

Teacher notes

Real Comprehension: Teaching Guide and Glossary

How does Real Comprehension work?

1. Introduce the theme

Explore words related to the theme; discuss ideas pupils have about it

(see teacher notes for 'unit overview and guidance')

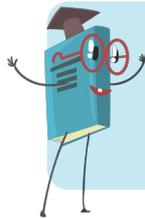


2. Explore the texts (fiction/non-fiction/poetry) by children's authors

Check prior knowledge

READ IN SECTIONS

- Build familiarity with a layered read
- Secure understanding with a close read
- Deepen engagement with supplied activities (e.g. emotion graphing)
- Tackle Big Questions as a class and independently



REVISIT THE WHOLE TEXT

- Practise 'difficult easy' questions
- Discuss pupils' personal responses
- Develop vocabulary with focused lessons

3. Pull it all together

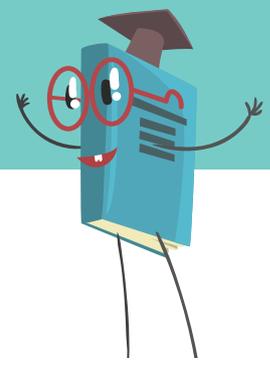
- Explore the theme with the questions provided
- Share whole books and extracts from the reading list
- Relate the theme to wider reading, and children's own experiences.
- Have their ideas changed since the start of the unit?



What is Real Comprehension?

Real Comprehension is a reading comprehension programme for Y1 – Y6. With texts written by experienced children's authors and planning created by highly experienced English consultants, it is an exceptional resource for teaching reading comprehension.

Real Comprehension includes three units for each year group (one per term); each of which provides three texts covering fiction, non-fiction and poetry that are connected to a shared theme such as conservation, first impressions or caring for others. In addition to the three texts, there is also a 'pulling it together' strand to each unit that asks children to reflect on the links between the texts, as well as their own experience and wider/class reading.



The texts themselves cover a wide range of genres including information texts, poetry in different forms, traditional stories including myths and legends and contemporary texts such as blog posts. All have been written for Real Comprehension by successful authors, with the age of the children clearly in mind, meaning that they are appropriately pitched with progression across the year groups.

Teaching with Real Comprehension

The Real Comprehension texts are written for whole class or small group reading. The programme uses a close reading structure so that children read and reread the text to gain deeper understanding. Each unit uses a range of reading techniques such as modelled reading, choral reading and paired reading to build children's confidence, develop fluency and to ensure that they remain active and engaged in their reading.

Detailed annotations identify opportunities to teach retrieval, inference, prediction and vocabulary skills. There are also annotations to guide teachers about when they may need to support children's understanding. These include 'clarifying' – where the annotations may suggest sharing an image, giving an explanation or offering a prompt to ask if any of the children can offer clarification – and 'visualising', where children may be prompted to draw a picture, undertake a short role play or show a facial expression that connects with the text.

It is this connecting with the text that is one of the many strengths of Real Comprehension. The teaching notes for each text begin with a prompt to help children build on their existing knowledge and understanding by activating what they already know. This personal reflection is then built upon so that by the time they have finished analysing the text, children are able to give their own responses to what they have read through expressing opinions and sharing their own feelings.

Each text is accompanied with a range of questions. These include retrieval, inference, prediction and vocabulary questions and all come with answers. There are also a range of ‘difficult easy’ questions to accompany each text. These include True/False responses, sequencing and summarising – formats that children traditionally find difficult to answer, but that with practice become straightforward.

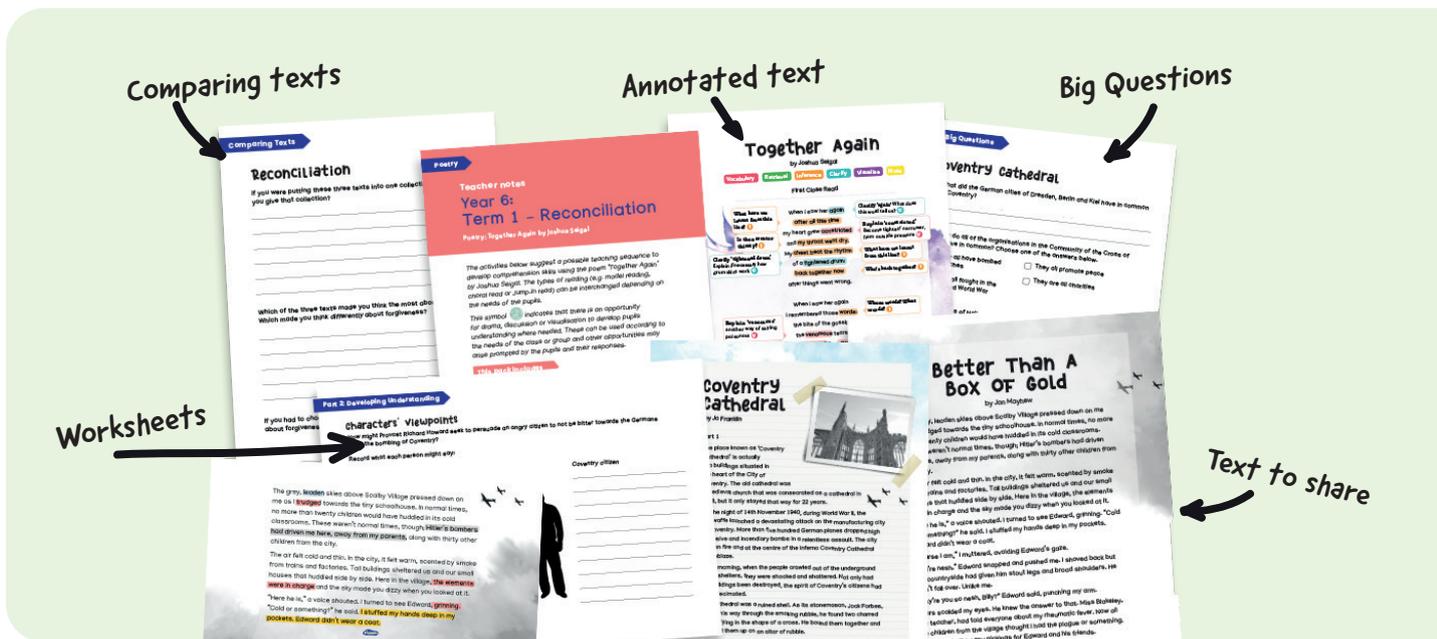
Through the process of repeatedly reading the text, children come to understand it more deeply - and so each text is also accompanied by a number of ‘developing understanding’ questions. These cover a range of skills such as characterisation, narrative structure and visualisation. Typical accompanying activities to these might include: undertaking dramatic activities such as role play; mapping the structure of a story; or drawing what the author has described. Photocopiable resources for activities such as ‘role on the wall’ or ‘emotion graphing’ are also frequently provided to support these deep learning activities.



Vocabulary teaching is at the heart of Real Comprehension. Each text is supported with plentiful annotations which provide definitions and everyday explanations to help clarify words’ meanings. Further focused vocabulary teaching is also included, using some of the words and phrases that appear in the text. In these explicit vocabulary sessions, teachers will find definitions, links to where the focus words appear in the text, and activities to undertake with their class. These language choices are frequently ambitious but accessible due to the use of synonyms and child-friendly expression.

Identifying themes in texts can be extremely tricky, as children need to dig beneath the words on the page to find a moral, message or big idea. By providing children with three texts on a theme, Real Comprehension brings theme to the fore and helps children to see this most tricky aspect of comprehension more clearly. The ‘pulling it together’ strand in each unit is particularly helpful for helping children

to explain their thinking about the texts. Each of the themes occur regularly in children's literature and in the wider curriculum. Once you and your class have become accustomed to identifying the themes in texts, it's likely that you'll want to find more books that explore the issue or idea. To this end, you will also find a selection of expertly chosen books to accompany each of the Real Comprehension themes.



Real Comprehension is a ready-to-use resource based on quality texts and expert planning to save time for teachers. It is also flexible and adaptable to meet the needs of the children and the expertise of the teacher. The texts in each unit can be taught in any order. They can also be adapted to meet the needs of the class - for example, by adding or removing annotations or adding or removing learning activities. Because there are no time specifications, teachers can choose to take as much or little time as they need to help their children truly understand each text, and there is always scope to reread the text more times than specified. The lesson plans are designed very much so that teachers shape, adapt and personalise to best meet the needs of their classes. Real Comprehension can also act as a model for teachers to plan their own close reading lessons using the methods, teaching ideas and resources provided in the programme.

Glossary

Glossary Term	Teaching points	Notes
Big Questions	These are the questions that teachers ask during close reading. These are the important questions that show children understand the text. They are often retrieval or vocabulary questions.	
Close reading	This is a reading strategy that uses short texts or extracts. Children read and reread the text to develop clarity, inference, prediction and monitor their own understanding.	
Choral reading	This is when the teacher and the children read the text together as a group.	
Conscience alley <i>(also known as tunnel or decision alley)</i>	This is a great way of exploring a dilemma faced by the protagonist of a story. The class forms two lines facing each other. One child is picked to be the protagonist, who then walks down the 'alley' or passageway formed by the lines. As they walk the other children tell them their thoughts, concerns and ideas concerning the issue the character is facing. The children must use their voices and gesture to emphasise their ideas. Once the main character has reached the end of the line, they must make a decision about how to act next, explaining their reasons to the rest of the class.	
Copy reading <i>(see also echo reading)</i>	The teacher reads a section or the whole text to the group, demonstrating fluent reading. They then discuss their reading and the techniques they used. The children then take turns to reread to their partner using the strategies demonstrated by the teacher. Their partner judges how well they read and if there were any issues, helps them out with their reading.	

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Dictogloss	This is a type of dictation. The teacher reads a short text several times. As they listen, the children write down the key words they hear. They then rewrite the passage using their keywords to help them. This is a good activity for learning new vocabulary and new sentence structures.	
Difficult Easy questions	These are question formats that children often find difficult but become easier once they've practised using the formats. They are often True/ False responses, sequencing and summarising.	
Echo reading <i>(see also copy reading)</i>	The teacher reads a sentence of a text or a line of a poem and asks the class to read it back in exactly the same way.	
Emotion graph	This is a graph to show how a character feels at key points in a narrative text. It's good for showing children that characters' feeling change over the course of a narrative.	
Fill in the blanks	Children are provided with a text with blanks to show where there are missing words. The children should use their understanding of the text to help them fill in the blanks.	
High Five!	Read a passage to the class. Children should listen and act as the judges, giving marks out of five on their whiteboards. They should provide feedback, commenting on what you did well and how you could improve. Phrasing; use of punctuation; pace; fluency, intonation and expression are all good aspects you may want children to comment on. This technique is particularly good when children are working in pairs as they can use the identified features to give each other marks out of five for their reading.	

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Jump in reading	This is a way of choosing readers to read to the whole class. Start reading then say: 'x jump in'. This child then picks up the reading until you choose the next child to jump in. It is a useful strategy when the children have already read the text a few times. Use your knowledge of the children to help you choose which children would enjoy being chosen to jump in and those who might not enjoy reading on their own to the rest of the class.	
Model reading	The teacher models reading the text to the class. It is a particularly good technique to use the first time the class works with a text as they all get an accurate first reading of the text, they hear correct pronunciation of unfamiliar words such as names and are given a model of fluency by the teacher.	
Paired reading	When two children read a text together. There are different ways to do this and you may alter these depending on the experience of the children and the challenge of the text. For example, they could read in unison, take turns to read a sentence each or choose to read longer passages such as a paragraph each. They should support each other if they become stuck.	
Personal response	This is when children give their own response to a text based on their rereading and deep analysis. Personal responses often involve empathy or connecting to an experience in their own life. Making connections between the text and themselves is at the core of giving a personal response.	
Reading recital	After a period of rehearsing their reading, children perform their rehearsed reading in front of the group or class. They don't need props or costumes, the idea is that they use the text as a script and bring it to life through their reading.	

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Role on the wall	Children are provided with a character outline drawing. On the inside of the figure, they should write information they have directly retrieved about the character. On the outside of the figure, they should write information they have inferred about the character.	
Role play	This is a drama technique where children behave in role as a character from a text. Role plays are frequently best when short and very focused on one key aspect of a narrative. Children don't need props, costumes or scripts to role play and it doesn't need to take place in a special space such as a drama studio or the school hall.	
Visualisation	This is a way of helping children to create an image from a text in their mind's eye. It is an effective way of supporting children to infer meaning from a text.	
Zone of Relevance	Children are provided with a target board and words or phrases from the text. They should sort the words or phrases to show which are the most relevant to the question they've been asked. The most relevant words or phrases go at the centre of the target, the less relevant words are placed in the other zones of the target. If the words are irrelevant, they are placed outside the target.	