

Introduction

Many adults discover that when they are reading aloud to others, they fail to ‘hear’ what they have read. This failure to take in meaning occurs despite the fact that they have relayed the words perfectly and with appropriate intonation and stress. They will glean meaning and retain information most effectively if allowed to read quietly to themselves. Similarly, children’s increased speed and ease at ‘decoding’ text, by combining skills such as word recognition, phonic knowledge and interpretation of contextual clues, may sometimes be at the expense of understanding what they read. It is therefore important that they learn to read for meaning.

You should familiarise yourself with each text before presenting it to the children and make full use of the opening pointer when introducing it. Your knowledge of the children’s abilities will determine whether you read the extract with them first or leave each child to read independently.

These texts and the related questions encourage children to move beyond simple understanding and recall (although these are tested) to look for more complex meaning. The children will use inference and deduction, draw on their own experience and apply it to their reading through empathy, visualisation and prediction. Questions assess the readers’ ability to explain ideas and events, identify structures and observe how writers use language for different effects.

The extracts include fiction and poetry from different times, the work of popular children’s authors, biography, autobiography, information texts, persuasive writing, poems that demonstrate various poetic devices, journalistic writing, a letter and a playscript extract.

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