able pupils will be able to find information from across more than one paragraph to answer questions (e.g. Optional SATs).

Pupils can make inferences about a characters actions, e.g. Why did the greedy man chase the bird? Pupils can make inferences about a characters feelings, e.g. How do you know that Paul was scared? Pupils can make inferences from dialogue, e.g. that a character is angry.

As with Year 1, pupils can make connections between the books they read and their knowledge of the world, their experiences and other books they have read. They can start to talk about their favourite books. They can say what they like about a book. They can spot techniques such as repeated phrases and alliteration such as ‘Natalie nibbled noodles’.

Pupils in Year 2 need to be able to answer questions in writing. The optional SATs papers and KS1 assessments from 2018-2023 can help to make judgements on attainment. It should be possible for pupils to provide broader, deeper and more sophisticated answers in discussion than in writing, and pupils will need support in both mediums.

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BIG 10 READING ICTWAND

KEY STAGE 1: BIG 10

How will you stagger developments? E.g. greater focus on oral answers, and then selecting answers from the group and then written responses; Reduce cognitive load by reading the text to pupils so that they can concentrate on comprehension; level of text complexity; answers during rather than at the end of reading.

GOAL	Pupils can select a text based on what they want to achieve, e.g. a story for entertainment, a non-fiction book to learn about trucks. They can show understanding that a story is read from start to finish, but a non-fiction book can sometimes be started in different places. They can use a basic contents page to locate information. They show basic awareness of audience which helps them select books. They understand why you might read a text more than once.
PREVIEW	Pupils can examine the front and back cover of a book, using information such as the title and images to identify the type of book and likely content. They can preview a page and locate information by using subheadings. They scan a page, forming initial impressions and quickly pick up information.
MONITOR	Pupils demonstrate monitoring their own understanding as they read, e.g. slowing down when text is difficult to understand, choosing to re-read part of the text to help them make sense of the text, checking vocabulary, asking questions, pausing to think, pausing to discuss what has happened so far, looking back at a previous page, looking carefully at images.
VISUALISE	When reading books that do not have illustrations, pupils can conjure up simple images in their mind as an adult is reading. For example, listening to a story set on a cold day, the pupils can make images in their mind of the children wrapped up in thick coats and woolly hats, can use description in the text to visualise the scene (e.g. snow covered grass), can identify sounds (e.g. the author describes the chirping birds).
CONNECT	Pupils can make connections to their own experiences, e.g. talking about their experiences on a farm when reading a book about farm animals. Pupils can make connections between books, e.g. talking about two versions of the same story. Pupils can talk about similarities and differences between two texts. Pupils can make connections between different parts of a story. Pupils can make connections between images and the text they are reading.

Note: Monitoring in Year 1 may start with building awareness through teacher modelling with a view to increasing pupils' ability to perform this skill independently in Year 2.

The key is for pupils to demonstrate 'understanding' and read beyond the words to what is implied, and engage in cognitive acts that cause them to think e.g. inferences, visualisation, making connections. Pupils reading a text with intonation can give many clues as to the level of comprehension being achieved. Note this is non-statutory guidance.

QUESTION	Pupils can generate and ask each other questions, e.g. using why, what, when, how, which. They can ask inference questions, retrieval questions, opinion questions, connection questions. They can ask questions of adults in order to check their understanding and ask for clarification. They form questions in their mind as they read, e.g. I wonder why...
INFER	Pupils can say how a character is feeling based on inference, e.g. Ben is feeling scared. They can say how they know a character's emotional state, e.g. he is shaking. Pupils can give reasons / explain motives of characters, e.g. The giant chased Jack because he had stolen an egg and the giant wanted it back. Pupils can relate actions, feelings and motives together, e.g. <i>Poppy is sad because she dropped her ice-cream. Fred offers to share his ice-cream with her. He wants to cheer her up.</i> Pupils can track pronouns across sentences.
PREDICT	Pupils can make predictions about the content of a book based on the front and back cover, size and shape of book, general appearance. Pupils can make predictions about what might happen next in a story based on what has been read.
SUMMA-RISE & RETRIEVE	Pupils can retrieve information from non-fiction texts, including extracting information from more than one paragraph to answer a question. Pupils can retrieve information from stories and poems, e.g. What did Jack steal? They can tell someone else what they have learned from a book. They can retell a story in their own words (perhaps with visual prompts or physical objects). They can identify words from their meaning.
EVALUATE	Pupils can identify techniques such as alliteration, rhyme, repetition (without necessarily naming the technique). They can identify elements of the book they like, e.g. I liked it when..., I think it is funny when..., I like that in the end... I really like the pictures of Calculation Island. I like that it has a map of the town. They can state if the book they choose contained the information they were looking for. They can identify effective vocabulary (e.g. words that helps them to visualise or words they like because of the sounds they make).

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BIG 10 READING ICTWAND

READING COMPREHENSION

National Curriculum

YEAR 3 & 4: Texts become more challenging which increases reading comprehension demands.

Pupils should be taught to:

develop positive attitudes to reading, and an understanding of what they read, by:

- listening to and discussing a wide range of fiction, **poetry, plays**, non-fiction and **reference** books or textbooks
- reading books that are structured in different ways and reading for a range of purposes
- using **dictionaries** to check the meaning of words that they have read
- increasing their familiarity with a wide range of books, including fairy stories, myths and legends, and **retelling** some of these orally
- identifying **themes** and **conventions** in a wide range of books
- preparing poems and play scripts to read aloud and to perform, showing understanding through **intonation, tone, volume and action**
- discussing **words and phrases that capture the reader’s interest and imagination**
- recognising some different forms of poetry [for example, free verse, narrative poetry]

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
- **asking questions to improve their understanding of a text**
- drawing **inferences** such as inferring characters’ feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and **justifying** inferences with **evidence**
- **predicting** what might happen from details stated and **implied**
- identifying main ideas drawn from more than 1 paragraph and **summarising** these
- identifying how **language, structure, and presentation** contribute to meaning
- **retrieve and record** information from non-fiction
- 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.

Commentary: Pupils should be able to achieve the statements with more challenging texts than in KS1. Some notable differences are the inclusion of poetry, plays and reference books. Page layouts, particularly in non-fiction, should become more sophisticated and pupils should read non-linear texts that require them to choose the order to read the text, images and diagrams, flowcharts (etc.) on a page. They should take into consideration the way that the author communicates through colour, fonts, font sizes, images, layout as well as the words. Pupils should also be able to identify conventions in different types of writing (for example, the greeting in letters, a diary written in the first person, numbering and headings in instructions). Pupils should recognise themes in what they read, such as the triumph of good over evil or the use of magical devices in fairy stories and folk tales.

As texts become more challenging, retrieving information and making inferences becomes more demanding and there is a greater need to pick up on elements that are implied. They often have to draw clues from multiple places in a text and give more than one piece of evidence to back up their conclusions. For example: I know that John is feeling scared because his heart is pounding and his legs are shaking, but also that he is trying to be brave in order to save his friends from the dragon. Pupils can make a wide range of inferences such as impressions of settings, objects and character traits. Note the increased emphasis on evidence and justification for pupils’ answers.

Pupils discussions should include more evaluative discussions, e.g. picking up author techniques such as show not tell, evaluating the use of vocabulary, identifying how the author helps the reader to visualise. Evaluations should include page, paragraph, sentence and word level, as well as at plot level and elements such as page layouts.

Pupils have to show they can take more action, e.g. summarising, making notes, performing poetry, retelling. They should be able to utilise texts in different ways - showing understanding of the goal for reading. They should become increasingly independent, e.g. using dictionaries, asking questions to help them better understand the texts they are reading, engage in discussions about books with their peers.

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YEARS 3/4 BIG 10

GOAL	Pupils show understanding that there are different reasons to read, e.g. for entertainment, to learn, to recreate something, to be informed. Pupils choose an appropriate approach, e.g. slowly reading a complex text or choosing to spend time looking carefully at a cut-away diagram to understand the structure of a volcano. They can give reasons for their choices, e.g. repeated reading plus look/cover/check when learning to recite a poem.
PREVIEW	Pupils take into account a wide range of information when previewing a book and making book selections, e.g. title, images, publisher, number of pages, images to text ratio, sampling pages, contents page. They use this to make judgements about audience and purpose and match to goal. They also use preview before reading a double-page spread in non-fiction texts to get the gist, or to select / reject the page, or to locate info quickly.
MONITOR	Pupils demonstrate monitoring their own understanding as they read and are aware of when meaning has broken down. They take action to address difficulties, e.g. through slowing down when text is difficult to understand, choosing to re-read part of the text to help them make sense of the text, checking vocabulary, asking questions, pausing to think, pausing to discuss what has happened so far, looking back at a previous page, looking carefully at images, taking note of structural elements in the text. They check progress towards a goal and make adjustments if necessary.
VISUALISE	Pupils can create images in their minds as they read using literal information and inferences. They are tuned in to the five senses and experience texts through the eyes of different characters, e.g. what they hear, smell, taste, touch and see. They can give examples of words and phrases that aid visualisation as well as author techniques such as similes, onomatopoeia, prepositional phrases. They pick out details to help them visualise, and whilst they use their background knowledge to create mental pictures, they ensure any visualisation holds true to the text.
CONNECT	Pupils make connections in their mind as they read, e.g. when reading stories, they draw on their experiences to make sense of the text, they consider what they would do in the shoes of the character, they use their knowledge of the world to give meaning to events. They can make connections between characters and track information across chapters. When reading non-fiction, they make connections between books, they consider how the knowledge links to what they already know about a topic.

QUESTION	Pupils can engage in discussions about books in a way that helps them to understand the text at a deeper level or with greater clarity. They ask questions of adults and each other that helps them to engage mentally with the text, e.g. considering characters motives, making connections to the text, providing opinions. They ask questions before they read, during reading and after reading to engage fully with the text. They ask questions that help them better perform plays and poetry recitals.
INFER	Pupils make inferences on characters thoughts, feelings and motives. They can 'give impressions' of settings, events, objects and characters based on clues in the text. They can infer relationships between characters based on their interactions. They draw clues from across paragraphs and some pupils will be able to make inferences using clues across multiple chapters. They can increasingly make rich and sophisticated inferences, particularly about the personality and motives of the characters. They can track pronouns and alternative nouns across sentences and paragraphs.
PREDICT	Pupils can make predictions about what a character will do next based on a scene as it unfolds. They can also draw on their wider knowledge of the character, using information drawn from a previous chapter to make predictions, e.g. using knowledge that a character is untrustworthy to think about the character's next actions. They can make predictions about objects, e.g. that a rickety ladder might collapse under the weight of the children as they cross the ravine.
SUMMA-RISE & RETRIEVE	Pupils can draw information from different paragraphs to answer questions. They can summarise a paragraph, pull out the main points from a longer text, extract and record specific information, e.g. filling in a table from a non-fiction text. They can recall information in their own words and retell information to others. They can give a synopsis of a story.
EVALUATE	Pupils can evaluate a book or text using a range of criteria, e.g. match to goal, readability, layout, content, style. They can state what they like or don't like about a book, giving reasons. They can write reviews that can support other pupils in their book choices. Pupils can also evaluate author techniques, e.g. how the author has painted a vivid scene, the author use of vocabulary, how the author has used show not tell. They can make evaluations at different levels, e.g. global across the whole text, plot, characterisation, writing (paragraph, sentence, word).

Note this is non-statutory guidance.

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BIG 10 READING ICTWAND

READING COMPREHENSION

National Curriculum

YEARS 5 & 6: Pupils should be taught to:

maintain positive attitudes to reading and an 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
- reading books that are structured in different ways and reading for a range of purposes
- 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
- recommending books that they have read to their peers, giving reasons for their choices
- identifying and discussing themes and conventions in and across a wide range of writing
- making comparisons within and across books
- learning a wider range of poetry by heart
- 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

understand what they read by:

- checking that the book makes sense to them, discussing their understanding and exploring the meaning of words in context
- asking questions to improve their understanding
- drawing inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence
- predicting what might happen from details stated and implied
- summarising the main ideas drawn from more than 1 paragraph, identifying key details that support the main ideas
- identifying how language, structure and presentation contribute to meaning
- 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
- 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 views courteously
- 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
- provide reasoned justifications for their views.

Commentary: The criteria for reading comprehension is very similar to KS1 and Lower Key Stage 2. The main difference is the increased level of challenge provided via text choices. Fiction books and texts are drawn from less familiar contexts, including books from other cultures and classics written in the past. Sentence structures are likely to be longer with increased use of multi-clause sentences. Tracking nouns and pronouns becomes more challenging. Stories become more sophisticated: plot twists and turns; relationships between characters become more nuanced; there is an increased need to track multiple characters and multiple events as they unfold in a story; holding the 'story so far' in their minds as they progress through a novel. Non-fiction texts will have a wide range of layouts and page structures, are often packed with high level vocabulary and subject specific terms, and include more sophisticated diagrams.

There is greater emphasis on justifying answers and citing evidence from the text. It is useful for pupils to be able to state where in the text the answer was obtained from (if it was from one location). Answers are likely to include multiple points. There is a greater need to use implied information and information drawn from multiple chapters. There is more need for pupils to synthesise information in non-fiction texts across pages and across texts.

What pupils do with the information also extends, e.g. making more choices on how to present their learning from reading a range of non-fiction books. The level of discussion is deeper, including considering conflicting ideas and opinions.

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YEARS 5/6 BIG 10

GOAL	Pupils can demonstrate, articulate and evaluate how their approach to reading changes depending on: a) the goal of reading, e.g. to memorise, to learn, b) the genre , e.g. timetable, story, information text, and c) the nature of the text , e.g. densely packed information, high level vocabulary, numerous diagrams. They understand the differences in how good readers approach a recipe compared to a newspaper, and contrast reading a graphic novel to that of a wordless book (for example). They can plan how to approach a text and this enables them to be successful in a variety of reading tasks and when reading independently.
PREVIEW	Pupils take into account a wide range of information when previewing a book and making book selections, e.g. title, images, publisher, author, number of pages, images to text ratio, sampling pages, contents page, own knowledge, match to goal. Pupils are skilled at making judgements about the audience and purpose of a text / book. Pupils use preview to support their reading of non-fiction books, e.g. using preview before reading a double-page spread to consider the gist of the text, identify what they might gain from reading double page spread, take note of any significant author choices (e.g. colours, fonts and style), notice subheadings to signal content changes, note the significance of any images and illustrations, decide the order to read the page.
MONITOR	Pupils demonstrate monitoring their own understanding as they read and are aware of when meaning has broken down. They use a wide range of strategies to address difficulties, e.g. choosing to re-read part of the text, checking vocabulary, asking questions, pausing to think. They check progress towards a goal and make adjustments if necessary, e.g. changing texts, altering reading approach, pausing to discuss the text, ask questions. They understand, and take account of, elements that can hamper comprehension, such as background knowledge. They can use think alouds to demonstrate mental engagement with texts, e.g. noting the questions that they ask themselves, the observations they are making, the thoughts helping them make sense of the text. They can explain how they are using the Big 10 reading strategies to engage with the text as an active reader, e.g. explaining how they are making sense of the text by drawing on their own experiences (connection), or how visualising the action is helping them to put themselves in the shoes of a character.
VISUALISE	Pupils can create images in their minds as they read using literal information and inferences. They are tuned in to the five senses and experience texts through the eyes of different characters, e.g. what they hear, smell, taste, touch and see. They can give examples of words and phrases as well as author techniques such as similes, onomatopoeia, prepositional phrases that help them to visualise. They pick out details from the text both stated and implied that help them to visualise, and whilst they use their background knowledge to create mental pictures, they ensure any visualisation holds true to the text. They visualise characters, scenes, objects, events, interactions. They draw on description, dialogue, and inference.
CONNECT	Pupils make connections to other books they have read, to themselves, to the world around them. Pupils make connections across chapters in a book enabling them to follow complex stories and track multiple characters. Pupils make connections to themselves, e.g. connecting an event or how a character feels to their own experiences. They can interpret texts by using their knowledge of the world e.g. social conventions to interpret why a characters actions are surprising, recognising the significance of an event such as war. They make connections between fiction and non-fiction books, e.g. drawing on their knowledge of non-fiction history books to make sense of stories set in medieval times. Pupils make connections across non-fiction texts, e.g. synthesising information to learn about a topic. When reading non-fiction, they make connections to other books they have read on the subject and how the knowledge links to what they already know about a topic. They notice patterns across pages in a book, e.g. colour, style, layout, content, etc., and consider text conventions of the genre.

'Big 10' Reading Comprehension

QUESTION	<p>Pupils ask questions to help them understand texts and engage with texts at a deeper level. For example, they ask questions before reading which help shape their reading approach, they ask questions as they are reading to help them ponder the text, they ask questions after reading to help them reflect on what they have read.</p> <p>Pupils can generate their own questions, e.g. inference, connection, visualise questions. They can ask each other questions to deepen their mental engagement with the text and think more deeply about the meaning of a text e.g. considering each other's opinions about a book, discussing a character's motives, sharing and comparing how their experiences connect to the text, evaluating author technique, comparing the mental images they created as they read the text and what they drew on to create those images.</p> <p>Pupils can engage in discussions about books using a wide range of strategies to help them discuss texts, e.g. express opinions, asking for clarification, respectfully disagreeing, cite evidence, give alternatives, build on from another pupils' answers.</p> <p>Examinations: Pupils can successfully tackle a wide range of question types e.g. multiple choice, short answer, fill in the blank, matching, sequencing. They understand that answers are often awarded more than one mark and can illustrate the difference between a one mark, two mark and three mark answer. They understand the need for accuracy in answers. They can justify answers citing evidence in the text.</p>
INFER	<p>Pupils make rich and sophisticated inferences on characters thoughts, feelings, actions, interactions. They can 'give impressions' of settings, events, and objects based on clues in the text. They can infer relationships between characters. They can draw conclusions about a character's personality. They pick up on subtle nuances.</p> <p>They cite evidence to justify their answers.</p> <p>Pupils can make inferences when using non-fiction texts.</p> <p>They can track pronouns and alternative nouns across sentences and paragraphs.</p>
PREDICT	<p>Pupils can make predictions about what a character will do next based on a scene as it unfolds. Pupils can make predictions of how the story will end based on what they have read and text conventions. They can also draw on their wider knowledge of the character, using information drawn from a previous chapter to make predictions, e.g. that a character is setting out to trick another character based on information in chapter 1. They can make predictions about objects, e.g. that a rickety ladder might collapse under the weight of the children as they cross the ravine.</p>
SUMMA-RISE & RETRIEVE	<p>Pupils can draw information from different paragraphs to answer questions. They can summarise a paragraph, pull out the main points from a longer text, extract and record specific information, e.g. filling in a table with information from a non-fiction text. They can choose different ways of expressing the learning they have gained from reading one or more non-fiction texts. They can recall information from a book in their own words and retell information and stories to others. They can give a synopsis of a story as part of making book recommendations.</p>
EVALUATE	<p>Pupils can describe how a text impacts on them personally (e.g. emotional impact, knowledge impact, thinking perspective) and how the author achieves this. Pupils can evaluate texts at different levels - global (e.g. genre, whole text), macro (section of text) and micro (right down to word level) against a wide range of criteria. They analyse techniques the author has used and the impact these have on the reader, e.g. the use of dialogue, the use of foreshadowing for tension. They compare and contrast books of the same genre / books by the same author considering their qualities, what they like and don't like with reasons, consider how the texts achieve their intended goals (etc.). Pupils can show how 'reading as a writer' has influenced and supported them with their own writing. Pupils can critique a book, providing information that would be useful for others when considering purchasing / selecting the book to read. They can express opinions about a text and justify their answers.</p>

Note this is non-statutory guidance.

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BIG 10 READING ICTWAND

SECTION 4

Advice and guidance for assessing each of the Big 10

The Big 10

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BIG 10 READING ICTWAND

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GOAL



READING COMPREHENSION Assessing goal

Why is 'goal' important and if we assess 'goal' what can it tell us?

Pupils who can understand the 'goal' of reading and choose effective strategies that then match the goal are likely to become effective, efficient and independent readers who are capable of reading a wide range of different types of texts for a variety of reasons.

It is difficult to assess pupils understanding of 'goal' through written tests, and therefore it should be assessed through methods such as: question & answer, observations, think alouds, explanations, listening to peer dialogue, and metacognitive conversations.

Understanding the goal (e.g. to memorise, to extract key information, to enjoy) can help pupils devise a strategy (e.g. read slowly, read the text more than once, make notes whilst reading). Pupils who know the goal tend to be better at paying attention to what is relevant and important in the text. They are more likely to be 'tuned in' to key elements of the text which aids understanding. *(This is backed up by research.)*

- Pupils can choose 'how' to read a text, e.g. skim, scan, read line by line.
- Pupils can choose how 'fast' to read, e.g. slow pace for a difficult text, varying speeds based on monitoring own level of comprehension.
- Pupils can choose a strategy, e.g. read the text multiple times, underline key points as they read.
- Pupils can choose a duration for reading (e.g. read all the text, read to the end of the first page, read the first paragraph, read for 30 minutes) and a location - with a clear rationale for their choices.

Pupils need to take into account the author's purpose, e.g. persuasion, information sharing, entertainment. And use this to help them make sense of the text.

For example, when reading a persuasive text, pupils should read carefully to identify the key points, pay attention to any supporting evidence the author uses (e.g. facts, statistics), consider language choices (e.g. emotive language), weigh points up, connect the text to what they already know, consider if the author has persuaded them to change their mind or affirmed what they already



Speed (fast / slow)	Level of concentration	Physical location
Read only once or repeatedly	Methodically (line by line) or selecting elements to read	How much attention should be paid to images, diagrams and pictures?
Do you need to record your thoughts, e.g. graphic organisers, table, notes in margins?	How much attention should be paid to vocabulary?	Which comprehension skills will be important, e.g. visualisation, making connections.

believed. Pupils would need to take into consideration how up-to-date the information is, and if there is any author bias, and if they will seek to compare the author's arguments to any other sources.

By contrast, when reading an information text, pupils will want to use the index and contents page to quickly locate information, utilise headings and subheadings to identify relevant sections, pay attention to information contained in images, diagrams and illustrations, and may take more note of points underlined, highlighted in bold, displayed in a different colour or font size. They may hone in on information which specifically matches a question they have in mind, or perhaps choose to make notes of important points, or create a summary.

Pupils should make deliberate choices as to how to approach different types of text, e.g. How would you read a recipe? How would you read a timetable? How would you read a story? How would you read an advertising leaflet? How would you read a wordless book?

Pupils should make deliberate choices linked to the goal, e.g. How would you read if you needed to create a summary? How would you read if you had to memorise a poem? How would you read to learn about a new subject? How would you read a book focused on learning how to look after a pet? How would you read if trying to evaluate how the author builds tension in a story?

Goal covers consideration for any author bias. What was the author's intent when writing the text? Consideration for how reliable the information is. Consideration for if the information is up-to-date.

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BIG 10 READING ICTWAND

GOAL



What is the purpose and goal for reading?

Why do you need to read the text?

What will you do with the information?

How will this influence how you read?

Does the text selected match the goal?

Do you need any resources to help you reach your goal?

When pupils come to select their own texts, e.g. for research purposes, they need to make lots of decisions based on the goal and their own knowledge. If the pupil was researching snakes in order to make an information leaflet they might ask themselves the following questions before and during the task:

- What do I already know and understand?
- Where should I start in terms of levels of complexity – should I start with an easy book or should I dive into a more complex one?
- Where will I find the books?
- What exactly am I trying to find out – perhaps I should write a list, e.g. where does this type of snake live, what does it eat, how long does it live, is it poisonous, what does it look like, how long or wide is this type of snake?
- Which books will help me to find this information quickly – which might add more detail? How many books shall I look at?
- And when selecting a book – shall I read all of it or use the contents page / index to find specific information.



All of these questioning and thinking skills can be modelled, discussed and explicitly taught.



Assessing and identifying next steps:

- ☐ Pupils can state different goals for reading; KS1
- ☐ Pupils can state some of the variables that can be altered or can show through their deliberate actions and choices that they are aware of variables. LKS2
- ☐ Pupils can combine elements to generate an effective approach to achieving a goal and can explain their rationale. UKS2
- ☐ Pupils can demonstrate, articulate and evaluate how their approach to reading changes depending on: a) the **goal** of reading, e.g. to memorise, to learn, b) the **genre**, e.g. timetable, story, information text, and c) the nature of the **text**, e.g. densely packed information, high level vocabulary, numerous diagrams; e) their level of **comprehension** (e.g. re-reading).
- ☐ Pupils are able to vary their approach to reading across a range of texts and for a wide range of goals successfully.

As pupils progress through KS2 the goals for reading may be sophisticated and multiple. The strategies are likely to include altering a range of variables.

When setting next steps for reading, consider providing advice about which variables pupils can consider altering, e.g. next time consider if reading the text once, twice or multiple times will be effective in helping you achieve the goal; next time consider slowing the rate of reading when tackling a challenging text; next time consider how you can use the contents page, headings and subheadings to locate a extract information quickly from a non-fiction text. Or prompts about purpose, e.g. when you read the poem consider what strategies will aid memorisation; when you read the timetable consider what the quickest way is to locate the information. When giving this advice they should link it in the mind of the pupil to 'GOAL.'

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BIG 10 READING ICTWAND



MONITOR



READING COMPREHENSION Assessing monitor

Pupils need to be aware of three key elements of monitoring:

1. Pupils need to appreciate that reading is much more than decoding. They need to focus on 'understanding'.
2. Pupils need to be aware that they must mentally engage with the text, e.g. think about meaning, ask themselves questions as they read, make connections to own experiences, visualise, make inferences.
3. Pupils must pay attention to their level of understanding and know a range of strategies they can deploy when understanding has broken down.

ASSESSING MONITORING AND IDENTIFYING NEXT STEPS

It is very difficult to see when understanding has broken down. One of the best ways of gathering information on pupil's ability to monitor is to listen to a child read. If they alter their reading speed, pause, hesitate, ask a question, look at the teacher for confirmation - it may indicate that they are monitoring their understanding. It may be possible to see pupils making adjustments, e.g. spontaneously reading part of the text they have not understood a second time.

A teacher's judgement about a pupils' ability to monitor is likely to build up over a period of time, although when teachers suspect that pupils are not monitoring their comprehension, they might assess a child more thoroughly using diagnostic assessment.

Older pupils may be able to discuss their monitoring and how they have taken action to secure understanding, e.g. 'I didn't know quite a few of the words used in the text and this made it hard for me to understand.', 'I didn't really understand paragraph three. I tried to re-read it, and I think it means...', 'I had to keep looking back at the map at the front of the book to work out where the characters were located.', 'I had to refer to the character map we drew in class because I kept forgetting who some of the characters were and their relationship to each other.'



ASSESSING MONITORING AND IDENTIFYING NEXT STEPS

There is no set division between key stages, but the following can support professional judgement about the level of monitoring pupils are engaged with and help teachers to identify sensible next steps forward. Monitoring can be more challenging as texts become more sophisticated. Pupils ability to make decisions independently and articulate their thought processes will increase as they progress through the key stages.

- ☐ Pupils are able to explain what it means to be a 'good reader' and as part of this they recognise that it is more than the mechanical process of reading the words.
- ☐ Pupils are able to give some examples of ways in which they mentally engage with the text, e.g. visualisation, making connections, thinking about meaning.
- ☐ Pupils spot when meaning has broken down.
- ☐ Pupils are able to use a range of strategies when they hit a road block, e.g. slowing down their reading speed, reading the text for a second time, checking vocabulary, asking questions, using images to support text meaning, discussing the text with someone else, switching to an easier text and coming back to the key text when they have developed more background knowledge.
- ☐ Pupils are able to track their progress towards a reading goal, e.g. reading a recipe in order to bake a cake, identifying what rabbits like to eat in a handbook for pet care, reading with a view to performing poetry. They make changes when they realise they are not making good progress towards the goal.
- ☐ Pupils are aware of issues that can hamper or prevent understanding, e.g. background knowledge, vocabulary, tracking pronouns. And what can make a text more challenging, e.g. unfamiliar context, multi-clause sentences, the text is densely packed with subject specific vocabulary, an unfamiliar genre.
- ☐ Pupils can articulate and evaluate their approach to reading a particular book or text, explaining what made it hard or easy to understand and the actions they took to ensure they achieved the goal.



READING COMPREHENSION

Assessing preview

Preview as a skill serves a number of purposes:

1. Studies have shown that pupils are more likely to understand a text when they are mentally prepared for reading, and this includes knowing what to expect from the text. Knowledge of typical genre structures is important for comprehension, e.g. typical construction of a persuasive text compared to that of a newspaper and compared to story structures.
2. Preview helps the pupil to consider the right approach to reading and this skill links to 'goal' for reading. For example, when 'reading to learn' and using a book about coastal erosion, the pupil's preview leads them to notice the densely packed text and intricate diagrams. From this, they conclude they should approach the text by reading slowly, pausing often to consider the meaning of the text, and taking note of key vocabulary.
3. When purchasing books or choosing a book from a library, preview can help pupils to make the right choices in terms of goal and readability.
4. Previewing a book or double page spread can help pupils use the book efficiently, e.g. scan the page to locate the information they need. They assess colour, layout, size (etc) and quickly identify significant elements, e.g. the volcanoes are in reverse order and the colour denotes how deadly the eruptions are.

Deadliest eruptions

Whole cities can be destroyed when a nearby volcano erupts. If there are warning signs, people have time to leave. If it explodes without warning, thousands of lives may be at risk. Here are the five deadliest eruptions in human history.



23,000 deaths
Main cause: mudflow. On 13 November 1985, a fast-moving stream of hot gas, ash, and rock, called a pyroclastic flow, erupted from Nevado del Ruiz. It melted snow on the volcano's peak and turned into a huge mudflow, or lahar, that destroyed two towns.



28,000 deaths
Main cause: pyroclastic flow. In May 1902, a pyroclastic flow from Mount Pelée, travelling at 670 kph (416 mph), destroyed everything in the nearby town of Saint-Pierre.



30,000 deaths
Main cause: pyroclastic flow. About 1,500 years ago, this volcano, which is now below Lake Ilopango, erupted. A pyroclastic flow from the eruption killed everyone in the nearby Ancient Mayan cities. Most of El Salvador was covered in ash.



36,000 deaths
Main causes: landslide and tsunami. In 1883, two-thirds of the island of Krakatau disappeared when its volcano erupted. The violent explosion caused a landslide and a giant wave, or tsunami. The wave spread across the Indian Ocean and destroyed many faraway coastal towns and cities.



90,000 deaths
Main cause: pyroclastic flow and starvation. In 1815, Mount Tambora erupted. A pyroclastic flow killed about 12,000 people near the volcano. Many more died later, of starvation because their crops and animals had been destroyed. The massive cloud of ash released by the volcano dimmed sunlight and lowered temperatures across the world.

ASSESSING PREVIEW AND IDENTIFYING NEXT STEPS:

Pupils' answers will grow in sophistication throughout the key stages, but a useful build-up of skills can be represented as:

Assessing the book / text:

- Examination of the front and back covers, e.g. the pupil is able to look carefully at the front cover (title, subtitles, images, author) and make decisions, e.g. this is a non-fiction book about polar bears, this is likely to be a funny book about dogs, this is a story set on a farm. They consider any blurb on the back or inside flap of the book jacket and use this to predict what they will find inside.
- Using a number of clues, the pupil can state the genre of the book, and indicate the purpose and audience before they start reading.

Further development of this would include:

- Discuss the purpose and audience of the book/text, justifying answers based on the examination of the book or text for other factors, e.g. number of pages, text density, type of images included inside, text to image ratio, readability / accessibility of text, text size, layout.

Making decisions about the book / text:

- Pupils can provide reasons for the selection or rejection of books and texts based on their preview of the text. This might include considering contents page, flicking through the book for a broad overview of the text, considering who has written the book, accessibility, match to goal.

Text feature walk through:

- Pupils can talk through features in a text e.g. pointing out features and stating the significance.
- Pupils can show their method (e.g. explanation / think aloud) for previewing, e.g. taking note of headings, subheadings, style of font, colours used, layout, captions / labels, etc.
- Pupils can explain the typical features and conventions of texts, (e.g. common features of newspapers, common structures for a persuasive essay, common plot structures in stories) and how this will help them to comprehend the text.



VISUALISE



READING COMPREHENSION Assessing visualise

Learning to visualise is associated with higher levels of comprehension, more engagement with reading and increased enjoyment of texts. Good visualisation helps pupils to become immersed in the stories they read, allowing them to 'see' what is unfolding. They are better placed to notice details, which in turn helps them to make inferences and predictions. Visualisation supports pupils in retelling and summarising a text. It even helps with monitoring their own level of comprehension.

In order to visualise, pupils need appropriate background knowledge and understanding of vocabulary. For example, it is difficult to visualise 'canal' if you have no understanding of the word. Pupils breadth and depth of vocabulary makes a difference to visualisation, as does pupils first hand experiences. Reading non-fiction books and looking at associated images can help pupils to later visualise when reading stories, e.g. reading about canals, seeing various pictures of canals / life on a canal before reading a novel where the main character lives on a canal boat.

Sometimes the author allows the reader a great deal of scope in what they visualise, e.g. The garden was full of pretty flowers. This is reasonably vague and allows me to call on my knowledge of gardens and flowers to picture the scene. And sometimes the author wants to create a very specific image in the mind of the reader, e.g. Fragrant roses bushes of every shade of red framed a small square of lush grass. The pupil needs to understand that they can use their imagination and own background knowledge to a point, but that where the author is more precise, so too must their visualisation. (This can be a gap in pupils' understanding.)

Assessing visualisation is perhaps best achieved via answering questions and observing / engaging in discussion.

- When you close your eyes and listen to the story, what do you see?
- What does the character hear?
- Can you list some of the descriptive detail that helped you to visualise?



- What do you think the setting looks like?
- When you read paragraph 3, what images do you see in your mind?
- Tell me about the house and what mental pictures you are making in your mind as you read.
- What is helping you to visualise the scene at the farmyard?
- What words and phrases help you to visualise the scene?
- What techniques does the author use to help visualise the scene?
- Can you give me an example of how the author has used one of the five senses to create a strong mental picture of the scene?
- Why do you think the author chose 'His hair was like a nest of fighting vipers' when describing Mr Smith.

ASSESSING VISUALISATION AND IDENTIFYING NEXT STEPS

- ☐ The pupil can articulate a basic picture that they are creating in their mind as they read.
- ☐ The pupil can describe in detail or very precisely the image that they are creating in their mind as they read.
- ☐ The pupil can go beyond visuals to include other senses, such as what they or a character might hear or smell.
- ☐ The pupil can give examples of words and phrases that help them to visualise from the text.
- ☐ The pupil can give examples of how the author is supporting visualisation, e.g. dialogue tags such as bellowed, vivid verbs such as tiptoed rather than walked. Pupils can give examples of author techniques such as similes, metaphors, the use of onomatopoeia, the use of adjectives and adverbs, precise nouns, prepositional phrases.
- ☐ The pupil can visualise characters, settings, objects and scenes with accuracy using a wide range of clues and specific words / phrases in the text. They gather and track information from across paragraphs and even chapters in books to keep a strong mental picture of the story. They recognise that descriptive elements are often woven throughout a text.
- ☐ They can justify their visualisation using a wide range of evidence in the text.



READING COMPREHENSION

Assessing connect

There are three main categories:

- **Text to self** (using own knowledge / experiences & generating thoughts, opinions and feelings). Text to self connections include own life, places the pupil is familiar with, people the pupil knows, things they like to do, events they have experienced, times when they have felt the same as the character. For example, they might make a link between how a character is feeling and how they themselves are feeling, or they might remember visiting a hot country when considering the habitat of a desert rat.
- **Text to text** (comparing and contrasting the text with others texts). Connections might be made about the plot, the type of book, the style of writing, the big ideas, the characters, the emotions of characters, the events, the setting, etc.
- **Text to world** (linking the text to the wider world, e.g. current events). They might link the text to historical elements, to other subjects they are studying, to newspaper articles or TV footage they have seen, to global issues or general issues and concepts, e.g. poverty, fairness.

Making connections can help pupils explore the content and themes in a book or text more deeply than would otherwise be the case. Discussing connections can lead to more thoughtful, careful reading.

Making connections is also important when reading a novel, for example making connections between an event or information contained in an earlier chapter with something happening in the current chapter. Pupils have to be able to analyse the relationship between different parts of the text. Making connections helps pupils to keep track of the plot and characters in complex books.

Pupils might also make connections to the way a book is structured, e.g. noticing patterns in content selection, patterns with page layouts.

Teachers might provide specific questions to draw out connections, e.g. “*Palwinder, what is different about this version of Cinderella to the one we read yesterday?*” “*Ben, how does our visit to Porchester Castle help you to visualise this scene in the story?*” “*Jenny, how does your thinking about fairness help you to understand how Poppy was feeling after the music auditions?*” “*Should Mary trust Mr Griggs? (connecting a character’s motives to events earlier in a book.)*” “*How is the theme in this book similar to others you have read?*” “*How is the prince in this book similar / different to how*

princes are often portrayed in fairy tales?” **Activities**, such as using a Venn diagram can help pupils to make connections between texts.

Teachers can support pupils to make connections through text choices and sequencing, e.g. reading several fairy-tales to make connections at genre level; reading texts that illustrate conflicting view points - perhaps articles that highlight differing views about an environmental issues such as the use of plastics; reading complimentary texts such as several books on the same topic; or reading a non-fiction book that links to a novel.

Complex connections can be drawn from studying a short extract, e.g.

We walked on the hot, burning sand until sunset. I have never longed for a day to conclude as I did that day . . . I perspired, and my body shuddered from the pain. Finally, we came upon a hut that was on the sand. None of us was able to talk. We walked inside and sat down on logs around a fireplace. There were tears in my eyes, but I was unable to cry because I was too thirsty to make a sound. I looked around to see the faces of my traveling companions. They were crying as well, without a sound.

When pupils are provided with challenging text extracts, they might pick out phrases such as ‘I have never longed for a day to conclude as I did that day’, pick out a character’s physical responses ‘perspired, shuddered with pain’, pick out emotional elements ‘unable to talk, crying without a sound’. They can also make connections to images, and use a range of other



skills in conjunction with making connections.

Teachers need to recognise that skilled readers are often using multiple elements of the Big 10 to derive meaning.

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CONNECT



When assessing pupils in upper Key Stage 2, pupils need to have the opportunity to make connections using complex and challenging texts, and they also need to have opportunities to engage in deep conversations with adults and peers in order to develop meaning through discourse. Can pupils reach sophisticated insights into a text by contemplating it after reading? For example, a group of pupils discussing Charlotte's Web might discuss how Charlotte and Wilbur are friends, what friendship is and state examples that illustrate friendship from the book. As the discussion unfolds it shows how Year 6 pupils are making many different types of connection:

Jenny: "The book shows how important it is to have friends. When Wilbur is friends with Fern he is happy and enjoying life. When he moves to the barn, he is bored and upset with life until he makes a new friend."

Paul builds on from this: "When people don't have anyone to play with they can be really sad and this is why at school we have playground buddies, talking benches and organised group activities you can join."

Karl: "The story shows you can be friends with people who are not like you. Wilbur is a pig and Charlotte is a spider, they are very different but make a strong friendship. At school we celebrate our similarities and our differences."

Teacher: "That's an interesting point Karl. What does Wilbur think about Charlotte when he first meets her?"

Karl: "He's excited. He's been longing for a friend."

Teacher: "Anything else?"

Karl: "He's a bit afraid of her. She eats flies and is bloodthirsty."

Teacher: "Why do you think it says 'What a gamble friendship can be!'"

Karl: "He doesn't know if he can like her because of the differences."

Jenny: "It isn't always easy to make friends, like on page 41 when it says 'Wilbur was suffering the doubts and fears that often go with finding a new friend. When I joined the school, it took me quite a few weeks to feel like I had made friends. And last week we read the story about how nervous Natasha was when she moved countries and started a new school. Natasha was afraid the other children wouldn't understand her. She was afraid she wouldn't fit in."

Paul: "I agree with Jenny. It takes time to build a friendship. You don't always know if its going to work out. You worry that the other person might not like you when they get to know you better or you'll argue about things and fall out."

Teacher: In the book, Charlotte says 'You have been my friend. That in itself is a tremendous thing.' Why do you think the author uses the word tremendous?"

Paul: "To show how special it was. They were more than just friends. They were best friends. True friends. They would do anything for each other."

Jenny: "Not everyone gets to have a really special friendship."

It is likely that pupils will make more connections when they are engaged in free flowing discussion. Sometimes the teacher might need to draw attention to a phrase or section of the text, or ask a question to support cognition. It is difficult to assess a pupils' ability to make connections to a text if they have not had plenty of opportunity to develop 'book talk' over many years of schooling. If pupils are struggling, identify if it is: a) the 'discussion element' - are pupils struggling to articulate their thinking and relate to the answers other pupils provide, b) a lack of background knowledge, experiences or lack of wider reading that is holding back making connections; c) difficulties with the skill of making connections.

ASSESSING CONNECT & IDENTIFYING NEXT STEPS

- ☐ Pupils can make basic connections between the book they are reading and themselves and their own experiences, e.g. thinking of a time when they too felt frightened like the character in the story.

It is more challenging for pupils to make connections between books and between what they are reading and the wider world.

- ☐ Pupils can make basic connections between the book they are reading and others, e.g. comparing two versions of a fairy tale.
- ☐ Pupils can make basic connections between the book they are reading and the wider world, e.g. linking a book a global event.

As pupils progress, and books become more complex, they lend themselves to more sophisticated answers.

- ☐ Making connections that are more sophisticated, e.g. picking up on multiple points of connection, identifying both similarities and differences, identifying subtleties, being able to identify both general and specific details, appreciating an event in a book from multiple perspectives, being able to stand in the shoes of various characters.
- ☐ Pupils are able to track complex plots and make connections between chapters and events. This helps pupils to understand the story as it unfolds and appreciate deeper messages.
- ☐ Pupils are able to identify patterns within a book, e.g. repetitions, reoccurring themes, consistency in page layout.

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READING COMPREHENSION

Assessing questioning

There are several branches to questioning as a comprehension skill:

- The **internal** questions pupils generate **as they read** to help them interpret the text and think as they read. Self questioning is a form of actively interacting with the text and engaging mentally with the author in a way which moves beyond the words. Internal questions whilst reading can help pupils to **monitor their own understanding**.
- Questions that pupils want to **ask to clarify** their understanding with someone else such as a peer or teacher, e.g. 'What does the word x mean?'; 'Why did Bob hit Charlie? I'm not sure I understand why he did this.' Pupils who ask questions recognise the importance of 'reading for understanding.'
- **Unanswered** questions that pupils have at the **end** of a section of text. The unanswered questions can be a motivating factor in wanting to continue reading a story. Keeping the reader guessing is a strategy that many authors use in novels.
- In both fiction and non-fiction, unanswered questions may spark group / pair discussion that enable pupils to engage in thinking that includes elements of the text and goes beyond the scope of the article / book.
- Generating questions to **guide research**, e.g. where do snakes live, what do they eat? This can help pupils to select one or more texts in order to answer the questions, or decide when to stop reading / continue to search for answers.
- Pupils can generate questions to **ask each other** to help them develop a **deeper or broader** meaning of the text.

Question formats:

You might also include in this category, pupils' familiarity and skills in answering questions in activities and those set by the teacher and in tests. How familiar are they with different question formats, e.g. multiple choice, sequencing, matching, short answer, true/false?

Teacher questioning:

Pupils need to mentally engage with the texts and books they are reading. Being responsive to teacher questions is an important element of being able to engage in deeper way than the pupil might have achieved by simply reading on their own.

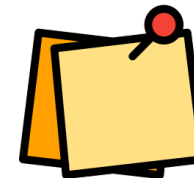
Ability to formulate answers:

Attention should also be paid to the pupils ability to formulate answers. For example, pupils' skills in clear oral communication, their ability to formulate written answers, their ability to produce precise answers, their ability to cite evidence, their ability to gain full marks for a multi-mark question.

Teachers can utilise Blooms taxonomy when setting questions, e.g. state, define, explain, list, argue, justify, select, create.

ASSESSING QUESTIONING PRIOR TO READING

Questions pupils want to ask before reading can be assessed by pupils writing down the questions they are thinking about, perhaps on post-it notes (either written by the pupil or scribed by an adult).



Pre-reading questions might be related to the goal of reading, e.g. What do I already know about this topic? What do I want to find out?

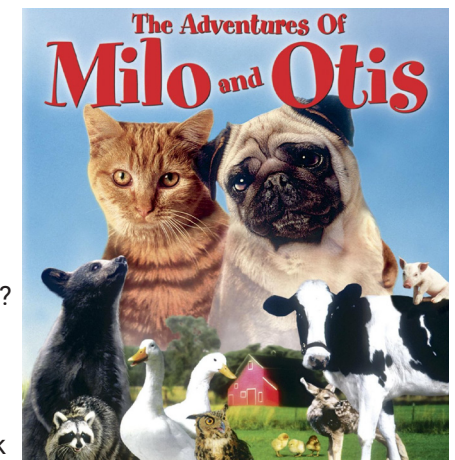
Pre-reading questions might be related to the skill of preview, e.g. What can I tell about the text from the title and from the images?

Pre-reading questions might relate to previous chapters in a story, e.g. I wonder if I'll find out why Ruby ran away.

Pupils might ask themselves general questions before reading a book, e.g. Which one is Milo and which one is Otis? What adventure will they have? Where does the adventure take place? Who are the other animals? What is the setting?

Pre-reading questions might link to other books, e.g. I wonder if this book will be like 'The Adventures of Bob' that we read last week?

A teacher might prompt a pupil: "What questions are you asking yourself before you start reading?"



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QUESTION



ASSESSING QUESTIONING DURING READING

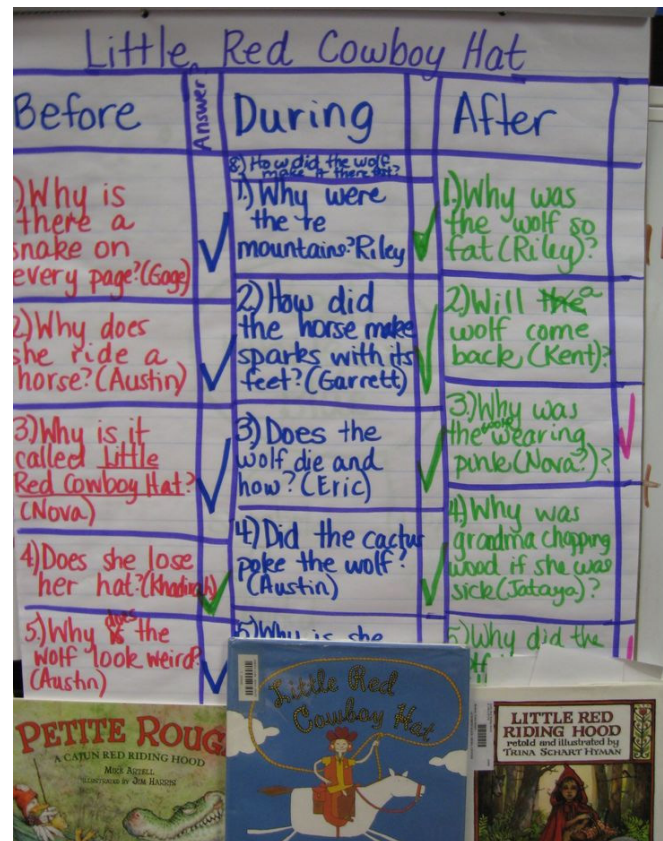
It is more difficult to assess the questions pupils are generating internally as they read. Teachers can ask pupils to perform a 'think aloud' in which the pupil not only reads the words but pauses regularly to explain what they are thinking about as they read.

Another way to assess pupils ability to generate questions whilst reading is to ask them to annotate the text with the questions they were thinking about.

Teachers might record on a chart who generated a particular question during a whole class reading activity.

CAUTION IN ASSESSING:

For younger pupils, it is more difficult to answer questions at the end of a reading activity and therefore periodically pausing to reflect on a short segment of text



will produce more reliable assessment data.

Sometimes, a pupil self-generated question may appear at first to be irrelevant. It may be necessary to explore a pupil's thinking about the question they have generated. Check their thinking before dismissing the question.

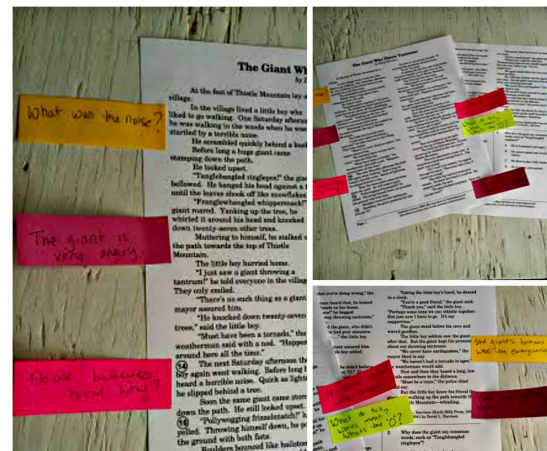
Research shows that the questions that teachers regularly ask in class influence the questions that pupils are able to self generate, e.g. if the teacher asks lots of inference questions, pupils will be better able to ask each other and themselves inference questions, if the teacher asks mostly retrieval questions, pupils will be better at asking each other retrieval questions.

QUESTIONING LINKED TO READING TO LEARN

Self-questioning can be particularly important in 'reading to learn' and when using texts across the curriculum. Pupils in UKS2, for example, may be taught to generate their own questions based on the titles and subheadings before reading the text, and then to consider after reading if they managed to answer the questions. For example, if pupils were given the heading 'The Election of 1976' the pupils might generate questions such as 'Who won the election?', 'How much did they win by?', 'What was important about the election?' Berkley, Marshak, Mastropieri, and Scruggs (2011) demonstrated that pupils who received self-questioning instruction outperformed the control group. How would you test pupils skills if this strategy had been taught in class?

The RAP strategy = Read a paragraph, Ask yourself the main idea and identify two supporting ideas, Paraphrase - tell someone, make an audio recording, write it - in your own words. This was found to be an effective intervention for at risk pupils in Years 4-7 (Hagmann & Reid, 2008). How might you test this skill if RAP had been taught in class?

Explicit teaching (e.g. modelling, guided practice, feedback on question generation) have all been found to support pupils in improving self-questioning. Struggling readers might be supported 1:1. For example, the pupil reads the paragraph and underlines the important point, e.g. Martin Luther King was an important leader in the civil rights movement. Pupils are then asked to generate a question from this, e.g. 'Who was Martin Luther King?' Feedback is provided on question relevance and if the answer



can be found in the text. If struggling, the adult models creating a question. The pupil then says the question aloud and answers the question. Together they review the question stem. How would you test pupils' ability to generate questions for a text?

QUESTIONING LINKED TO STORIES

Questions generated by pupils often start by being very factually orientated, require little searching to find the answer, and the answer is often already known to the pupil, e.g. 'How many sisters did

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QUESTION



Cinderella have?’ This is one of the reasons why pupils need to answer questions generated by teachers, as they are more likely to elicit deeper thinking about the text. However, over time, the teacher ideally wants pupils to generate more sophisticated questions for themselves. **Sentence stems**, e.g., Who, what, when, where, when, how; **models of sentences**, e.g. What evidence is there that Bob was sad?; **categories of question**, e.g. write an inference question, write a retrieval question, write a visualisation question; **structures e.g. Blooms** (such as list, argue, summarise, create, state, compare) ‘List the items the prince found in the treasure chest.’, ‘Write three ways in which the two stories are similar.’ - can all help pupils to develop their ability to create meaningful questions. Some pupils might find a **structure such as a story mountain** quite useful for asking and answering questions, e.g. Who are the main characters? What is the setting? Give five major events. State the story outcomes. Pupils may sometimes benefit from **generic question prompts** to internalise, e.g. ‘Is there anything I don’t understand?’ *Consider if you are expecting pupils to use a scaffold, a reference sheet or ask themselves questions unaided.*

Consider what your interest is in assessing questioning, e.g. Do you want to know if pupils are asking themselves self-monitoring questions? Do you want to know if pupils can generate questions to guide their study before reading a non-fiction text? Do you want to know if pupils can generate a range of questions including higher-order questions? Do you want to assess their ability to ask questions that might drive wide-ranging discussions that go well beyond the scope of the text?

ASSESSING QUESTIONING & IDENTIFYING NEXT STEPS

- ☐ Pupils can generate simple questions for each other to answer, perhaps with some question starter stems, e.g. who, what, when, how, why.
- ☐ Pupils can ask each other simple questions about plot, characters, events etc. These are likely to be factually based with easy to locate answers in the text.
- ☐ Pupils can engage in simple book talk with an adult as they read.
- ☐ Pupils can engage in simple book talk with peers after reading (with scaffolding and teacher prompts).
- ☐ To help them better understand a text, pupils ask adults questions. Pupils notice when they have not achieved full comprehension and consider how someone else can help them.

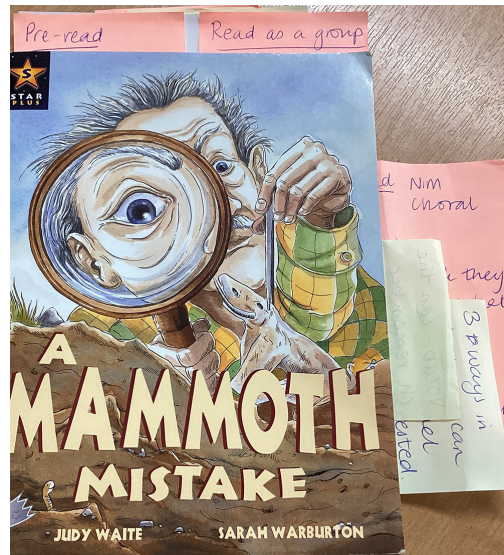
As pupils progress through the key stages, more complex and longer texts should lead to pupils needing a wider range of questioning skills. There is no set progression and teachers need to use professional judgement to analyse the questioning skills of pupils.

- ☐ Pupils are able to ask themselves a range of questions before reading, during reading and after reading.
- ☐ Pupils engage mentally with the text by using questioning, e.g. internal questions that help them monitor their own understanding, questions that help them ponder the meaning of the text, identifying unanswered questions that makes them want to read on.
- ☐ Pupils can generate questions to ask each other that relate to the Big 10, e.g. inference, retrieval, connect, predict, visualise.
- ☐ Pupils can engage in discussion about text/book, e.g. asking and answering each other’s questions, discussing unanswered questions, asking questions that help clarify meaning, asking questions that help to dig deeper into the meaning of the text.
- ☐ Older pupils will be able to take a greater lead in setting up peer discussion through the generation of questions, and they are able to engage in meaningful discussion with a partner and/or in a group, e.g. expressing opinions, asking others for their opinions, clarifying input from others, respectfully disagreeing, citing evidence, justifying answers, providing alternatives. Pupils will be able to take a greater lead in using non-fiction by generating questions to guide research.
- ☐ Pupils are skilled in answering the full range of question types (e.g. multiple choice, sequencing, short answer, true/false, matching). Pupils are able to provide precise and accurate answers (including to 1, 2 and 3 mark questions).
- ☐ Pupils are able to cite evidence or justify answers with specifics from the texts.
- ☐ Pupils ask questions that help them to better perform plays and poetry recitals. Generating a deeper level of comprehension can help with intonation, expressing the true meaning behind the author’s words, and questioning to achieve a better understanding can enable pupils to reflect on the speed and style of reading. ‘Do you think the character would pause here before replying?’ ‘Do you think the way I read that expresses the anger the character felt? Is there another way to say that line?’



CASE STUDY

QUESTION



NICOLA SEEDHOUSE, CHURWELL PRIMARY SCHOOL

The teacher worked with a small group of low attaining Year 3 pupils. The session focused on how questioning could generate intelligence about pupil difficulties in reading comprehension. This information was then used to target learning. The text selected was a reading scheme book at the top end of Year 2. The text was selected to be **challenging**, but not beyond the pupils' reach. It included Y3 vocabulary and was a bridging text between Y2/Y3.

The teacher carried out the assessment and corresponding intervention work over four 15/20 minute sessions. The process was completed for chapter one and then repeated for chapter 2. Splitting the book into two halves made the process manageable.

At the start of the session the teacher supported the pupils to preview the front cover and blurb on the back of the book. The teacher ensured pupils were aware of the setting and the character's names. The pupils were supported to break down and chant the word

'archaeological' (context). This created the conditions for the pupils to confidently begin the assessment.

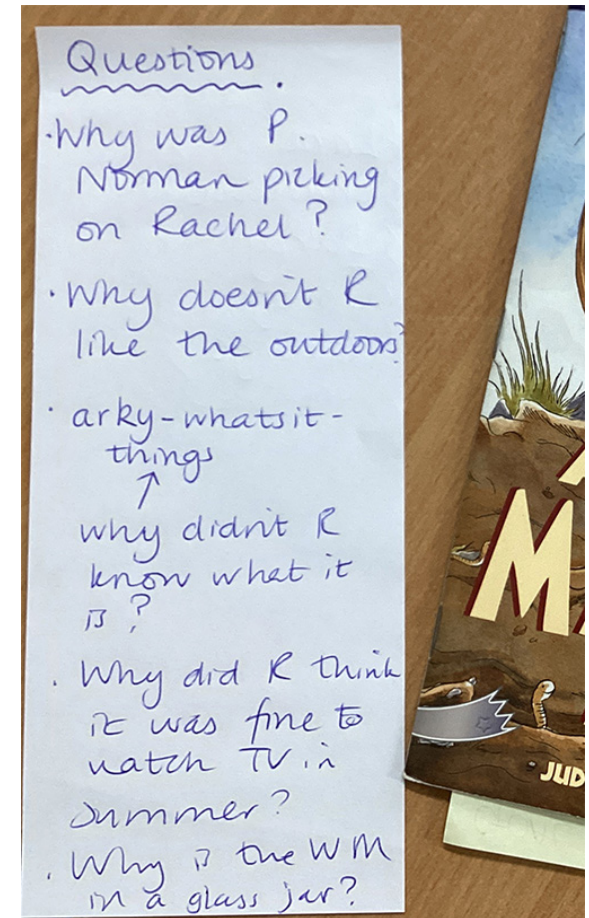
First, pupils were tasked with reading the text independently. Struggling pupils can become over reliant on the adult reading the text, including using clues in voice intonation and pauses for comprehension. For this assessment, it was important that it was based on their independent comprehension and reading skill base. It also provided an opportunity to assess stamina and speed. The teacher was able to consider any links between the speed of reading and comprehension. For example, one pupil who read quickly struggled with comprehending the text.

Next, the teacher asked pupils what questions they had. The teacher jotted these down (including who had asked the question). **These questions were not answered at this point.** This is an important distinction. By not answering the questions, the teacher was able to focus their attention on the types of questions being asked, what the question revealed about a child's understanding and thinking, and patterns across the group. The teacher noted that one pupil was unable to ask a question which in itself was revealing.

Pupils generated a mix of superficial questions, e.g. 'Who is Rebecca?', and deeper questions, e.g. 'Why is the Professor being mean?' - which involved pupils picking up on 'show not tell' from the text. By writing down the questions, the teacher could think about what they revealed about learning, e.g. the questions asked helped to identify that some pupils were struggling with tracking pronouns.

Next, the group re-read the text. This started with using NIM (Neurological Impress Method). This involved the teacher reading at a normal pace and the pupils reading aloud, trying to follow and match the speed. The NIM method helped pupils to become comfortable with reading the text, and at an appropriate point the teacher switched to pupil lead choral reading and then individual reading aloud. This provided additional data to the teacher on fluency levels, the link between the fluency and comprehension, and provided extra reading practice in the session itself.

The teacher fed into the session appropriate pupil generated questions at the right point, e.g. "George, you wanted to



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CASE STUDY

know...." and "Sarah, you asked....". The pupils were very focused and interest levels were high because they were tackling their own questions. It also eradicated the situation of the teacher asking a question and the group waiting for one person to answer. As the group joined in discussion and worked to answer the questions, the teacher was able to probe thinking and interject with teaching points. The teacher reported many 'ah-ha' moments as pupils moved from confusion to understanding.

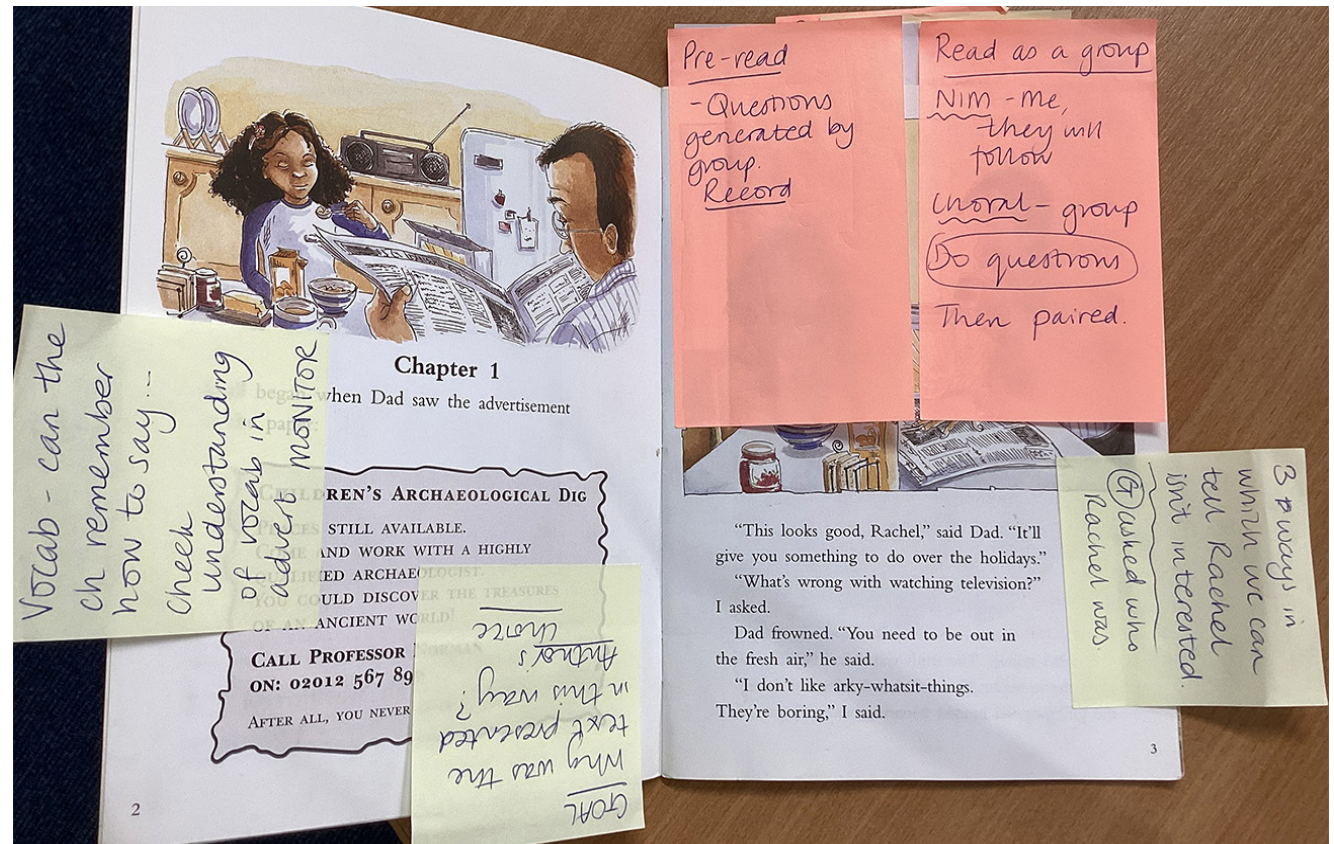
In addition to tackling pupil lead issues in the session itself, the teacher had the list of **questions to refer to when planning the next session.**

This session was carried out by a teacher whilst the rest of the class was engaged in other work. Teaching assistants can be trained to deliver high-quality interventions. However, the teacher tends to bring wide ranging knowledge that allows them to respond flexibly to whatever issues reveal themselves in the session, and for this group of pupils who needed to make accelerated progress, this level of personalised and responsive learning was paramount. Consider the TA/HLTA leading the whole class in a task whilst the teacher engages in quality assessment and intervention work.

Questions to consider:

1. What opportunities do you have to work with a small group on assessment and intervention?
2. What are the benefits of the process being carried out by a teacher rather than a TA?
3. How could you use this approach when planning an intervention for pupils in your class?

The session was rich in data, e.g. reading speeds and stamina, fluency, vocabulary, ability to track pronouns, levels of understanding - much of which was revealed by the questions pupils asked themselves. Over time, it is likely that this type of assessment and intervention would both increase the quality of pupil questioning and improve pupils' ability to resolve issues of understanding. What intelligence are you collecting in whole class sessions about the questions pupils would like to ask?





INFERENCE



READING COMPREHENSION Assessing inference

First, it is important to consider as a teacher what we mean by inference. There is some information which is literal, clearly stated and cannot be argued with in a text, e.g. He was angry. There is no inference needed. However, sometimes authors don't spell everything out and readers have to use their own knowledge and experience alongside the text to make sense of it, e.g. we can infer from 'his eyes flashed and he banged his fist furiously on the table' that the character might be angry. It doesn't state this directly, but using clues in the text we can infer his feelings. There might be further clues to support our inference in other sentences or sections of the text.

There are several types of inference, and the one that we tend to focus on most is elaborate inference. Inference questions tend to fall into the following categories:

- Explain how a character **feels** from their actions, body language, speech or facial expressions. For example, 'How can you tell that Hardip is feeling happy?' This links to the author's use of the 'show not tell' technique.
- Give **reasons / motivations** as to **why a character may act in a certain way**. The pupils have to be able to explain the character's actions, behaviours and their motivations (how, when, where, why), e.g. 'Why did the man chase after Peter?'
- Give **impressions** of the **personality** of a particular character, e.g. the person is greedy, the person is self-less - with evidence to back-up the impression. *Impressions can be based on actions, dialogue, movement, description.*
- Give impressions of the **relationship** between two characters, e.g. the characters do not like each other - with evidence to back-up the impression.
- Give impressions of a **setting**, e.g. the house is old and run-down - with evidence to back-up the impression. What suggests the inside of the farmhouse was not well looked after? (Impressions can be of an object, place, atmosphere).
- Give impressions of an **object**, e.g. knowing that a thick layer of dust on top of a box suggests that it has not been moved or touched in quite a while.
- Inferences can also refer to an **event**, thinking about what might have led to something happening (that is not stated literally in the text) or to the type of event, e.g. if the character chooses to wear a ball-gown to a party, it would lead to inferences perhaps about what type of party the character was to attend.
- **Predict** what might happen next or what a character might do based on clues in the text. Example: *Every time John leaves the room, Harry snoops around.*

Knowing that Harry is facing financial difficulties might lead to predictive inferences that he is looking for something to steal.

- **Character's opinions and thoughts** that are not explicitly stated. Example: Jenny gazes at Paula's ring and wondered if it was a fake. Based on other information in the text might lead a pupil to infer that Jenny doesn't think Paula could afford such a ring.
- Explaining a **character's reactions** to an event, object, place, person.

Sometimes inference questions are about the general gist of the text as a whole or for a particular section, e.g. What evidence is there in the leaflet that readers should feel hopeful for the future of bumblebees?

TYPICAL QUESTION STEMS

- How can you tell... (e.g. How can you tell Priya was nervous?)
- Why did... Why was he/she.... Why were they... (often related to actions, feelings) (e.g. Why did Robert run?)
- What impression do you get... (e.g. What impression do you get of Em Sharp at this point in the extract?) What words give you that impression?
- Why did...do this? (Why did Priya find it surprising to hear two vehicles pass by? Why did Sammy hide the box?)
- Why might he/she have expected...? (Why might Jenny have expected Mr and Mrs Smith to invite her to the party?)
- How do you know... (e.g. How do you know that no-one has touched the box for a long time?)
- What do you learn... (e.g. What do you learn about the boy's personality?)
- What evidence is there in the text to support your view? According to the text...
- Can you explain why...?
- At the end of... chapter 1 / paragraph X / end of story... the main character is feeling... Does this surprise you?
- What does this tell you about what ... was thinking?
- Explain what the descriptions suggests about...(What suggests that the farmhouse was not well looked after?)

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INFERENCE



READING COMPREHENSION Assessing inference

Pupils are likely to find it very difficult to make inferences if they lack background knowledge. Teachers should be careful not to make a judgement of poor inference when it is actually lack of background knowledge causing limited comprehension!

For example, pupils may read a statement such as *'Mum wrapped me up as if I was heading out into the Antarctic!'*

To really comprehend this extract, pupils would need to have the following background knowledge:

- Basic background knowledge of the Antarctic, e.g. extremely cold temperatures, snowy and icy, risk of death from freezing.
- Knowledge of the type of clothing you might be 'wrapped in' for extremely cold temperatures, e.g. lots of layers, hat, gloves, thick socks, boots, a very warm coat - maybe even goggles.
- Possibly it would be an advantage to have experience of a family relationship in which the person loves you and an understanding that the feeling of love may cause them to be overprotective or show concern for your well-being. If the pupil has experienced a parent fussing over them in regard to what they should wear, the sentence will be easier to visualise and comprehend. (Also noting the use of exaggeration which can link to inference of relationship.)

Pupils need to make inferences based on a wide range of information in the text, e.g. inferences from dialogue, inferences from body language, inferences from descriptions, inferences from characters thoughts.

In EYFS and KS1, inferences are likely to be based on 'show not tell', e.g. understanding how a character feels from actions, facial expressions, and body language. Some pupils may also be able to make inferences from dialogue. Inferences are also likely to include simple reasons and motives for the characters actions. Pupils in KS1 are expected to be able to make 'cohesive inferences' as in understand how an action earlier in a story relates to an action later in the story, and therefore they need to be able to make links across the text.

In KS2, the inferences become more sophisticated and wide ranging, e.g. making inferences about objects, events, relationships, personality of characters, and extends to 'impressions'. In all key stages pupils should be pushed for 'evidence' and

explanation for their answers. It is important in written tests to push for complete accuracy. For example, 'How do you know Sarah was afraid?' A pupil who responds 'Her heart beat' rather than 'Her heart beat fast' will not be credited for the answer. In written tests, pupils usually have to link specifically to the text, e.g. what are Sarah's impression of...In this type of question, pupils must directly refer to the character and not give a general answer. Reading examination questions carefully is critically important. Teachers should review marked SATs scripts and mark schemes to consider what is and what is not credited in tests.

It is important to assess pupils' inference skills using poetry, fiction, and non-fiction texts.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF INFERENCE

- **ELABORATE INFERENCE** - A type of inference which requires background knowledge.
- **LEXICAL INFERENCE** - Keeping track of elements in a sentence and across sentences, e.g. Jenny asked Peter if there was any more orange juice. Peter handed Jenny the flask. (Inference would include understanding what was in the flask - orange juice). Mary heard the ice-cream van coming. She remembered her pocket money. She rushed into the house to get it. (This requires a combination of lexical and elaborate inference: What is 'it' in the last sentence? Why does she want to get the money? Why does she rush?)
- **COHESIVE INFERENCE** - Linking elements together (in a story), e.g. understanding the influence of earlier events in a story.
- **PRONOMINAL INFERENCE** - Being able to track pronouns across a text - both fiction and non-fiction. For example -Molly was tired. She went to bed. (Knowing that 'she' refers to Molly.) Pronominal inference is more challenging as text difficulty increases, often requiring pupils to track different pronouns and noun alternatives across several lines of text or across paragraphs, and in more complex sentence structures.
- **GLOBAL INFERENCE** - Being able to identify themes and big ideas and understand the general gist.
- **PREDICTIVE INFERENCE** - Using clues in the text to consider what might happen next.

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INFERENCE

ASSESSING INFERENCE & NEXT STEPS IN PUPIL PROGRESS

Inferences in EYFS will mainly be in relation to texts that are read by the teacher, in Key Stage 1 inference will be a mixture of listening comprehension and making inferences on texts that pupils have read for themselves. In EYFS and KS1, the nature of pupil answers is likely to be simpler and shorter.

In **Key Stage 1**, pupils need to be able to provide written as well as verbal answers.

- ☐ Pupils can state how a character is feeling based on their actions (show not tell), e.g. Sam is sad (because in the text it says he is crying).
- ☐ Pupils can explain how they know a character's emotional state, e.g. How do you know that Sam is sad? Answer: Because he is crying.
- ☐ Pupils can give reasons for why a character acts in a particular way (motives), e.g. He is running because he is scared the giant is going to catch him.
- ☐ Pupils can relate actions, feelings and motives. Example: Anna is upset. How did her mum try to make Anna feel better? Answer: She gave Anna a hug.
- ☐ Pupils can make inferences on characters feelings and motives based on dialogue using a mixture of clues from what is said and how it is said, and considering how it relates to the story and characters.
- ☐ Pupils can give reasons for what contributes to how a character feels e.g. Why might Anna's cat like John? Answer: He keeps feeding her treats.
- ☐ Pupils can track pronouns across two sentences, e.g. Brian put on a thick red jumper. It was his favourite. (It = the jumper, his = Brian).
- ☐ Pupils can track elements across the text, e.g. "I want to go back now," said Jane. Where does Jane want to go back to? Requiring pupils to make inferences and recall an earlier section of a story.

Younger pupils find it more difficult to make inferences at the end of a story. As pupils move through Key Stage 1, they should start to be able to not only answer inference questions as the story unfolds, but also when questions are asked at the end. The Key Stage 1 SATs papers has one paper where the questions are interspersed with the text and one paper where the questions are separate.

In Key Stage 2, the answers pupils can give verbally based on novels are likely to be far more sophisticated than those they can state in writing. Pupils should be able to both engage in inference conversations and answer inference questions on a text. Discussions should show depth and assess pupils ability to engage with and make sense of complex texts. Pupils need to be accurate when answering written questions, particularly for examinations.

Lower Key Stage 2

All of the previous statements on more complex and challenging texts. Pupils will be able to give multiple reasons and give evidence from the text to support their answers.

In addition to previous statements:

- ☐ Pupils are able to give impressions of settings, e.g. that a garden which has long, overgrown grass and a mass of thick weeds might give the impression that no-one has been in the garden / no-one has been tending to the garden for a long time.
- ☐ Pupils are able to draw inferences about objects, e.g. making a predictive inference that the 'box which rattled, omitted a high-pitched keening sound and glowed' is not a standard box and might have magical properties; making an inference that a box covered in dust has not been touched in many months or years.
- ☐ Pupils are able to give impressions of a character, e.g. the thin, scraggy, unwashed cat whose ear is missing a chunk is perhaps a stray cat with no home and no-one to take care of it. The collar and bell around the cat's neck which hangs loosely, suggests that it hasn't always been a thin cat and has at some point had a owner.

Upper Key Stage 2

All of the previous statements on more challenging texts with increasingly sophisticated, well reasoned and justified answers.

In addition to the previous statements:

- ☐ Pupils can make inferences about events, e.g. A fight occurs in a story. The pupils might infer that: The fight would not have happened if Jenny had gone straight home; The fight was the reason Jenny still doesn't like Pippa; When Jenny sees Pippa start to follow her into the alley she is scared Pippa will attack her.
- ☐ Pupils can make inferences about a character's personality, e.g. The boy is unfriendly - reasons being that he does not answer John's questions, the boy is scowling, the boy turns and walks away.
- ☐ Pupils can combine a range of inferences and literal information gathered across multiple paragraphs / sections of a book and bring these together to form opinions.

There is no set progression for inference, but the above is designed to help identify next steps, and may be useful in designing interventions or lessons which help pupils to develop inference skills.

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INFERENCES ON NON-FICTION TEXTS

As well as making inferences on stories, pupils also need to be able to make inferences when reading poetry or reading non-fiction texts.

For example: Pupils might be asked to make inferences based on images and photographs in a newspaper or information text.



For example, pupils might infer that there has been a flood, that people are being rescued, that the car has been abandoned. They might infer that the people dressed in red jackets are from the emergency services and that everyone will be anxious and worried about the situation. They can infer from the signs and the car that this is probably a flooded road. Pupils can be asked to provide reasons and evidence for their answers.

Pupils might be asked to make inferences based on what is stated by a person. "Luckily for us, there's no more water coming into the system, which is great, the big tap in the sky is turned off and we will be able to soon get back to normal," said Dave Baker, the town's mayor.

Pupils can infer that 'no more water' and the 'big tap in the sky' refers to no more rainfall and use their background knowledge to know that water is likely to start receding. 'Luckily' might infer that the mayor and the residents will feel relieved that flood waters will not get any higher.

"The Thomson River will peak at a moderate level at 3.7m, rather than the initial expected major flood level of 4m, so that's great news for the local community in Sale."

Pupils could infer that the river may not now burst its banks and that as a result there will be less damage to homes and business, and less disruption to daily life, e.g. being able to drive and walk around the area, shops and businesses not having to close, and that these are some of the reasons why it is good news for the local community.

The local townspeople have been stacking sandbags outside the front doors of homes and properties all day.

Pupils can infer that the actions are taken to try and protect their homes from flooding and avoid water damage to the properties. They are preparing for the worst.

The council have set up an emergency shelter in the school hall.

Pupils can infer that the shelter will be for people whose homes have been flooded and can not stay there, and that the school hall must be on high ground / not in danger of flooding, and that the hall is large enough to accommodate those displaced.

Consider the inferences needed on this opening from a non-fiction text about floods,

When flood waters recede, affected areas are often blanketed in silt and mud. This sediment can be full of nutrients, benefiting farmers and agricultural businesses in the area. Famously fertile flood plains like the Mississippi River valley in the American Midwest, the Nile River valley in Egypt, and the Fertile Crescent in the Middle East have supported agriculture for thousands of years. Yearly flooding has left millions of tons of nutrient-rich soil behind.

Pupils can infer that whilst for many people, having land where they live covered in silt and mud would be damaging, disruptive and upsetting, there are other people for whom flooding may have advantages (better crops, more crops, faster growing crops).

Floods can cause even more damage when their waters recede. The water and landscape can be contaminated with hazardous materials, such as sharp debris, pesticides, fuel, and untreated sewage. Potentially dangerous mould can quickly overwhelm water-soaked structures.

Using the above paragraph, pupils might infer that the land can not be used either for a period of time or that it can only be used when it has been cleared of the hazardous materials. This may mean people have to leave their homes or that it may be disruptive to livelihoods, e.g. unable to farm the land.

Inferences in non-fiction can be similar to fiction, e.g. how people feel, why they may act in a certain way, inferences about events or objects or places. In non-fiction texts vocabulary and subject knowledge plays an important part in making inferences, e.g. what it means for lands to be 'fertile'.

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PREDICT



READING COMPREHENSION

Assessing prediction

- Prediction can include examining the front cover and making a prediction as to what the story will be about. For example, looking at a picture of farm animals on the front cover might lead a pupil to make a prediction that the main character will be a farmer and the setting will be a farm. This links to skills of preview.
- Predictions can be made before reading a non-fiction text, e.g. which food might be included in a book about healthy eating. They then read the book to find out if their predictions were correct. This can help to activate prior knowledge and can assist pupils in considering after reading what surprised them and how their thinking might have changed as a result of what they have read.
- Pupils might predict the vocabulary that they expect to encounter or the content that might be included. This is a good way of considering what is already known about a topic, setting or era.
- Pupils can be asked to predict how a character will respond to a growing situation or problem.
- Pupils might predict what will happen next in the story as they get to the end of a chapter.
- Pupils might hypothesise what characters might say or think in response to a situation.
- Pupils can also use prediction throughout the reading session, e.g. by 'staying present in the moment' and predicting what will happen as the story unfolds.

Prediction is a form of inference. It requires pupils to use a wide range of clues in the text and combine this with their own, wider knowledge to make predictions. For example, they might need to draw on their knowledge of genre and story structure, they might need to draw on knowledge of typical social norms, they might need to draw on their own experiences in order to make predictions. For example, a pupil might predict that the fairy story has a happy ending based on their knowledge of fairy stories. Pupils may find it easier to make predictions about how events might unfold if they have background knowledge, e.g. a pupil might predict that the children will be unable to create a fire because the wood has been left out in the rain making it difficult to burn.

If pupils make predictions that seem to bear little resemblance to the text, then it suggests a lack of comprehension. However, it is important to tackle the cause and not the symptoms. It may be working memory that is holding back their ability to make

predictive inferences, their knowledge of the genre or their wider knowledge base.

Some pupils, particularly those who have difficulties with relationships and socialising, may find it difficult to make predictions about a character's likely next actions.

It is easier to predict *actions* based on a character trait (e.g. shy, mean, nice) and mental state of a character (e.g. sad, angry) than it is to make predictions based on prior actions of a character. For example, when shown videos of a girl who is sharing her lunch, young children found it difficult to predict how the girl would behave in a future situation (e.g. would the girl help or not help a friend to rake leaves).

Making predictions whilst reading can help pupils to mentally engage with the text and be an active reader. For example:

Brad had no money, but he desperately wanted to give his wife a special gift. In the department store he saw a beautiful red silk scarf on a stand of outdoor clothing items. Seeing that there was no sales assistant around, Brad made his way quietly to the display and opened his bag.

A reader might predict that Brad is going to steal the red silk scarf.

Researchers claim that generating predictive inferences during reading eases processing of the subsequent text. It helps pupils to form situational models (the ideal representation) as they read and this encourages active engagement with the text.

When pupils learn to predict, they may at first need sentence stems to help scaffold their thinking, e.g. I wonder if..., Based on...I think...I think he/she/they will... Modal verbs can help pupils express their predictions.

ASSESSING PREDICTION

For younger pupils, the teacher may read a short paragraph and pupils might be asked to point or circle the picture that best represents what they think will happen next. For example:

Sarah's dog Max had been playing near the river and was covered in mud. She knew her mum would not be happy if Max trailed dirt into the house.

The pupils are shown three images of what might happen next, e.g. a) the dog eating, b) Sarah playing, c) Sarah washing the dog.

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PREDICT



In KS1 pupils are expected to make predictive inferences on what has happened so far. In KS2 pupils are expected to make predictive inferences on what is stated and implied.

Example KS2 questions:

Based on what you have read, what does the last paragraph suggest might happen to the explorers next? Use evidence from this paragraph to support your prediction.

What do you think is likely to happen when...?

Why do you suppose...?

Based on what you know about the character / event, how do you think the story will develop next?

Do you think the character will change his / her behaviour in the future? Give evidence for your ideas.

So, you think Paul will find the treasure. Why?

Prediction becomes more difficult depending on the text complexity, e.g. it is harder to make predictions whilst reading a novel, where information has to be tracked across several chapters, than making predictions on a short story; making predictions on simple, familiar events (e.g. predicting that at Dad's birthday party there will be presents and cake) are easier to make than on unfamiliar or more nuanced events; predictions will be easier to make based on a character's mood than on an interpretation of their past actions and character traits.

- ☐ Pupils can make predictions about the content of a book based on the front and back cover, size and shape of book, general appearance.
- ☐ Pupils can make predictions about what might happen next in a story based on what has been read so far.
- ☐ Pupils can make predictions about what a character will do next based on a scene as it unfolds.
- ☐ Pupils can make predictions of how the story will end based on what they have read and text/ genre conventions.
- ☐ Pupils can draw on their wider knowledge of the character (e.g. traits, motivates, actions, moods, prior behaviours) to predict their actions. They can refer back to events in previous chapters to support their predictions.
- ☐ Pupils can make predictions about objects, e.g. that a rickety ladder might collapse under the weight of the children as they cross the ravine.

Predictions	Text evidence	Revisions

In KS2 Encourage pupils to give reasons and evidence for their answers.

It is important that pupils understand that their prediction may be incorrect. The critical element is being **engaged** with the text. When pupils have read on, and now know what happened, they can discuss any surprises and why they might have been surprised.

Example dialogue between a pupil and teacher:

Teacher: "Look back at your prediction. What did you think would happen?"

Pupil A: "I really thought that Greg would decide to go on the trip to Africa with Mary."

Teacher: "Why?"

Pupil A: "Mary is his best friend. He loves to spend time with her and he knows that she really wants him to come on the trip. Also, the trip to Africa sounds amazing."

Teacher: "What might have held him back? What do you think influenced his decision?"

Pupil A: "Well, four months is a long time to be away. He's worried about who will look after his mum while he's away, and he's worried about the expense of the trip."

Teacher: "Do you think Mary will go without him? Do you think she might change her mind and stay in the UK?"

Pupil A: "Hmmm, no I don't think Mary will change her mind. It's her dream. Greg might his mind though.."

Teacher: "What might cause him to change his mind?"

Pupil A: "Perhaps if he can earn more money. Perhaps if there is someone to take care of his mum. I hope that there is some way for them to resolve it. I think he'll regret not going."

Teacher: "You said that you were surprised he decided not to go based on their friendship and that the trip sounds 'amazing'. Is there anything about his character that would suggest he would say yes or no to an adventure?"

Pupil A: "Hmm. He's not very confident about trying new things. He has a lot of routines and likes to do the same things each weekend. Perhaps this is the real underlying reason for his decisions and the other things are actually just excuses."

The above illustrates how prediction is 'predictive inference' and how discussion about predictions can stimulate deeper thinking about a text.

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COMPREHENSION ASSESSMENT

Summarise & retrieve

Retrieval = taking information directly from the text. An important skill is to be able to locate and extract key information from fiction and non-fiction texts. This includes, being able to answer questions where the information required for the **answer is spread across more than one paragraph**.

It also includes a degree of **interpretation**. For example: 'What games do dogs like to play in the park?' and in the text: 'These loveable canine creatures like nothing better than to chase a ball, catch a frisbee and roll around on the grass on a Sunday afternoon in the park.' The words in the question are not always the same as those used in the text (e.g. no reference to 'dogs' or 'play' in the text). Knowing that a synonym might be used can support pupils in tackling retrieval questions.

1 When Bella was learning to fly, she...

Tick **one**.

was lazy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	did not try hard.	<input type="checkbox"/>
did not give up.	<input type="checkbox"/>	found it easy.	<input type="checkbox"/>

1 mark

She tried and tried... and at last she was flying perfectly.

14 What were Martine's grandmother's rules about riding the giraffe? Key Stage 2

Tick **two**.

Ride only in daylight.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I know this because in the text it says she 'banned night rides'.
Don't show off.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Stay in the game reserve.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Keep to a slow speed.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I know this because it says 'no faster than a trot' and that she would prefer it if she 'stuck to a walk'.
No jumping.	<input type="checkbox"/>	

The second example is a Key Stage 2 SATs paper question. The annotation next to the answers demonstrates the interpretation required. It illustrates the importance of not just being able to locate the right information, but also to understand what is being read.

Typical question stems:

Sometimes a retrieval question may require the reader to extract reasons, provide evidence, state an action, give examples, provide details. Retrieval questions can also come in a variety of formats. Many will be short answer open questions, but pupils should also be able to extract information in order to comfortably tackle true/false, multiple choice, tick the box, fill in the blank, match the answers, complete the table.

- Name two things... State... List...
- Give two/three reasons... Give one piece of advice... Give two benefits... Give three advantages... Give two drawbacks...
- Who / What / Where / When / Why
- Using information from the text indicate whether the following statements are true or false...
- Look at the paragraph/text box. Complete the table below...
- What else... According to...what else...
- In what year... How long... When will...
- What conclusions can you draw from...

From an early age, children start to appreciate that a 'who' question is likely to require an answer that names / identifies a person or group, whereas a 'where' question requires a location. 'Why' questions usually require reasons and 'how' questions usually require pupils to think about ways and means. Thinking carefully about the type of information being searched for can help pupils to locate the right answer. Are there any pupils in your class who are struggling with retrieval assessments because they are not thinking about the type of information required?

Pupils who struggle to extract information and details from a text may first start with images. They can physically put their finger on items in the image and state the details, e.g. The girl is putting on a pair of red boots. The boy is dressed in a hat and scarf. You might provide the start of the sentence, e.g. The girl is putting on _____. Or you might ask a question, e.g. What is the boy wearing on his head? This type of assessment can also be useful for making the distinction between the factual details and the inferences (e.g. What do you think is happening in the picture? I think they are getting wrapped up in warm clothing to go outside to play and that it is a cold day.) Some pupils struggle to know, when inferences are required and

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SUMMARISE & RETRIEVE



when retrieval is required. This is an important distinction. One to one questioning can help to identify pupils who are struggling to appreciate the difference between retrieval and inference. Lots of practice in answering retrieval questions, particularly when using non-fiction, is usually required to build good comprehension skills. *Homework focusing on summarising and retrieval questions can build confidence and comprehension skills - lots of practice!*

Answering retrieval questions may require pupils to extract information from a paragraph, a table, a graph, a diagram or an image. It may even require a pupil to **combine** information from more than one element, e.g. the diagram and the text. This can be a particularly useful skill in 'reading to learn' across the curriculum.

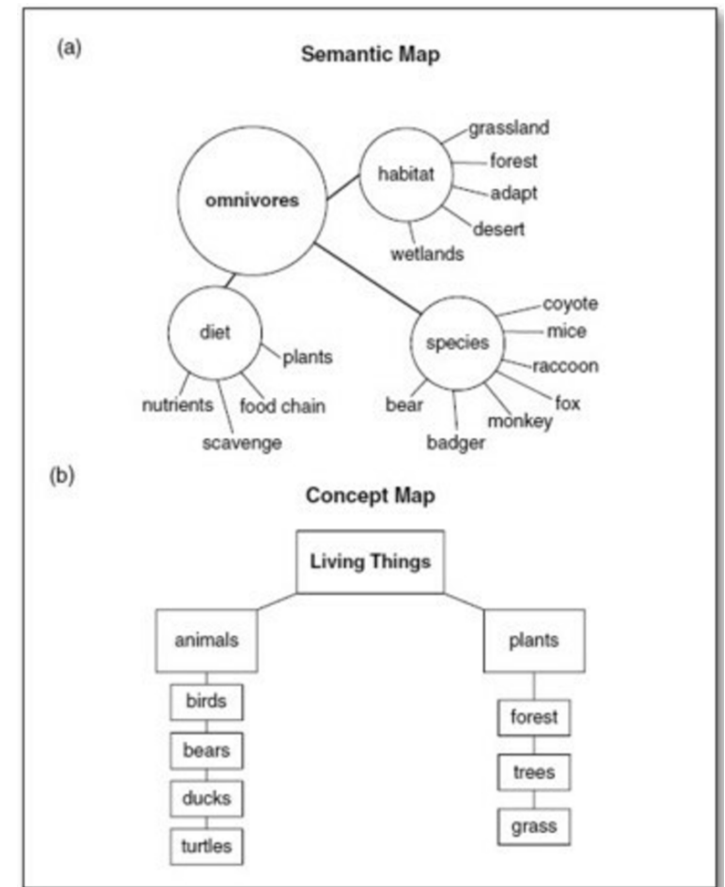
Some children, with high rates of fluency, may find they are trying to answer questions from memory, and whilst this is helpful for learning across the curriculum, it can cause pupils difficulties in ensuring they answer the question precisely, and where necessary, provide evidence from the text. If pupils generally rely on memory, their skills of physically locating the information may not be well developed, e.g. skimming, scanning, returning to a specific section of a non-fiction text, using layout and text organisational features, using an index or a content page. These pupils may perform inconsistently or struggle to gain full marks due to the quality and accuracy of their answers. The same can apply when they are relying on remembering the teacher's read through.

One difficulty for readers in successfully retrieving information and summarising a text in their own words is the size and depth of their vocabulary. Mental networks of vocabulary facilitate retrieval (Beckage et al., 2011; Griffiths, Steyvers, & Firl, 2007; Steyvers & Tenenbaum, 2005). If assessments reveal weaknesses in retrieval questions, it may need to be tackled from more than one angle, e.g. increase the quantity of text the pupil reads, build specific vocabulary knowledge, teach strategies related to using key words, as well as more obvious actions related to improving retrieval and summarise skills.

Try to identify the cause of any retrieval difficulties, e.g.

- Is it that the pupil can't locate the information?
- Is it that the pupil extracts incorrect information?
- Is it that the answer lacks precision, e.g. using own memory rather than details from the text?
- Is it that the pupil only provides part of the answer, e.g. one reason rather than two reasons?
- Does the difficulty stem from understanding the question or interpreting the text?
- Is the pupil having difficulty holding in memory a complex question, or a long answer?
- Is the issue related to vocabulary difficulties?

Pupils who can draw on their background knowledge, are likely to be more successful at retrieval questions even though the information is contained in the text. One factor which influences success in retrieval is the ability for pupils to think both about word semantics and activate conceptual knowledge. When working on non-fiction texts, creating diagrams from the text content can help pupils to process the information. Activities, such as the one shown (right) can be both a teaching aid and an assessment approach. De-constructing information texts in this way can help pupils to combine information from several texts with their own knowledge. What tools do pupils have at their disposal when retrieving information from texts or creating summaries?



Semantic map shows relationships branching out from broad to more detail. Concept map is often hierarchical lists on examples within the category, like a tree diagram.

Image: 10 essential instructional elements for students with reading difficulties, Johnson, Andrew P, 2016.

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SUMMARISE & RETRIEVE




Creating written tests that assess retrieval is relatively straight forward to achieve and I would recommend regular assessments that include retrieval questions. When designing your own assessments, it may be helpful to draw on the question format and comprehension demands of the end of Key Stage SATs papers, or draw on published resources. However, whilst you must prepare pupils for the end of Key Stage tests, it is also important to consider how the assessments you set for your class will help you to make judgements on their wider ability to use texts in many meaningful ways, which includes pupils ability to 'read to learn' across the curriculum. Projects and activities which require pupils to synthesise information from a wide range of sources, e.g. using books to learn and present back information about 'snakes' can assess many skills (e.g. goals, book selection, retrieval, inference, summarise, synthesis, locating information, drawing information from graphs and tables and images as well as text). It is also important to assess individual skill sets, e.g. asking questions that specifically require pupils to extract information from diagrams and use information in tables.

Hot and cold

Owls live in many different types of places.


This is an eagle owl. It lives in a very cold place.

Its thick feathers trap heat next to its skin.




6

Owls also live in countries where it is very warm. They find ways to keep cool.



Some owls live in thick forests where trees shade them from the hot sun.



In hot places where there are no trees, owls rest in burrows or caves.



Owls that live near rivers or lakes splash around in the water to cool down.

Owls cool down quickly by panting and holding out their wings.



7

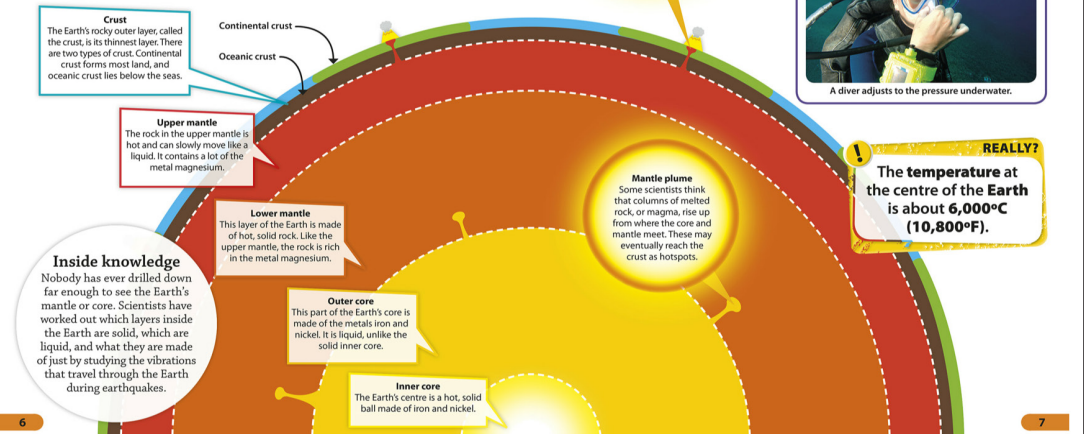


Inside the Earth

The Earth has several layers. Its outer layer, called the crust, floats on a layer of hot rock called the mantle. This thick layer is split into the semi-solid upper mantle and the solid lower mantle. At the Earth's centre is its metal core, made of an outer liquid layer and inner solid ball. Volcanoes appear when melted rock in the mantle breaks through the Earth's crust.



Cutting through the Earth
The picture below shows you what the Earth would look like if we cut it in half.



The demands of retrieval increase as the text complexity increases. In simple non-fiction books, the information is often presented in a linear layout which requires pupils to read from the top of the page to the bottom of the page in a similar way to a fiction text (e.g. Usborne beginner reader series - owls, shown above left). As text layouts increase in sophistication (such as DK Volcanoes shown above right), the text is read in different ways, and requires pupils to combine information (e.g. call out boxes, labels, diagrams, text) in order to be able to answer questions.

In EYFS and Year 1, pupils may learn with the aid of a teacher how to extract information from a simple diagram and learn how to put this into sentences, e.g. An owl has two wings; An owl has talons; An owl has feathers. Such skills are best assessed orally.

As well as being able to extract information, pupils also need to be able to summarise information in their own words. Research suggests instruction and practice in summarising not only improves students' ability to summarise text, but also their overall comprehension of text content (Duke and Pearson, 2002). When pupils are shifting and sorting the important information from the details they have to think. They are 'active' readers. Summarising is one of the most difficult strategies for students to master and one of the hardest to teach.

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SUMMARISE & RETRIEVE



Summarising often also leads to synthesis. When we synthesise we merge new information into our existing knowledge and understanding, such as a new fact, a new perspective or it might help us to generate a new line of thinking or even an original idea.

Summarising covers a variety of elements, such as:

- To identify the main sentence or phrase in a paragraph. Pull out the key points. Rewrite in own words. (De-constructing and reconstructing paragraphs can be beneficial to learning how to write non-fiction texts.)
- To be able to discern the main ideas from a text or to establish the gist of a story.
- To reduce the text to a few key bullet points or a shortened version of the text.

Summarising teaches students how to discern the most important ideas in a text, how to ignore irrelevant information, and how to integrate the central ideas in a meaningful way.

Teaching students to summarise improves their memory for what has been read, aiding later recall.

Assessing: There are many ways that summarise skills can be assessed. Examples: Pupils might be asked to orally retell a familiar story; Pupils might be provided with a short paragraph and asked to identify the topic sentence and two important details. Pupils might be assessed through the outcomes of a project as part of their curriculum studies. Pupils might be asked to summarise a double-page spread of a textbook, or pick out key details from a newspaper article to produce a news bulletin.

Assessing retrieval and summarising, and identifying next steps:

In all cases, the emphasis is on pupils showing that they understand what has been read.

- ☐ Pupils can pick out **details in an image**. For example: What is the girl holding in her hand (answer - a red toy truck).
- ☐ Pupils can retrieve simple information from stories and non-fiction where it is **straight forward to locate the information**, e.g. What did Jack steal? What do owls eat? These questions are asked as the text is being read, rather than at the end of reading. Pupils can answer questions that require simple interpretations.
- ☐ Pupils can **use** information from a non-fiction text, e.g. answering a simple question in their own words, orally state factual information that they have learned from reading a book, write sentences that utilise the information from a labelled diagram e.g. 'An owl has two wings. An owl has talons.'
- ☐ Pupils can **retell** a story in **their own words** (perhaps with visual prompts or physical objects) and retell information from non-fiction books.
- ☐ Pupils can extract simple information from across **more than one paragraph**.

In Years 3 & 4 - Pupils are able to use a wider range of sources, e.g. newspapers, timetables, diagrams, images, texts. Texts are longer and page layouts become more complex.

- ☐ After reading a longer piece of text, pupils can extract information from more than one paragraph to answer a question. They can answer questions that require them to extract information from tables, diagrams, images, text, graphs.
- ☐ Pupils can **identify words from their meaning**, e.g. find and locate a word in the text that means...
- ☐ Pupils can answer a variety of retrieval questions (multiple choice, tick the box, short answer, true/false, sequencing) that **require different types of information to be extracted** (e.g. word based, numerical, information about a person or object, who/what/where/when/why/how) and their answers demonstrate that they have understood the text.
- ☐ Pupils can identify the **main details from a paragraph**.
- ☐ **Locate information effectively and efficiently**, e.g. contents page, index, headings, structural features, page numbers, skimming, scanning.
- ☐ Pupils are able to **retell more complex stories in their own words**.

In Years 5 & 6 - pupils can do all of the previous statements, plus utilise information in different ways. In addition, the demands for understanding the text and interpreting what has been read is more challenging because the texts are more complex, e.g. more detailed, more abstract ideas, subtleties, less familiar contexts, multi-clause sentences, related points that pupils must track across the text.

- ☐ Pupils can state the **theme or gist** of the text.
- ☐ Pupils can **summarise**: a paragraph; pull out the main points from a longer text; summarise a whole text.
- ☐ Pupils can choose **different ways of expressing the learning** they have gained from reading one or more non-fiction texts showing evidence of synthesis.
- ☐ Pupils can give a **synopsis** of a story as part of making book recommendations.

Utilise past SATs papers for question types.



READING COMPREHENSION

Assessing evaluate

There are five distinct elements to 'evaluate':

1. **Form opinions about the text. Make judgements about the text and explain why.** For example, a pupils reads an article about plastics and the environment. They then evaluate the text against a number of criteria, e.g. match to audience and purpose, bias, reliability, level of detail, clarity, readability and enjoyment, typicality for the genre.
2. **Evaluate the author's craft**, e.g. word choices, sentence structure, language, pace, features, content. **Pupils consider the impact the writer has on the reader**, e.g. how the author's use of vocabulary helps them as a reader to visualise, how the use of foreshadowing builds tension and excitement as they read. The author's craft can be at **book level, chapter / section level, page level, paragraph level, sentence level, word level**. Pupils can consider how stories have been structured (plot) and how characters have been developed. They can consider how the layout features used in an information text help the reader to navigate complex thoughts, facts, opinions, data and details about a topic, e.g. headings, subheadings, call out boxes, diagrams. Pupils identify how language, structure and presentation contribute to meaning. They can evaluate how authors use language, including figurative language, impacts on the reader. *Evaluation of author's craft might include considering similarities in style across several books written by the author, or might include a compare and contrast between two authors.*
3. **'Read as a writer'** - pupils consider the techniques the author uses and **how they might use them in their own writing**. For example, pupils could explain how an author has used the *technique* 'show not tell' and then demonstrate using this technique in their own stories. Pupils could analyse how an author has *constructed* the text, e.g. how they have analysed page layouts in a non-fiction text before constructing their own booklet. Pupils could unpick *sentence structures* (e.g. The flower, a beautiful pale yellow silk rose, was the best gift she had ever received. Scarborough, a coastal town in the north of England, has a population of over 65,000.) and demonstrate how they have then used this sentence structure in their own writing.

4. **Evaluate what has been gained from reading the text.** For example: Have pupils formed a new opinion since reading the article? Has the information changed their mind in any way? Have they learnt something new? How does what they have read fit with what they already knew? Have the questions they had before reading the text been answered?

5. **Assess the enjoyment factor.** The extent to which pupils are able to express their opinion about a book, including likes and dislikes with reasons. They can identify elements of the book they like, e.g. I like it when... (action), I think it is funny when..., I like that in the end... I really like the pictures of Calculation Island. I like that it has a map of the town. **Pupils are able to select their favourite sections, phrases, words.** Pupils are able to consider the **impact** the writing has on them **personally**, e.g. the emotions stirred when reading a poem, the anger they feel towards an unjust situation in a newspaper article, how they feel transported to another land when reading. **Make book recommendations to others.**

There are times when pupils will use aspects from across all five areas in 'evaluating' when reading.

TEXT SELECTION:

Texts will become more sophisticated and challenging as pupils move through the key stages. This will provide fertile ground for generating more complex and nuanced evaluations. However, when 'reading as a writer' pupils may need opportunities to both evaluate texts that are challenging, and unpick simpler texts. This is because generally pupils write at a level that is lower than the level they can read. For example, Usborne Illustrated Book of Ghost Stories is a book of short stories aimed at Year 3/4 readers that includes examples of almost all of the Year 6 writing assessment criteria. Pupils will find it easier to 'read as a writer' using this text than a full class, challenging and complex novel. It makes an excellent book for 'reading as a writer' for Y6 pupils as the text is more accessible, enabling pupils to focus their attention on the techniques used by the author rather than grappling with understanding the text.

As pupils skills of analysis increase, so too should their ability to justify their answers and make good use of their evaluative skills (e.g. discarding a book on valid grounds, selecting more books to read in order to fulfil their reading goal, using the author techniques in their own writing, being able to make recommendations to others).

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EVALUATE

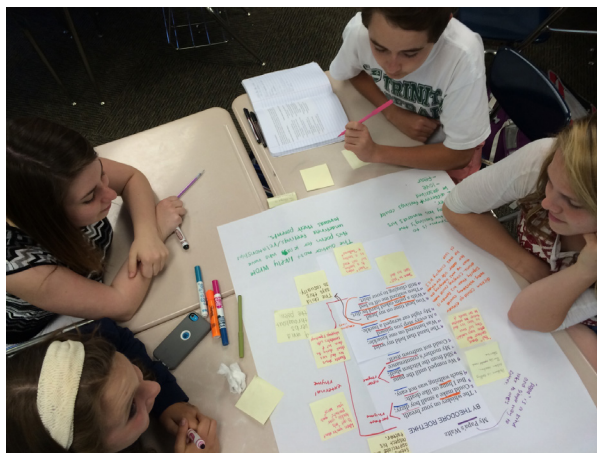


How can you assess 'evaluation'

Classroom tasks offer an opportunity to assess pupils through the work they produce, the processes they use and the conversations they engage in. What assessment activities can be naturally weaved into the curriculum?

Example, when assessing 'read as a writer': Pupils might annotate a short story with a particular focus in mind, e.g. How has the author used dialogue to move the story along?

How has the author used dialogue tags and different ways of structuring the dialogue to make it interesting? How do you know which character is speaking and how they speak? How has the author interspersed dialogue with actions, description and characters feelings? How does dialogue add to the overall quality of the story for the reader? The pupils are then tasked with writing a story that includes dialogue, perhaps as a small group using a word processor to refine their writing and respond to feedback. Later, pupils individually write a story and then annotate their work to show how they have used the techniques from the story in their own writing. Teachers can assess: the pupils ability to annotate a story with a focus on dialogue, the conversations they engage in with their peers when developing a collaborative story, the final product they produce, an annotated version of their writing.



Example, when assessing 'forming opinions and evaluating': Pupils might produce a book review using a template or a series of prompts. The review is likely to include key features, a synopsis,

Your name: _____		What did you like about the book?	
Title: _____		<div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> Book illustration </div>	
Author: _____			
Fiction <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Fiction <input type="checkbox"/>			
What is the book about?		<div style="text-align: center;"> </div> Would you recommend this book to others? What ages and interests might this book appeal to?	

and evaluative elements, e.g. what they liked and disliked about the book (with reasons), their favourite sections, comments evaluating the author's style, content, structure, presentation. The book reviews can be used by other pupils when selecting books for independent reading. The teacher would need to ensure that pupils have clear criteria for the book review.

Example, when assessing several aspects of evaluation at the same time:

Pupils might be asked to read two non-fiction books on the same topic in history lessons (topic: The Stone Age). In small groups, pupils discuss the two non-fiction texts given a structure and some talk points, e.g. match to goal, audience and purpose, content, level of details, readability, layout, use of images and diagrams, patterns and conventions. They compare and contrast the two texts, evaluating them, stating what they liked and disliked with reasons. Pupils might move on to discuss what they learnt from the books, e.g. what new knowledge they have gained, what surprised them, what interested them, what questions remained. And lastly, pupils in pairs could dig into analysing a double page spread to drill down into author techniques, e.g. paragraph construction, writing style, sentence openers, sentence types, vocabulary. The teacher can observe the interactions and points raised in dialogue.

An example of a written activity focused at sentence level evaluation:

There's a mass of wrinkly material in your head, weighing around 1.3kg, which controls every single thing you will ever do.

I like the word wrinkly it creates a picture in my mind of what my brain looks like. It is good that they also included factual information.

It enables you to think, learn, create and feel emotions, as well as controlling every blink, breath and heartbeat.

A list with commas means a lot of information is contained in one sentence. They have used 'as well as' to be able to add in extra information.

This fantastic organ is your brain!

The author has used a short sentence with an exclamation mark for effect.

It's so amazing that famous scientist James D. Watson once called the brain "the most complex thing we have yet discovered in our universe." Here's why!

The quote from a scientist makes is more believable. 'Here's why!' – makes me want to read on.

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EVALUATE



The newspaper activity (shown below) is an example of how a table format can aid pupils in evaluating a text against a set of criteria. Assessments should enable pupils to demonstrate what they know and understand. It may be necessary to provide structure, e.g. discussion prompts, sentence stems for answers, grids and templates for recording their thoughts, criteria to support them to evaluate against a range of criteria.

Discussions:

Whilst it may be necessary to separate out a pupils ability to converse with their peers effectively compared to their ability to evaluate the texts they are reading, group discussion is a good vehicle for pupils to share how texts impact on them as a reader, e.g. how a text makes them feel, the typicality of the text to others of the same genre, the phrases and words they like with reasons, what they like and dislike about texts. Evaluation skills may also be assessed alongside other Big 10 strategies, such as 'making connections' and 'goal'.

Give and Take, by Roger McGough

I give you clean air
You give me poisonous gas
I give you mountains
You give me quarries

I give you pure snow
You give me acid rain
I give you spring fountains
You give me toxic canals

I give you a butterfly
You give me a plastic bottle
I give you a blackbird
You give me a stealth bomber

I give you abundance
You give me waste
I give you one last chance
You give me excuse after excuse after excuse.

Feature	Yes/No	Example	Impact on the reader
Headline	Yes	There's no stopping this spider!	It makes you wonder what he's done and why there's no stopping him.
Strapline (headline written beneath the main headline)	Yes	Spiderman saves many lives when he stops runaway train.	What has he done to save lives? Where did this take place? Who did he save?
Photograph and caption	Yes	A passenger's photograph taken from a passing train moments before Spiderman overtaken the train from crashing.	It makes me feel scared for the person who took the photo and how they felt.
First paragraph: 3 Ws (Who, what, when)	Yes	New York City. Thousands of train passengers Spiderman yesterday morning hurtled of the track.	They give you more information so you know who did it, what happened and when did it happen.
Sensational language.	Yes	Almighty bang. Incredible. Shocked and bemused. Humbled. Shaken. Amazing.	These words are powerful because it makes you get different feelings at once.
Direct speech	Yes	I was half way through eating my bagel when I heard an almighty bang and the train seemed to swerve from side to side.	The direct speech built up from him eating his sandwich to a familiar figure dressed in red.
Reported speech	Yes	However, passengers near the front of the train reported hearing a loud bang.	It's telling you what the people on the front of the train heard, this makes you want to know what

s to have lost moments before g the station. At ment, the cause ncident is yet to 'irmed. However, gers near the f the train d hearing a loud which may suggest e with the brakes. aken passenger, ig soon after the it said, "I was half rough eating my when I heard an ty bang and the eemed to swerve de to side. Out of ner my eye, I saw nlliar figure d in red. I just 't believe it was needed treatment passenger train m capture their m before his exc webs tr train to In a pre yesterd Mayor his gro our city again s He end questic we do At this Trains I an offic howev

Give and Take poem:

Teacher: What is the poem about?

Pupil A: It is about how we treat the planet.

Teacher: Is it more than this?

Pupil B: Its about the beauty of the world and how we are destroying it.

Teacher: What was the author's purpose?

Pupil B: Perhaps to make us stop and think, to try and persuade us to change our actions.

Teacher: How does the poem make you feel?

Pupil A: It really makes me feel sad that the world around us is being so polluted and damaged.

Pupils B: I agree, and it makes me feel angry that older people are not thinking about future generations.

Teacher: How does the author achieve this?

Pupil A: The author picks out some powerful words that pack a punch like toxic, poisonous, acid, waste.

Pupils B: I agree. He has had to think carefully about what examples to include, quarries look ugly on the landscape. He has thought about how to make contrast such as the pure snow against the acid rain.

Teacher: Can you think of some reasons why the author chose 'butterfly' as an example?

Pupil C: Butterflies are very beautiful and colourful. But also they look fragile. They can be easily hurt and damaged.

Teacher: How does that relate to the world?

Pupil C: I think he is trying to say that the earth is fragile and can be easily hurt. It is also beautiful.

Teacher: What do you notice about the structure of the poem?

(Discussion continues)

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BIG 10 READING ICTWAND

Diary of Killer catDid I enjoy the book?

What a great book that was! I loved the story. I also loved the sarcasm in it as well. The detail of it was great, and I loved the story language. How Tuffy lies and explains that he didn't do it makes me laugh, and how the dad describes Tuffy also makes me laugh.

What was my favourite part?

I really enjoyed the whole book - but if I was to choose a favourite book part I would choose when the family pretended and acted that they didn't know that Thumper died and was like, "Oh no," and "Poor Thumper."

Who is my favourite character?

That is an easy question because it is very simple that it is Tuffy! I like adore Tuffy because every second that Tuffy speaks it makes me think that if I was an author when I grow up, I would be an author just like that.

How did I feel about the book?

I felt very excited from Friday because it said that they nailed up the cat flap, it left a real excitement of what was going to happen on Saturday.

Who would I recommend this to?

I would recommend this to my sister because she is always talking to her friends on the laptop, so she can read for a while and forget about talking to her friends.

Tuffy is a striped, mischievous cat who always kills animals and brings them into the house. He has killed a cute poor bird and a tiny miserable mouse thingy. When the owners tell him to do something he disobeys them, or he sometimes ignores the owners.

Tuffy has pointy ears that hear perfectly well and he sniffs mysterious things that we can't smell. He is covered from head to toe in ginger stripes and ^{his} claws as sharp as knives and daggers. Tuffy has a mischievous face on him all day because he is always making making cunning plans. He has eyes that can see everything around him, so keep an eye on him, so he is not going to trip you up, or something else.

It is very hard to describe Tuffy's behavior, because he is always into trouble! Tuffy is a cat who creeps around quietly and then strikes - but not like any other cat because when he strikes he doesn't jump he pounces and traps it into his paws.

I would definitely like to be Tuffy's friend, no matter if he is up to mischief or not.



EVALUATE



ASSESSING EVALUATE AND IDENTIFYING NEXT STEPS

Key Stage 1:

- Pupils are able to **express simple opinions about the books and stories they read**. They use this experience to help them select books they wish to re-read because they enjoyed them. Pupils can identify elements of a book or story they enjoyed, e.g. I like it when... (action), I think it is funny when..., I like that in the end... I really like the pictures of Calculation Island. I like that it has a map of the town.
- Pupils can **identify features in a non-fiction text that make it easier to read the text and learn about a topic**, e.g. headings, labelled pictures, photographs and images.
- Pupils can **identify specific features of different types of book**, e.g. lift the flap, wordless books, large format books. Pupils can make **simple comparisons** between books making judgements as to differences and similarities. (This also links to 'making connections').
- Pupils can **identify features of stories**, e.g. plot, characters, setting. They can use typical elements of a genre *to help them write their own stories and non-fiction texts*.
- Pupils can **write short book recommendations**, explaining what they liked and disliked about a book with reasons.

Lower Key Stage 2: All of the above, and...

- Pupils are able to **evaluate different parts of books and stories**, e.g. evaluate the opening of a story, the ending of a story. They are able to identify elements they enjoyed, giving reasons, e.g. I liked...because...
- Pupils can **dig deeper into the texts they are reading to explore the authors craft**, e.g. the author's use of show not tell, how the author has used vocabulary to create a vivid scene. They can pick out elements such as the author's use of alliteration or repetition and consider why author's might choose to use these techniques.
- Pupils can **reflect on what they have learnt from reading**, e.g. how they know more about a place they have never visited because of a story they have read, or how they have learnt about what rabbits eat from a non-fiction text about how to care for pet rabbits, or how they are now able to argue for and against the use of single use plastics after reading articles and combining this with knowledge gained from other sources.
- Pupils are able to **identify the features used in more complex non-fiction texts and explain why they are used**, e.g. call-out boxes, cut-away diagrams, tables, bullet point lists, subheadings. They are able to identify the typical structures of genres such as persuasive texts and newspaper

articles. They are able to *use this to help them create their own texts*. They can state how the author is creating texts that match the audience and purpose, e.g. considering text density, font sizes, the type of sentence structures, the use of images and layout, content selection, sentence style.

- Pupils can express **feelings** generated from reading texts.

Upper Key Stage 2

- Pupils can **describe the impact texts have on them personally**, e.g. the fear generated within them when reading a ghost story, the sadness they felt when a character died in a story. They can consider **how** the author stimulates the reader's emotions and consider the role this plays in reading. They can consider the author's *motives, intentions and purpose*.
- Pupils can **move from global evaluation of a book or text and drill down to paragraph, sentence, word level exploration of author techniques**. They can annotate texts, select elements of author's craft that are significant, and evaluate the **impact** these elements have on the reader.
- Pupils can **show how they are using analysis of the books they read to support them in their own writing**, e.g. unpicking how an author has structured dialogue (e.g. moving the action forward, use of different dialogue tags, how they have interwoven dialogue, characters thoughts and actions) and showing how this has helped them to use dialogue in a story that they have written; considering how the author has created a vivid scene (e.g. vocabulary choices, level of details, use of prepositional phrases) and how this has helped them to create the opening of a story of their own.
- Pupils can **evaluate a text using a range of criteria**, e.g. reliability, bias, match to audience and purpose, readability, content selection, layout. Pupils can **create book recommendations for both fiction, non-fiction and books of poetry** showing consideration for a wide range of relevant elements.

As pupils progress through the key stages, texts will become more complex and sophisticated which provides fertile grounds for evaluation. Teachers need to make sure that there is scope for evaluation in the texts chosen.

Teachers should think carefully about which elements of evaluation they are trying to assess and what texts and activities will match the assessment purpose. Will the activities give pupils the best opportunity to demonstrate their skills?

Teachers can also consider the level of independence pupils show in evaluation. It is likely that at first pupils will need a significant amount of teacher guidance, e.g. teacher lead discussions. This is likely to progress to more independent evaluation but with scaffolding, e.g. tables to complete, sentence stems, thinking prompts, writing frames, key questions.

READING COMPREHENSION

A word about recording assessment

It is **NOT** my intention that teachers record against each of the Big 10 strategies. This would be extremely time consuming and is unlikely to yield benefits that match the time invested in the activity. In addition, the 'sum is greater than the parts' should be remembered. It is how pupils bring together all the elements and apply them to reading that matters most. ***The focus is on pupils being able to mentally engage with texts successfully and read in a 'rich way' that supports them to both understand and enjoy the texts they read.***

This booklet should also not be taken out of context. It is written to work in conjunction with the ICTWAND online reading comprehension course, which for example, stresses that the books and texts pupils read will determine which skills and elements of reading teachers should focus on alongside their knowledge of their class. In addition, teachers should always refer to any national guidance, e.g. the DfE Reading Framework, recent research reports, international perspectives.

It is my intention that the information contained in this booklet **supports the teacher to identify the most important next steps for their class**. If pupils appear to be struggling, either as a class or individually, it is hoped that the bullet points listed for each of the Big 10 will support teachers in drilling down to possible areas of focus. It is hoped the information may support teachers to design very specific, time limited interventions. It is hoped the information contained in this booklet will lead teachers to think more deeply about assessment and support teachers to engage in high quality professional dialogue about pupil attainment and the 'clues / evidence' they are using to unpick pupil learning.

The bullet point statements are non-statutory (yellow boxes contained in each section of the Big 10). They are NOT designed to be a recording device. They are NOT designed to replace teacher professional judgement. The main difference between key stages is the complexity of the texts pupils are asked to read. Any attempt to break reading comprehension strategies into a list of progression will, to some extent, be arbitrary. However, they are based on research and expertise, including my own, in the field of reading and as such will hopefully not be too far from the mark. They might spark debate between teachers, which in itself is a good thing. In addition, it must be remembered that in assessing pupils, teachers should always come back to the overarching goals, e.g. that pupils understand

the texts they are reading, and teachers should refer regularly to the National Curriculum.

What is recorded, how often and for what purposes is for leaders in each school to decide. As set out in the underlying principles section of this booklet, it is important to consider the rationale for assessment in making such decisions. What will teachers and leaders do with the information gathered? This is likely to then inform how, when and in what format the assessment information is recorded.

For some schools, externally produced tests may be utilised. This can often provide a comparison against other schools nationally and the analysis of results can help teachers to evaluate their practice (e.g. identifying strands of reading that are less well developed, undertaking question level analysis, reviewing pupils' examination technique). As such, the results would be recorded and stored in an electronic system. As stated previously, it is important for teachers to fully understand the optional SATs papers for KS1 and the SATs papers for KS2, including the test specifications. It is also useful for teachers to review externally marked papers to be clear on what is and what is not credited in pupil answers.

There are many elements of reading that are difficult to assess through tests, and this is perhaps where this booklet is most helpful. As teachers, we are not just preparing pupils to pass examinations, but also preparing pupils to be ready for their next stage of education, and preparing them to access and enjoy texts throughout their lives. This requires a more rounded picture than just test scores. Using a wide range of methods (e.g. written questions, observation, dialogue, classroom activities) teachers can assess pupils in a more rounded way, and increase their understanding of what pupils are finding difficult. Pupil progress meetings are an excellent way of discussing the 'fuller picture' of reading attainment and the progress pupils are making, which can draw on a wide range of sources, including externally produced tests.

On the following page are some question prompts that you might draw

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'Big 10' Reading Comprehension

on, or might inspire you to think of other questions.

- What texts were particularly important this term for your pupils? What were they reading?
- What was demanding about these particular texts? How did choosing these texts help you to develop pupils' reading abilities?
- What aspects of reading comprehension did you most hope to develop?
- Why did you choose to focus on these particular areas?
- To what extent have the class achieved the objectives?
- What were you particularly pleased about?
- Were there any surprises?
- What was particularly challenging about what you set out to achieve with the class? How did they respond to these challenges?
- Can you give an example of a pupil who overcame a particular difficulty and how this was achieved?
- For pupils who have achieved excellent progress, what made the difference?
- What improvements have you seen in the performance of pupils based on...the actions agreed in the last meeting / based on any changes you have made to your practice / CPD activities?
- What strategies have been particularly beneficial for EAL pupils, SEND pupils, disadvantaged pupils? Are there any groups who you are particularly concerned about? How do different groups of pupils compare? What specific struggles did you notice? How can this help you to improve the outcomes for these groups?
- Can you share your conclusions from assessment and how this will inform your teaching?
- When you consider which pupils did not achieve the expected standard (or target) what is it specifically that they are struggling with?
- How is assessment feeding into planning for individual pupils?
- What evidence are you drawing on to inform your judgements about attainment?
- When you reflect on your teaching, what is helping you to impact positively on pupil's progress in reading?
- What aspects of teaching reading do you feel most confident and comfortable with, and what aspects of teaching reading might be a focus for your professional development?
- What impact have interventions had on pupils' progress and why?
- What do you think at a whole school level is positively impacting on attainment and what else might help?

(It is also advisable to consider the speed of reading and issues with reading fluency that may be impacting on reading outcomes. It is also important to keep in mind background knowledge, vocabulary levels and the quantity of reading pupils are undertaking.)

- Consider the pupils in your class who have low reading speeds, how is this impacting on the quantity of reading they are undertaking a) during whole class reading activities, b) independently in school, c) independently (or with support) at home? What strategies are being used to support the 'quantity of reading', e.g. access to sufficient books at a decodable level, partner support in lessons, audio books, teacher reading aloud? How are actions to improve low reading speeds making a difference to fluency?
- What strategies did you use this term to support pupils with limited background knowledge so that they were well placed to engage in high levels of comprehension?
- What strategies did you use this term to support pupils with limited vocabulary so that they were well placed to access texts and engage in high levels of comprehension?

For example: "To make meaning from text, children draw on a wealth of accumulated knowledge about words and the concepts that words signify. Comprehension requires not only that children have broad vocabularies (i.e., a large number of words in their lexicon) but also that those words activate rich, interconnected networks of conceptual knowledge. For example, when reading a passage and coming across the word sparrow, a child retrieves not only meaning information for that single word, but also all the associated knowledge that he or she has built over time: A sparrow is a bird and therefore has feathers, wings, and a beak and lays eggs. The child may also access words commonly used in context with sparrow, such as robin, egg, worm, nest, and fly, to help him or her interpret the passage. There is growing consensus that this knowledge base that supports word depth is critical for young readers." Extract taken from the work of Hadley et al 2018 (please see references).

It is not so much the pupil progress meeting questions that matter, but the quality of conversation with the teacher. For example, in the answers that teachers provide do they show that they really understand their class, do the answers reflect a good understanding of the level of attainment you might expect in the phase, do you get a sense that assessment conclusions are derived from accurate knowledge of pupils, do teachers show they are knowledgeable about reading comprehension, do you feel that teachers reflective practice is helping to continually strengthen teaching and as a result improve results, do you get a sense that the teacher is able to plan for their class and for individual pupils in a way that will increase the outcomes for pupils, particularly in achieving the expected standard and greater depth?

Teachers should be encouraged to engage in structured reflection throughout the year, and provided with a safe space to have open and honest conversations about teaching and learning. An 'investigative' approach by teachers where they deeply consider what contributes to progress in reading is likely to lead to a self-improving system. It should be remembered that teaching reading is extremely complex and requires teachers to integrate a wide range of sophisticated skills and knowledge in the classroom. *Developing as a 'reading teacher' is a continuous process, and even when expertise has developed, new research is published.*

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READING COMPREHENSION

Sources and further reading

Writing this booklet is based on knowledge and experience gathered over many years. I have read and unpicked hundreds of research reports and books on teaching reading. It is based on a wide range of school improvement experience, analysis of examination papers, undertaking lesson observations and discussing reading with many practitioners. In addition, there are many blogs from serving teachers, from renowned experts in the field, and a great deal of intelligence shared on social media. It would be impossible for me to state all the sources over time that is the 'evidence' for this booklet. I would encourage all teachers to engage with the research materials directly, including carrying out their own research. However, I know time is limited for busy teachers, and it is hoped that my research will bring aspects of wider research into a practical format that can be used on a day-to-day basis.

Within the booklet were some specific references to sources, please see below. You will also find references to sources threaded into the online reading comprehension course that links to this booklet.

Some references specifically related to vocabulary:

Beckage, N. M., Smith, L. B., & Hills, T. T. (2011). Small worlds and semantic network growth in typical and late talkers.

Griffiths, T.L., Steyvers, M., & Firl, A. (2007). Google and the mind: Predicting fluency with PageRank. Psychological Science.

Hadley, E.B., Dickinson, D.K., Hirsh-Pasek D.K., Golinkoff, R.M., Building Semantic Networks: (2018) The Impact of a Vocabulary Intervention on Preschoolers' Depth of Word Knowledge, Literacy International Association, Research Reading Quarterly.

Steyvers M, Tenenbaum JB (2005). The large-scale structure of semantic networks: statistical analyses and a model of semantic growth. Cognitive Science Journal.

Some references specifically related to pupils being able to summarise:

Denton, C., Bryan, D., Wexler, J., Reed, D. Vaughn, S. (2007) Effective instruction for middle school students with reading difficulties: The reading teacher's sourcebook.

University of Texas Systems/Texas Education Agency.

Duke, N. K., & Pearson, P. (2002). Effective Practices for Developing Reading Comprehension. In Alan E. Farstrup & S. Jay Samuels (Eds.), What Research Has to Say About Reading Instruction (3rd ed., pp. 205-242). Newark, DE: International Reading Association, Inc.

If you would like to discuss the content and ideas contained in this booklet, why not get in touch to see how I can help you or your school. I am always delighted to engage with education professionals, so if you have a comment, query or suggestion, then I would love to hear from you. You can find a variety of ways to contact me on my website: www.ictwand.online



An extensive online CPD course is available to help teachers become experts in teaching reading. Video tutorials, think pieces, case studies, audits and checklists, advice booklets and teaching resources are used to blend together theory and practice. The menu driven system enables colleagues to personalise their route through the course. Find out more: <https://ictwand.teachable.com/>

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