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Introduction

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

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

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

Teachers should read the texts with the children and discuss them thoroughly before allowing them to proceed to the activities. If you are using the e-book version, you can display the pages on the interactive white board.

In the **Year 6** book there are first a series of Questions that require factual recall. Encourage children to respond in full sentences. The Word work sections will help to develop and stretch their vocabulary. The Extension work sections require more open-ended answers enabling the pupils to provide a more personal response. Children should write the answers in their workbooks or on separate sheets of paper. Answers are provided on pages 122–141. On pages 8–19 there are some suggestions for ways in which the passages can be linked to writing, speaking and other literacy activities, as well as to other areas of the curriculum. These activities are ideal for children who finish their work early.

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

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

The **Brilliant Activities for Reading Comprehension Series** provides an invaluable resource for assessing pupil progress in reading. The chart on pages 5–7 shows how the activities link to the relevant Programmes of Study in the National Curriculum for England (September 2014).

Links to the National Curriculum

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

identifying themes and conventions in a wide range of writing (cont)	<p>Examples of themes covered in this book include: Autumn (page 32) – thankfulness; Feral Cats (page 41) – loyalty; Snegworthy (page 62) – coping with fear/unknown; The Dark Side (page 83) – homelessness; The Organisation (page 103) – fear; The Viking Raid (page 111) – revenge/ courage.</p> <p>Pupils should continue to learn the conventions of different types of writing, such as the use of the first person in writing diaries and autobiographies. Examples of conventions used in this book include: diary format – Game Ranger Diaries (page 44); play script – The Formula – part 1 (page 90) and part 2 (page 93); letter format – A Sojourn in Bath (page 23); newspaper/magazine articles – Stately Homes (page 47), Shopping Centre Opens (page 80) and Virus on Space Station (page 119).</p>
making comparisons within and across books	Compare and contrast the different passages in this book. Look at well-known books and explore themes and ideas and issues arising. Hold class discussions on the book(s) they are reading.
learning a wider range of poetry by heart	Have a poetry competition. Learn a poem and say it aloud.
preparing poems and plays to read aloud and to perform, showing understanding through intonation, tone and volume so that the meaning is clear to an audience	Have a class assembly on poems they have written on a specific theme/genre. There are four poems in this collection: Autumn (page 32); Cautionary verse (page 34); Silence (page 60) and Song of the Naga (page 66).
understand what they read by:	
checking that the book makes sense to them, discussing their understanding and exploring the meaning of words in context	Use paired or guided reading to ensure understanding. Ask questions to check children's understanding and explain any words that are unclear. The 'Word work' activities encourage children to think about the meaning of words and to look at how they are used in context.
asking questions to improve their understanding	The 'Questions' activities require factual recall and will check pupils' understanding.
drawing inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence	Many of the 'Extension work' (EW) activities provide opportunities for drawing inferences from the text. Special examples are: A Bad Business (page 20) – Q7; Daisy Randall ... (page 26) – EW2; An Unexpected Visitor (page 29) – EW5; Marley's Place (page 53) – Q6–7; Stately Phantoms (page 71) – EW5; The Case of the Missing Turtle (page 74) – EW4; The Formula (part 1) (page 90) – EW2; Goblin Falls (page 97) – EW3; The School Outing (page 107) – EW2 & 4.

predicting what might happen from details stated and implied	Many of the 'Extension work'(EW) activities provide opportunities for predicting what might happen. Specific examples are: Daisy Randall ... (page 26) – EW7; An Unexpected Visitor (page 29) – EW8; Daisy Randall ... Continues (page 37) – EW7; The Case of the Missing Turtle (page 74) – EW5; The Formula (part 2) (page 93) – EW3; The Journey (page 100) – EW5.
summarising the main ideas drawn from more than one paragraph, identifying key details that support the main ideas	Provide opportunities for children to chunk text and then scrutinise it carefully to identify key ideas.
identifying how language, structure, and presentation contribute to meaning	Look at different texts to compare and contrast. Pupils should be taught the technical and other terms needed for discussing what they hear and read, such as metaphor, simile, analogy, imagery, style and effect. Some examples from this book include: A Bad Business (page 20) – EW1–3; A Sojourn in Bath (page 23) – EW1–3; Daisy Randall ... (page 26) – EW8; Cautionary Verse (page 34) – EW2; Daisy Randall ... Continues (page 37) – EW1 & 2; Stately Homes (page 47) – Q8; Snegworthy (page 62) – Q3; Goblin Falls (page 97) – Q7; The Viking Raid (page 111) – EW3.
discuss and evaluate how authors use language, including figurative language, considering the impact on the reader	
distinguish between statements of fact and opinion	
retrieve, record and present information from non-fiction	When using reference books, pupils need to know what information they need to look for before they begin and need to understand the task. They should be shown how to use the contents pages and indexes to locate information. The skills of information retrieval that are taught should be applied, for example, in reading history, geography and science books, and in contexts where pupils are genuinely motivated to find out information, for example, reading information leaflets before a gallery or museum visit or reading a theatre programme or review. Teachers should consider making use of any library services and expertise to support this.
participate in discussions about books that are read to them and those they can read for themselves, building on their own and others' ideas and challenging view courteously	Look at a huge variety of texts to explore the style of writing and understanding. Classes can be broken down into groups to look at specific things and then feed back to the rest of the group.
explain and discuss their understanding of what they have read, including through formal presentations and debates, maintaining a focus on the topic and using notes where necessary	Pupils should have guidance about and feedback on the quality of their explanations and contributions to discussions.
provide reasoned justifications for their views.	

Stately Homes

Stately Homes

Monthly Magazine

June issue

DEAR READERS,

IT HAS BEEN an exciting year for us here at *Stately Homes* and I'm delighted to announce that our magazine is flourishing. This month, we report on some exciting new developments at Bagnum Hall as the restoration of the Great Hall and Library get underway. A team of experts are using their considerable talents to recreate the beauty of a bygone age. The costs of the restoration, which are likely to be five million pounds, are to be defrayed by the Bagnum Hall Trust, supported by generous donations from private individuals.

In this issue we celebrate Spirits Month. This is an opportunity for all those interested in ghosts to find out more about the spirits which haunt many ancient homes. It will also give our staff the chance to gather information for a new book, *Stately Phantoms*, to be published next year. If you have had an encounter with a phantom, please get in touch with Griselda Hall, who will be delighted to hear about

your experience. Her email address can be found at the back of the magazine.

One topic we report on this month is badgers. The keeper at Griddlecote Manor has reported a rise in the number of badger setts to be found around the Manor. This has led to much damage to the garden, and the main lawn has been returfed for the fourth time this year. In a controversial article, Mary Baxter proposes new ways for keeping the badger population under control. If you have any views on this subject do please let us know.

For those readers with children, don't forget to look at our new activities page at the rear of the magazine. A comprehensive guide gives you all the latest on fun-packed activities for children of all ages.

We look forward to a happy, colourful month.

Denise Walters
Editor

Activities Around the Country

THEXTON HALL

HOME of the Lidwyddle Family.

Saturday 7th July

Medieval Jousting Day
Children are invited to come and design shields and swords in the arts and crafts tent.

Mr Clive Heston will be bringing his collection of goshawks, sparrowhawks, falcons, kestrels and owls to the Hall. Clive will give a talk on the history of falconry and show his birds in a display. Children over the age of five will be given the opportunity to handle the birds.

COSGROVE MANOR

Saturday 14th July

Tree planting ceremony

An old vegetable garden has been dug over and is to become an orchard.

Come and assist the gardeners in planting 100 new apple and pear trees.

ACTWORTHY HALL

Saturday 14th July

Recreation of the Battle of River Cresswell

Visitors are invited to join this mock battle which commemorates the time when Lord Reginald Actworthy led his servants and peasants against his neighbour, Bernard de Courtney, who he accused of stealing his sheep. The battle took place mostly in the River Cresswell. Please bring a change of clothes. Non-swimmers are advised to stay away.

ACTBRIDGE MANOR

Friday 27th July

Garden Party



Tickets cost £8 for non-members and £6 for members

Concessions for children are available.

Tickets to the greenhouse are on a first-come-first-served basis and cost £6

The garden party is an annual event and gives visitors the opportunity to explore the beautiful gardens which are only open a few times during the year.

BODDLEWORTHY CASTLE

Friday 27th July

Archery Show

While the adults shoot their arrows, would-be Robin Hoods are invited to join the fancy-dress parade. There will be prizes for the best costumes. During the afternoon there will be a barbecue. Please contact Mary Richards at Boddleworthy Castle for tickets.



Questions

Answer the following questions with a full sentence:

1. How many times a year does the *Stately Homes* magazine come out?
2. What is a 'stately home'?
3. Who or what is paying for the restoration work on Bagnum Hall?
4. Name two of the topics which are dealt with in this month's issue.
5. Why do you think that Mary Baxter's article on badgers is likely to be controversial?
6. Who was Lord Reginald Actworthy and what action is he remembered for?
7. Why do you think tickets for the greenhouse are on a '*first come, first served*' basis?
8. Comment on the style of language used for the magazine.

Word work

1. Give the meaning of the following words:

bygone
haunt
encounter
comprehensive
falconry

2. Bagnum Hall is being '*restored*'. What does this mean?
3. What will people expect to see at the joust?
4. How do '*concessions*' benefit people?

Extension work

1. If you could choose one of the events to go to, which one would you choose and why?
2. What kind of person do you think *Stately Homes* might appeal to?
3. Write an email to Griselda Hall in which you describe a ghostly experience you have had. Say where and when it happened and provide as many details as you can.
4. You are one of the phantoms at Bagnum Hall. What changes have you experienced over the years and how do you feel about these?
5. Write a letter to the editor of *Stately Homes* in which you object to children being allowed into stately homes. Give reasons to support your argument.
6. As editor, respond to the above.