

How to develop higher order reading comprehension skills.

A guide for parents.

Why do we read?

- We read for enjoyment. We read for meaning.
- As adults, we read fiction e.g. novels, short stories, and non fiction, e.g. recipes, manuals, travel guides, newspapers.
- If we read a text where we can decode the words but do not understand what we are reading, it becomes meaningless and does not engage us:

e.g.

Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters:

I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness;

15

I never gave you kingdom, call'd you children,

You owe me no subscription: then, let fall

Your horrible pleasure; here I stand, your slave,

A poor, infirm, weak, and despis'd old man.

But yet I call you servile ministers,

20

That have with two pernicious daughters join'd

Your high-engender'd battles 'gainst a head

So old and white as this. O! O! 'tis foul. [King Lear-Shakespeare]

The neuropathological hallmarks of Alzheimer's disease include extracellular plaques containing amyloid beta (A β) and intracellular neurofibrillary tangles containing hyperphosphorylated tau protein,¹ along with synaptic and neuronal losses.² The A β hypothesis of the mechanism of Alzheimer's disease proposes that early pathogenesis of the disease results from the overproduction of or reduced clearance of A β , leading to the formation of oligomers, fibrils, and neuritic A β plaques.^{3,4} Treatments that slow the production of A β or that increase the clearance of A β may slow the progression of Alzheimer's disease. Solanezumab, a humanized immunoglobulin G1 monoclonal antibody that binds to the mid-domain of the A β peptide, was designed to increase clearance from the brain of soluble A β , peptides that may lead to toxic effects in the synapses at a stage before the deposition of the fibrillary form of the protein. [\[taken from a medical journal\]](#)

Children learn the mechanics of reading [how to decode and recognise words] at different rates. An assumption cannot be made that those children who pick up the technical aspects of reading quickly, will develop comprehension skills at the same rate. Some children who take longer to learn to read, can sometimes demonstrate more mature comprehension skills than more fluent readers who may not be taking in or understanding what they read to the required depth. Fluent readers who use expression and intonation can sometimes mask a lack of reading comprehension skills. At school we aim for children to develop both reading fluency and comprehension in tandem. We request that parents support us in this aim. This can be achieved by reading to your child and your child reading to you. We hope you will find this guide useful.

By the time most children reach Year 2, they have developed good word recognition skills and a level of fluency that allows them to access many different types of fiction and non fiction texts.

The main focus now shifts to comprehension skills:

Children need to be able to demonstrate the ability to:

- Understand and engage with the text.
- Predict what will happen next.
- Retell the story.
- Recognise key themes within a text.
- Express opinions.
- Deduce.
- Infer.
- Empathise with characters, making inferences about their thoughts, feelings and reasons for their actions.
- Understand new vocabulary from within the context.
- Comment on the choice of language used by the author, e.g. to create mood.

- Appreciate different viewpoints within a text.
- Relate books read to own experiences.
- Make connections with existing knowledge and other books read.
- Evaluate the usefulness of a text for its purpose [non fiction].
- Recognise common features of non fiction texts and how to use them.
- Know how to navigate a text [non fiction]
- Understand the purpose or main message of the text and what the author is trying to convey to the reader.

5 out of the 6 strands for assessing reading on Learning Ladders, relate to comprehension skills.

Your child will move to the next “colour band” within the reading scheme when they can demonstrate the depth of comprehension skills required for their current reading level, even if they are reading the words fluently.

Fiction - Expected Standard [Year 2]:

Oscar needs a friend

Oscar was a bear who couldn't keep still. All day long he raced round the mountainside. At bedtime he raced round mum.



And when at last he snuggled down, Oscar always said the same thing.

"I wish there were more bears on our side of the mountain. I wish there was another bear who liked the same sort of games as me!"

Practice questions

A What kind of bear was Oscar?

☐

A bear who slept a lot.

☐

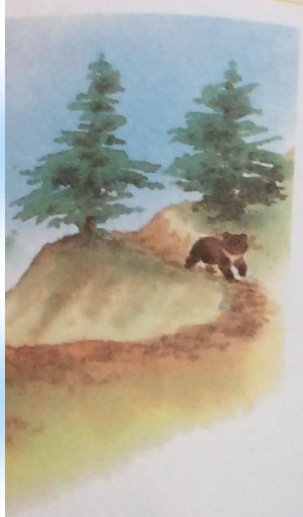
A bear who could not keep quiet.

☐

A bear who could not keep still.

☐

A bear who ate a lot.



"Let's play on my slide," said Oscar.
Without waiting for a reply, he
pulled Max to the top of
his favourite hill.

"Isn't this great!" cried Oscar,
as the two bears tumbled
down the hill together.

But Max wasn't so sure.
And before long he ran off back
to his mum.

That evening at supper Oscar was sulky.
But the next day he went to see Max again.



3 Which words tell you that Oscar liked the game?

☐

Oscar was sulky

☐

ran off back to his mum

☐

tumbled down the hill

☐

"Isn't this great!"

☐

s moving in

mum

☐

ourite tree.



That night at bedtime Oscar had a tantrum.

"Max says my slide's too steep, my branch is too bouncy and my wood's too scary," he yelled.

"And he keeps running home to his mum."



When at last she could make herself heard, Oscar's mum made a suggestion. Oscar pretended not to listen.

But before he went to sleep, he thought about what mum had said.

7 Why was Oscar upset at bedtime?

☐ because he did not want to go to bed

☐ because the woods were too scary

☐ because mum told him off

☐ because Max did not like his games

8 What did Oscar's mum do to help him?

☐ She made him tea.

☐ She played with him.

☐ She talked to him.

☐ She sent Max home.

15 **Think about the whole story.**

Match the boxes. The first one has been done for you.

Mum helps Oscar to

be brave and try new things.

Oscar and Max

think about other people's feelings.

Oscar learns to

enjoy playing together.

Max learns to

take turns and listen to other people.

Non fiction - expected standard [Year 2]

Making our new playground

We asked all the children in our school to tell us what they thought about playtime.

Some children said that playtime was boring because there was nothing to do. They wanted some new things to play with and ideas for new games.

Other children said they were sometimes sad because they did not have anyone to play with.

We thought about what everyone had said, and chose three ideas. We hope that you will visit our new playground and come and see us having fun.

16 Why did some children think playtime was boring?

☐ They were tired. ☐ It was cold.

☐ There was nothing to do. ☐ There were lots of games to play. ☐

17 What did the bored children want?

..... ☐

18 Why were children sometimes sad at playtime?

..... ☐

19 What is **Making our new playground** ?

☐ the end ☐ the blurb

☐ the logo ☐ the title ☐

12 13

This is the Friendship Bench. When somebody sits on the Friendship Bench, other children know that they are feeling lonely and sad, and come over to be friendly. This is what Dan said about it.

When I first started at this school I didn't know anybody. At playtime I sat on the Friendship Bench and Sarah, Baz and Tanya came over and asked me if I wanted to join in their game.



Now playtimes are fun because I have some friends to play with. The Friendship Bench is a good idea because it helps you to get to know people quickly.

20 Why did some children sit on the Friendship Bench?

☐

They were hungry.

☐

They were waiting for a bus.

☐

They were lonely.

☐

They were tired.

21 Does Dan like the Friendship Bench?

☐

Yes

☐

No

Why?

Think about the whole *Friends* booklet.

- 28 What can you learn about friends from this booklet?
Tick **3**.

Friends make playtime boring. _____

Friends share ideas and games. _____

It is lonely without friends. _____

You can only have friends at school. _____

Friends listen to each other. _____

Friends always have to play your games. _____

Non Fiction - Greater depth standard [Year 2]



Lightning always comes before thunder.

Thunderstorms explained



Thunder can sound like a rumble, a crackle or just one loud crack. It can be heard after a flash of lightning lights up the sky. Lightning is very hot and it heats up the air all around it. When this hot air touches the cooler air nearby, the hot air explodes. This explosion is the sound we call thunder.

Lightning can be dangerous, but thunder cannot hurt you.

Storms Information Sheet



What is a storm?

A STORM IS BAD WEATHER WITH STRONG WINDS, RAIN OR SNOW, AND OFTEN THUNDER AND LIGHTNING TOO. THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT TYPES OF STORM.



Sandstorms

Sandstorms happen in many hot dry places around the world. A sandstorm takes place when strong winds blow dry sand up into the air. The wind blows the sand into big clouds and pushes it up against anything in its way. Sandstorms can change the shape of desert rocks by blowing sand up against them. The sand clouds scratch away at the rocks over time, chipping pieces off and changing them into strange shapes. Sand is also blown into buildings, covering the things inside with sand and red dust.

At the end of the storm, the winds slow down. The sand then settles back onto the ground, spreading over huge areas. Sometimes airports, railways and roads are covered in sand and have to be closed.

Buildings often have to be cleared after a sandstorm.



This was once a solid rock. Wind and sand carve desert rocks into strange shapes.



Storms at sea can be dangerous for boats.

Storms at sea

Strong winds make a storm at sea. The waves get bigger as wind blows them across the sea. The wind pushes the waves towards the land, where they crash and tumble onto the beach. These crashing waves are called breakers. Storms at sea can be very dangerous. Boats can be tossed from side to side on the huge waves. People on boats listen to weather forecasts on the radio so that they can find out if a storm is coming.

Snowstorms

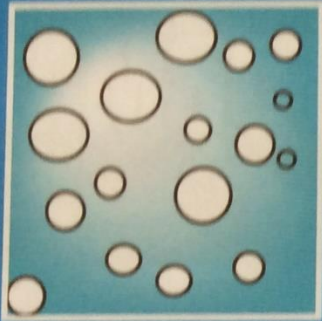
A strong snowy storm that lasts for three hours or more is called a blizzard. During a blizzard, it is extremely cold and heavy falls of snow and strong winds cause problems. It is difficult to see because there is so much snow blowing through the air. People have to dress in very warm clothes when there is a blizzard. This is because there is a danger of frostbite if suitable clothes are not worn. When a blizzard ends, cars often have to be dug out of deep piles of snow called snow drifts.



Snow drifts bury cars deep in snow.

Storms at sea can be dangerous for animals too. Young sea turtles and seals can be washed onto the shore during a storm. They are often caught up in seaweed. This makes it difficult for them to move back into the water when the storm is over.

Storms Information Sheet



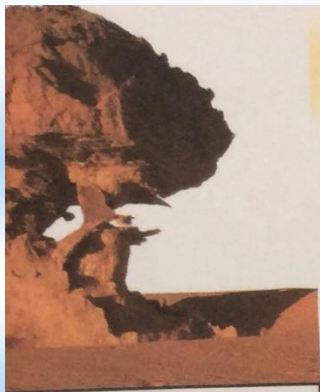
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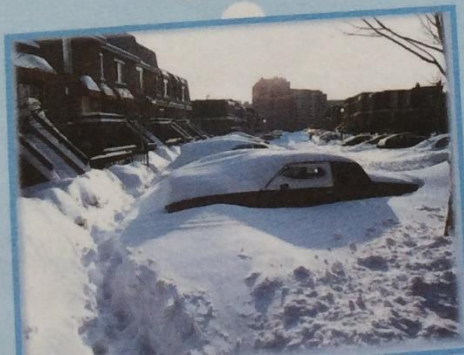
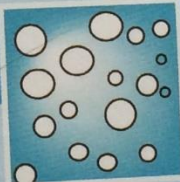
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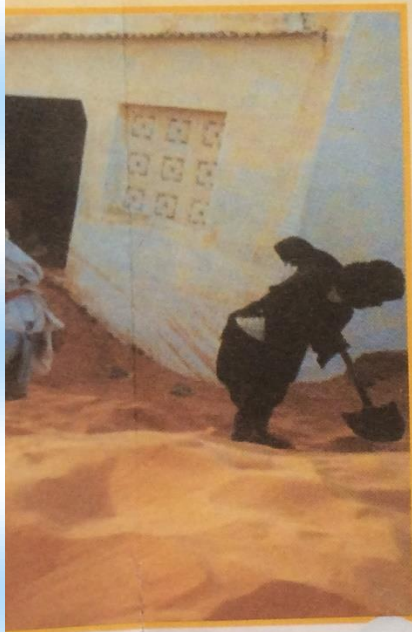


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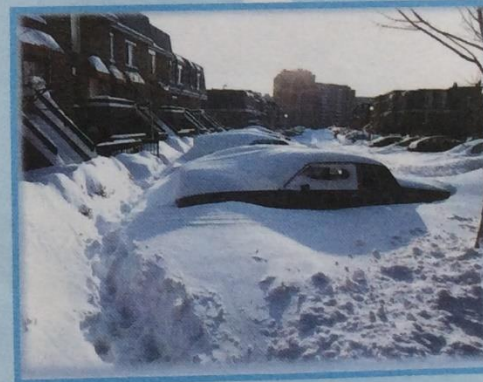
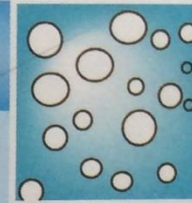


This was once a solid rock.
Wind and sand carve
desert rocks into strange shapes.

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Snowstorms

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Snow drifts bury cars deep in snow.



before thunder.



rumble, a
crack.
Flash of lightning
The air is very hot
around it.
As the cooler air
rises. This



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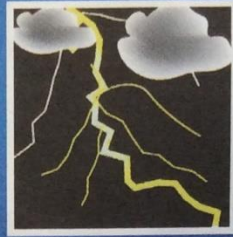


Buildings often have to be cleared after a sandstorm.

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desert

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Thunderstorms explained



Thunder can sound like a rumble, a crackle or just one loud crack. It can be heard after a flash of lightning lights up the sky. Lightning is very hot and it heats up the air all around it. When this hot air touches the cooler air nearby, the hot air explodes. This explosion is the sound we call thunder.

**Lightning can be dangerous,
but thunder cannot hurt you.**

Sand is also blown
sand and red dust.
At the end of the s
settles back onto th
Sometimes airports
have to be closed.

Buildings often have
to be cleared after a
sandstorm.

1

What does this sheet tell you about?

☐

the weather in
England

☐

different kinds of
weather

☐

different kinds of
storm

☐

storms in
seasons

2

What is thunder?

☐

rain and wind
together

☐

hot air exploding

☐

lightning and sand
rubbing together

☐

sun heating up the
clouds in the sky

3

Which words tell you that you should not be afraid of
thunder?

.....

4

Which section of the information sheet tells you about
blizzards?

Write the heading.

.....

5

What
blizzards

6

Look
What

7

How

☐☐

8

Who

9

Who

☐☐

5

What can people do to keep safe if they go out in a blizzard?

.....

6

Look at the section called *Storms at Sea*.

What are breakers?

.....

7

How can storms be dangerous for baby sea turtles?

☐ They can be washed onto the shore.

☐ Sand can be blown into their eyes.

☐ Sand can cover their homes.

☐ They can be frozen in ice and snow.

8

What can sailors do to find out if a storm is coming?

.....

9

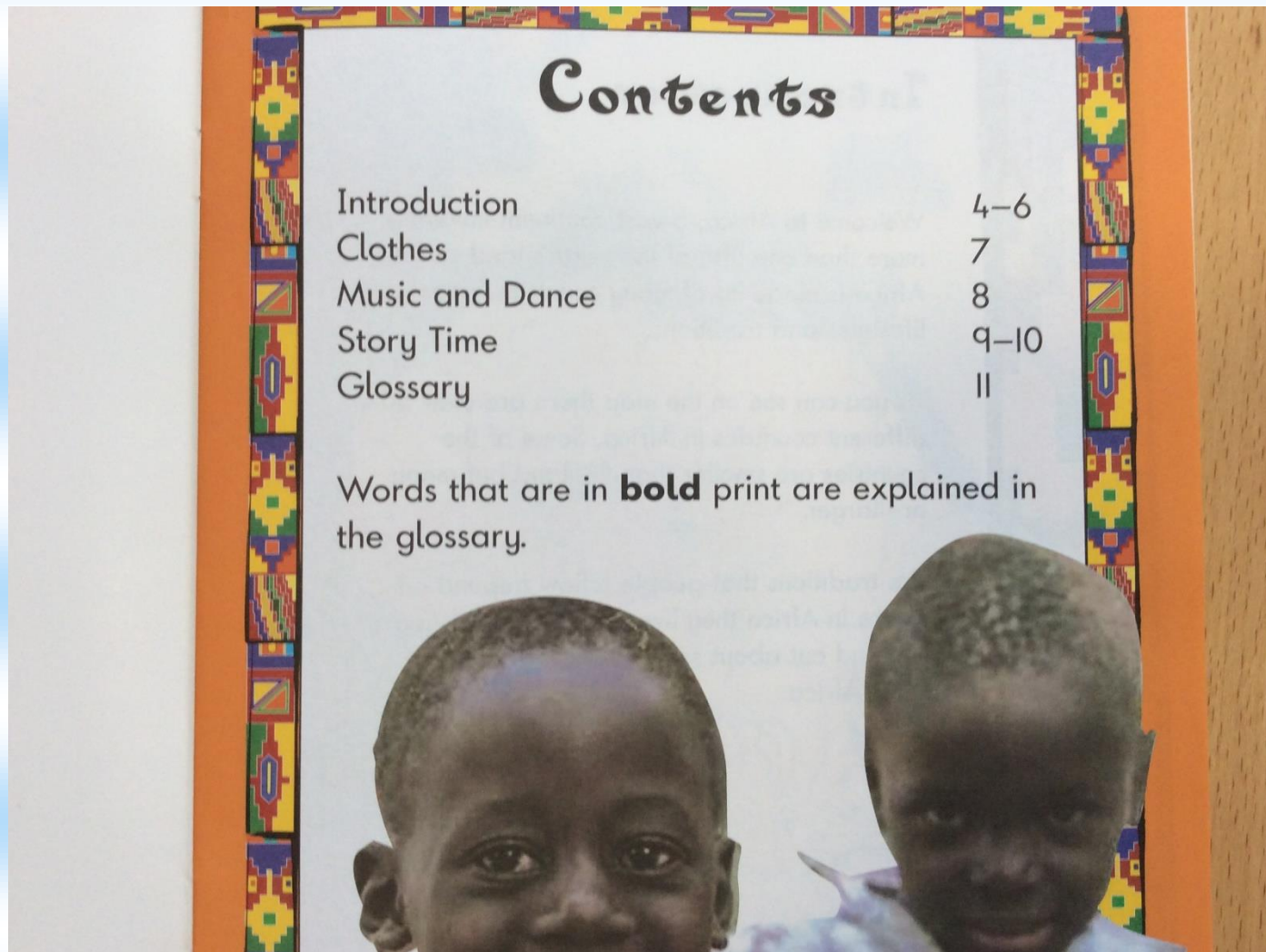
What happens during a sandstorm?

☐ Waves crash onto the beach.

☐ Thunder can be heard overhead.

☐ Blizzards mean it is hard to see.

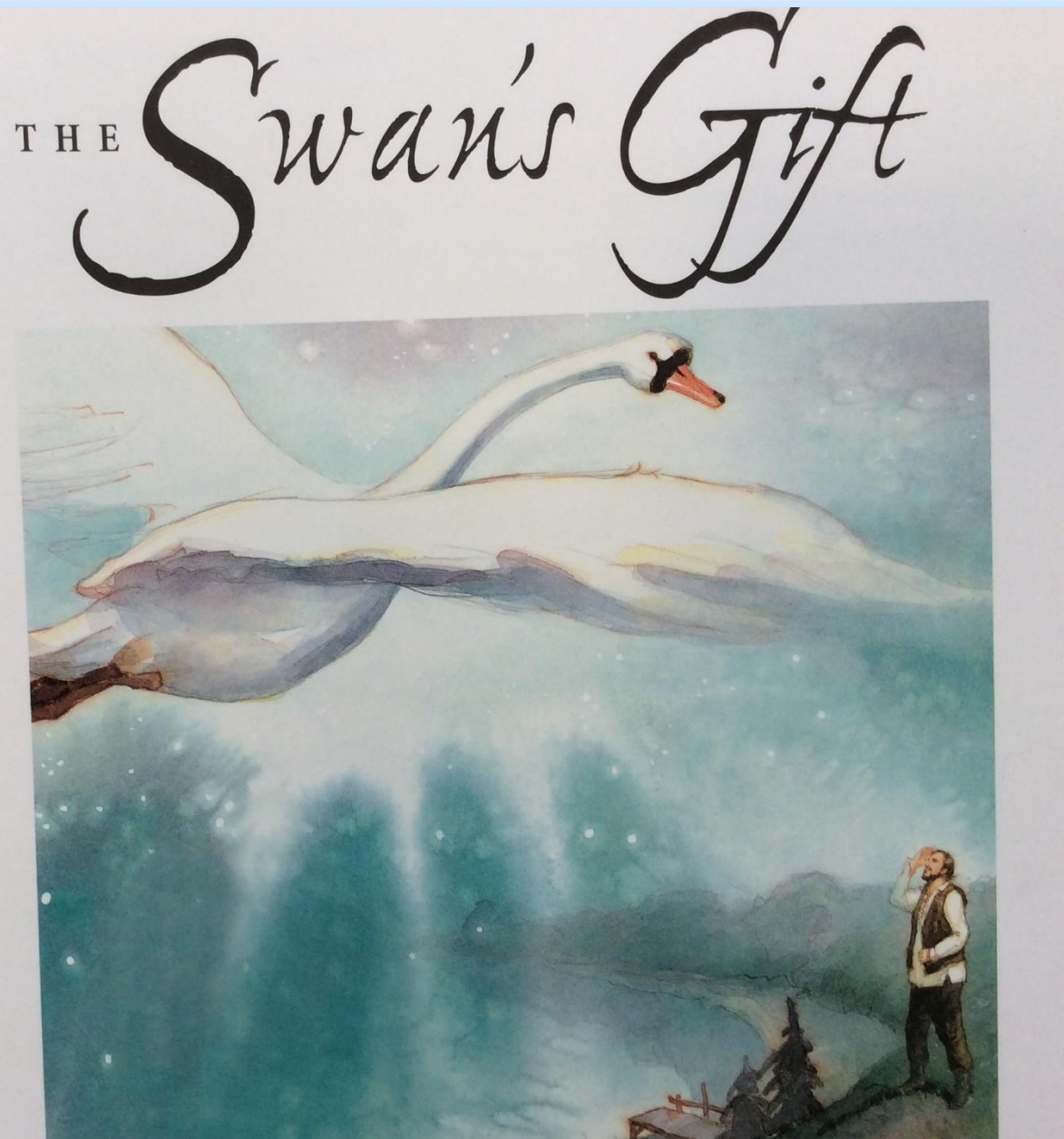
☐ Wind blows sand through the air.



On which page would you find out about what people wear?

How do you know which words in the text can be found in the glossary?

Fiction - Greater depth standard [Year 2]



The Swan's Gift

Anton was a farmer who lived with his wife Rubina and their seven children at the edge of a forest. He worked hard and they were happy for many years. Then one spring the rains didn't fall and Anton's wheat died in the fields.

As winter came on, their food supply grew smaller and smaller.

Soon Anton's shoulders were stooped with worry. Rubina's plump apple cheeks withered. The children no longer sang or laughed or danced, for they were all too hungry.

Every day Anton went out to hunt for food but returned without firing a shot. And every day Rubina added water to the onion soup until there was nothing in the pot but water.

When Anton saw his family crying with hunger he wanted to cry too. But instead he took his gun and went out again into the cold, cold night.

He had to find something for them to eat: a bird or a rabbit. But the black branches were empty of birds and no rabbits crouched in the frozen scrub.

The only tracks Anton saw were his own.



Stop at the end of the first page. Ask your child questions to establish their understanding:

e.g:

- Why did Anton's crops die? [deduction]
- Why did the food supplies get smaller when Winter came? [inference]
- How can you tell that Rubina was getting thinner? *[understanding of language – her plump apple cheeks withered. Children need to explain what this means]*
- Why did Rubina add water to the soup?
- Which words tell you that Anton could not find any animals to hunt? *[no rabbits crouched in the frozen scrub. The only tracks Anton saw were his own-children need to interpret this information and paraphrase].*

Questions without sufficient depth or challenge to develop higher order comprehension skills:

- Who is the main character?
- What is his job?
- Where did he live?

He came to a small hill and knew it was the last one he would be able to climb before his strength was gone.

His feet were numb and his breath rasped in the freezing air. At the top of the rise he stopped to rest, scanning the snow for animal tracks.

In despair Anton turned to go.

Just then he saw below him a lake that had not yet frozen over. Its edge was lacy with ice and at its centre floated a swan of such dazzling beauty that Anton could not look away. Its stark white feathers gleamed against the dark water and as Anton watched, the swan seemed to grow larger until its image filled his eyes.



How do you know Anton was feeling very cold? [*his feet were numb, his breath rasped*]. What does rasped mean do you think?

would be

ing air.
now for

rozen over.
wan of
Its stark
s Anton
ge filled

Suddenly juices flowed into
Anton's mouth.

He could taste succulent
roast swan and see his
children's faces glowing
as his family sat at the table
eating again.



He raised his gun and sighted
down the long barrel.

Anton put his finger on the trigger.

The swan seemed to be looking at him, listening for the shot that
would kill it.

He lowered the gun.

The swan was the most beautiful creature Anton had ever seen.
As he watched, the swan fanned its magnificent wings.

Anton closed his eyes and thought of his family.

Again he raised the gun.

Could Anton really taste the swan? *[no he was imagining the taste]*

What do you think succulent might mean? *[work out from the context]*

Hours seemed to pass. The feathers on the swan's breast moved gently with each beat of its heart, and Anton could feel his own heart beating. He lifted his heavy wet feet, walked a few steps, and then dropped to his knees.

"I can't do it," he said.

"Why not?" asked a voice as soft as snow or feathers ruffling in a gentle wind.

"I cannot kill beauty. If I kill this swan my family will have food for one or two meals. And then what? We will be hungry again and it will have been for nothing."

Anton was too tired to be surprised that he was speaking to the swan or the wind or the night. He was too tired to walk back home. He bowed his head with sadness for his family.



What words in the story tell you that the voice Anton heard was very quiet?

Anton wanted to kill the swan to provide food for his family. What stopped him?

van's breast moved
i could feel his own
walked a few steps,

feathers ruffling in a

nily will have food for
e hungry again and

as speaking to the
ed to walk back
s family.

With a cry the swan lifted its wings, rose from the lake, and circled over Anton, water dropping from its wing feathers. As the water hit the snow it froze into crystals that sparkled in the moonlight. Anton reached out and touched one. It was hard, harder than ice, and did not melt in the warmth of his hand.

"A diamond!" Anton said.

Quickly he scooped up the diamonds that lay in a glittering circle around him. He filled his pockets with them and set off through the snow to a nearby village.

Anton was no longer tired. He no longer felt the cold. He woke up the innkeeper, calling, "I need food."

"Your crops failed," said the innkeeper. "Everyone knows you have no money."

"I have a diamond," said Anton.

"Where would the likes of you get a diamond?" the man scoffed.

"Let me in and I will explain."

The innkeeper fed Anton cold venison and sweet dumplings while Anton told his story, and the innkeeper's wife packed a sledge for him with roast chickens and cheeses and onions and turnips.

Then they sent Anton on his way so that they could begin looking for the magic swan themselves.



Why did the innkeeper want to send Anton on his way?

Questions on the whole story:

Choose a character from the story who was kind. Explain how they showed kindness in the story?

Can you retell the story in order?

nd 5)

(questions on the whole story)

II Put these sentences in the right order by numbering them from **1** to **5**.

The first one has been done for you.

_____ Jewels fell from the bird's wings.

_____ A magical swan appeared.

 1 Anton went hunting at night.

_____ The family feasted on delicious food.

_____ Anton thought about shooting the swan.

7)

What is the message of the Swan's Gift?

Prompt your child if necessary:

e.g. Greed is the way to success.

Bravery leads to disaster

Beauty leads to sadness

Kindness brings its own prize.

Keira Ainsworth

Head Teacher

Maids Moreton CE School

November 2018.