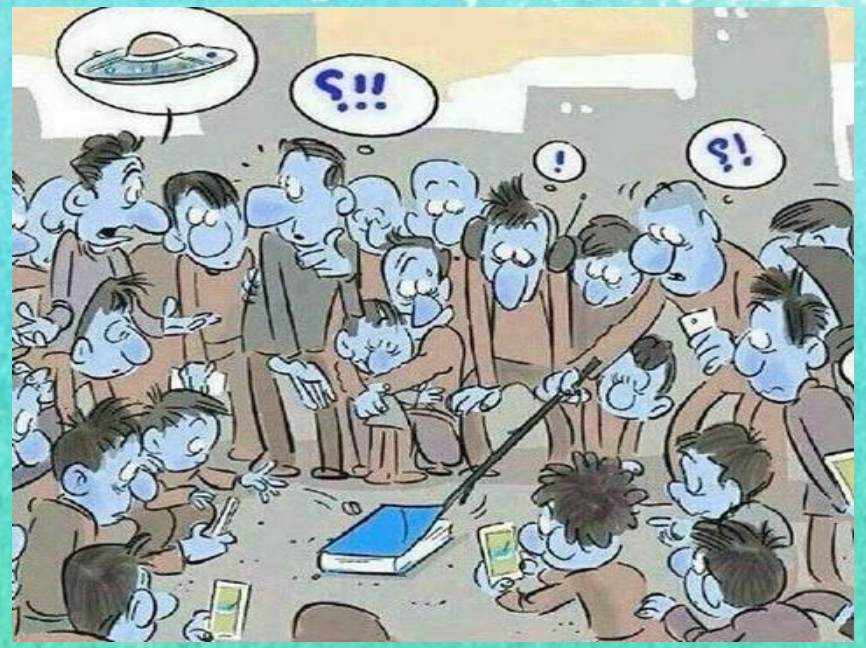


Teaching *for* Comprehension: Rethinking Our Pedagogical Approach

Hillingdon Schools
18-6-25

Dr Wayne Tennent
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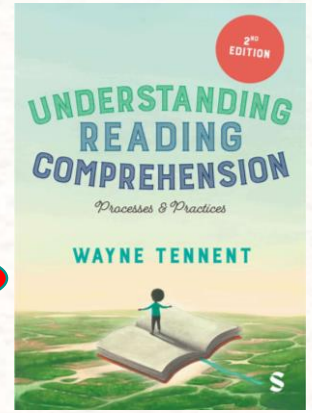
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1. Comprehension: What do we know?

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The Components of Comprehension (Tennent, 2025, in press)



Sentences

Words

Linguistic Processes

General

Experience

Domain

Knowledge Bases

Cultural



Professional thieves operate at this station

Motivation

Metacognitive Processes

Text-type Familiarity

Standards of coherence

Reading Goals

Comprehension Monitoring

Cognitive Processes

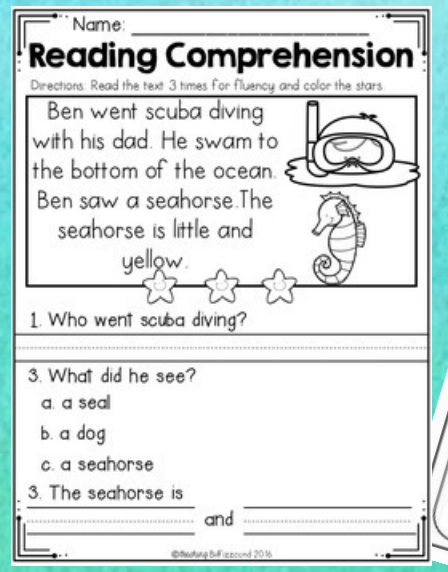
Decoding

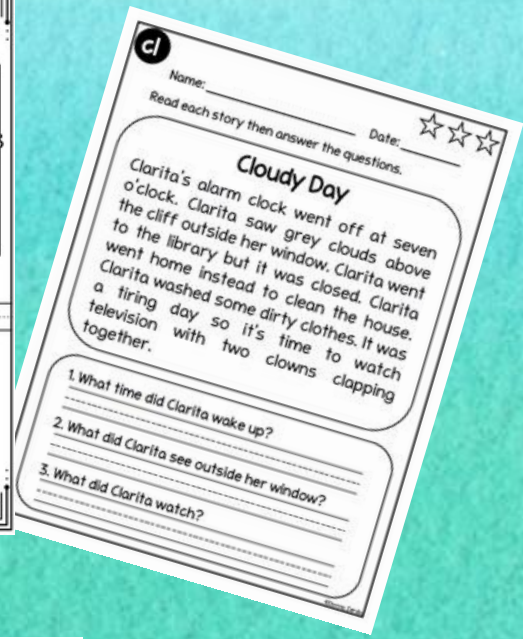
Memory

Inferences

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2. 'Doing' a comprehension



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‘Understanding’ in the National Curriculum (2014) (1)

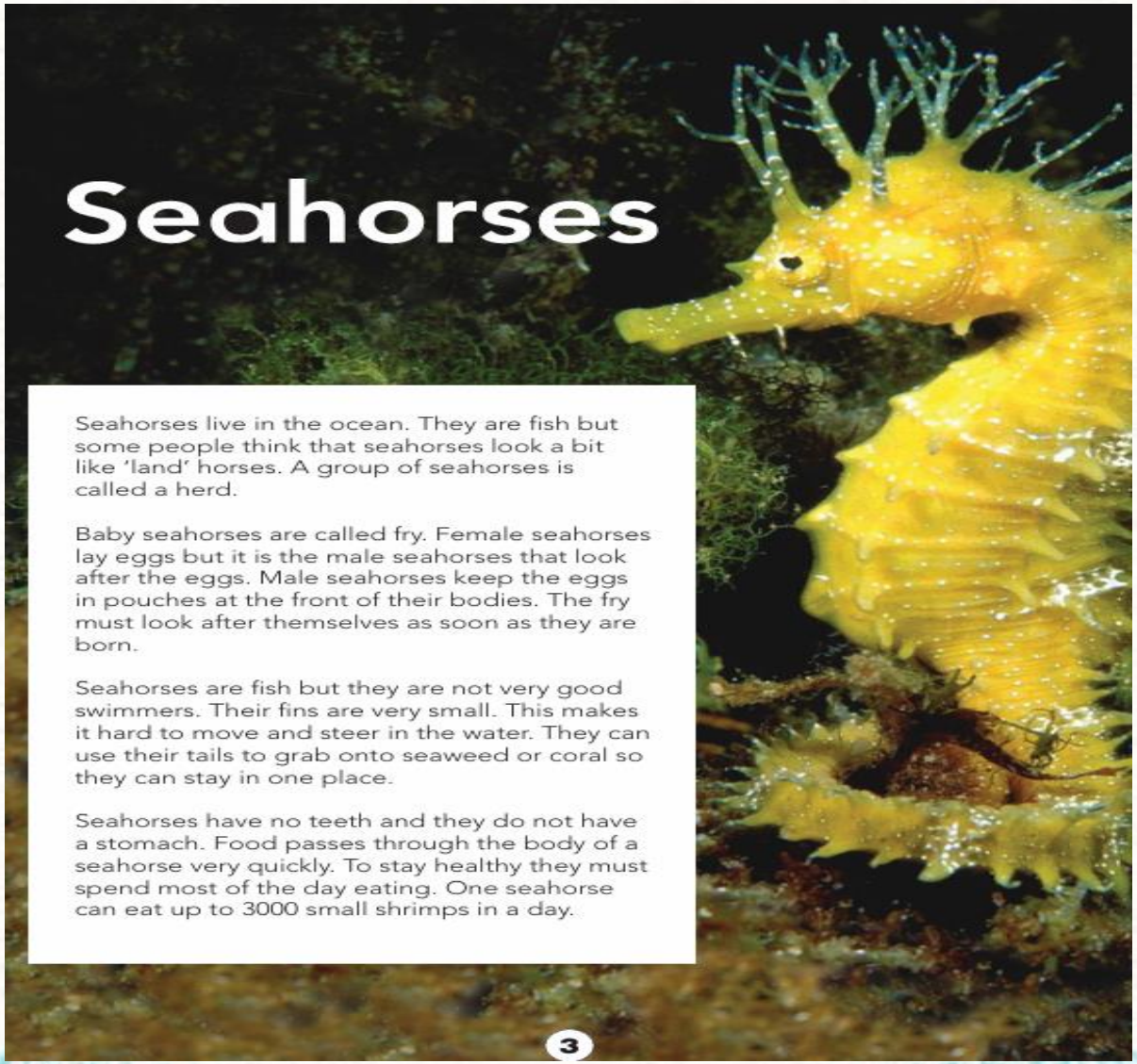
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3 & 4	Year 5 & 6
Understand both the books that they can already read accurately and fluently and those that they listen to by:		Understand what they read, in books they can read independently, by:	Understand what they read by:
Checking that the text makes sense to them as they read, and correcting inaccurate reading		Checking that the text makes sense to them, discussing their understanding, and explaining the meaning of words in context	
Making inferences on the basis of what is being said and done		Drawing inferences such as inferring characters’ feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence	
Predicting what might happen on the basis of what has been read so far		Predicting what might happen from details stated and implied	
	Answering and asking questions	Asking questions to improve their understanding of a text	Asking questions to improve their understanding

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‘Understanding’ in the National Curriculum (2014) (2)

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3 & 4	Year 5 & 6
Understand both the books that they can already read accurately and fluently and those that they listen to by:		Understand what they read, in books they can read independently, by:	Understand what they read by:
Discussing the significance of the title and events			
Drawing on what they already know or on background information and vocabulary provided by the teacher			
		Identifying main ideas drawn from more than 1 paragraph and summarising these	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	

‘Doing; a Comprehension is not teaching – it’s testing (Australian 8-9 Year-Olds Reading Test)



Read *Seahorses* on page 3 of the magazine and answer questions 7 to 11.

7 Seahorses got their name because they

- ○ move like horses.
- ○ eat like horses.
- ○ breathe like horses.
- ○ look like horses.

8 Seahorse eggs are kept

- ○ on coral.
- ○ in a pouch.
- ○ in the seaweed.
- ○ on the sand.

9 What does a seahorse use to attach itself to seaweed?

- ○ its mouth
- ○ its teeth
- ○ its fins
- ○ its tail

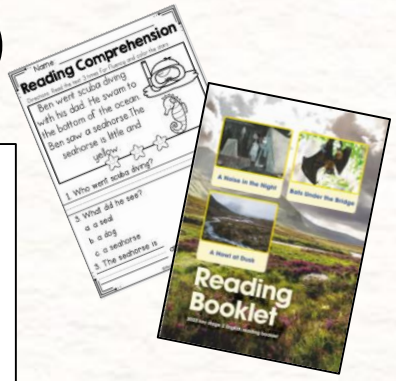
10 Which question is answered in the last paragraph?

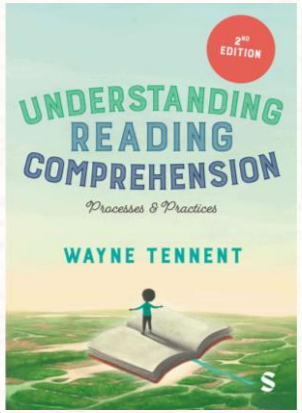
- ○ What are seahorses?
- ○ Where do seahorses live?
- ○ What do seahorses eat?
- ○ How do seahorses move around?

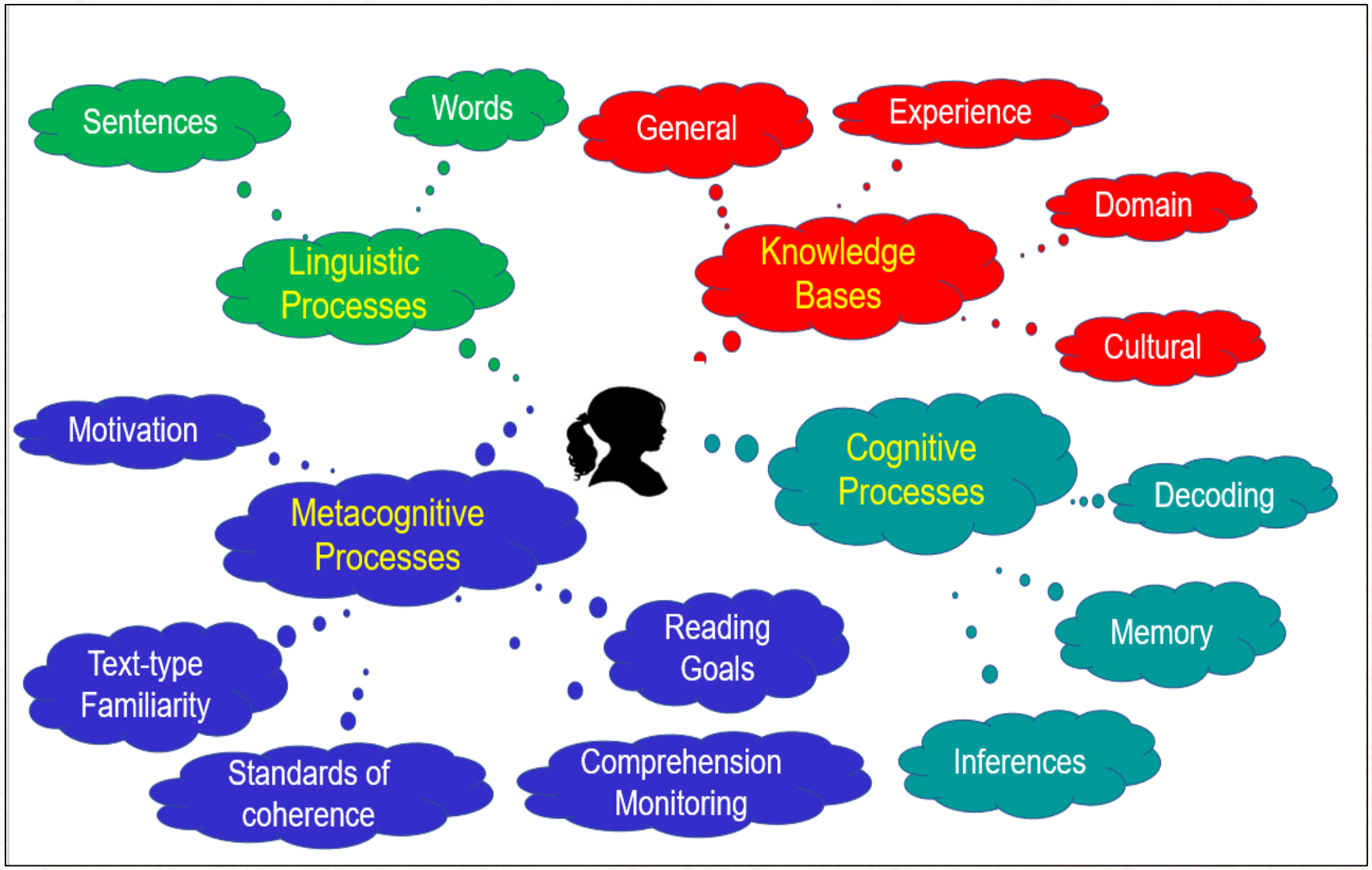
11 The main reason for the picture is to show

- ○ what seahorses eat.
- ○ what seahorses look like.
- ○ how seahorses move.
- ○ where seahorses live.

The Components of Comprehension (Tennent, 2025, in press)







Expected levels do not exist

No test of comprehension can control for background knowledge

Putting a score to comprehension is of little value

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3. Teaching *for* Comprehension

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When Teaching *for* Comprehension we are not necessarily looking for children to provide ‘right’ answers, but rather teaching them to think in different ways.

These ‘ways of thinking’ are relevant to the comprehension of *all* texts.

Developing the Dialogue

Golden Hand

THE MAN loved his wife. He loved her mop of blonde hair. He loved her tawny eyes and warm breath that smelt of peardrops. He loved the way she walked like a penguin. But above all, he loved her solid gold left hand.

Poor woman! She died while she was still quite young, and the man was filled with emptiness. He felt as if he had lost a limb.

On the night after the funeral, the man went back to the graveyard, and he was carrying a spade. He found his wife's grave, and he dug for an hour and dug up his wife. At once, he unscrewed her left hand and took it back home with him. In fact, so as to be completely safe, he hid it under his bottom pillow.

But when the man got into bed, it didn't matter whether he closed his eyes or kept them open: his bedroom still swarmed with dancing white lights, like insects' stings or stars. And little white bones were floating through the air.

Then the man saw his wife—his wife's ghost—drift up to the foot of the bed.

'Where is your mop of hair?' he asked.

'Fallen out,' she said. 'Turned into dust.'

'Where are your eyes?'

'Marbled,' she said. 'Marbled and shrivelled.'

'And your breath?'

'Cold,' she said. 'Cold and wormy.' And then she stepped along the side of the bed. The man could have reached out and touched her.

'And your left hand?' he asked. 'Wife, where is your left hand?'

The woman leaned forward and bent down. 'GONE!' she shrieked. 'IT'S GONE! AND YOU'VE GOT IT!'



Learning Intentions

1. Literal comprehension

Inquiry Question

What happens in the story?

2. Connecting the text

Inquiry Question

What else can we find out?

3. Applying knowledge, experiences and values

Inquiry Question

What do we know already?

Success Criteria

Narrate
Explain
Imagine

Reason
Analyse
Solve
Explore

Speculate
Explore
Evaluate
Discuss
Justify

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Inquiry Questions – Repeated across all texts

Inquiry Question – What happens in the story?

Compare the beginning and the end of the story (hair, eyes, breath, etc.) – She died – Funeral – The man went back to get the hand – put it under his pillow – Wife is haunting him

Inquiry Question – What else can we find out?

Opening line ' The man loved his wife.'

'above all he loved her hand'.

Metaphors – ' filled with emptiness' - 'lost a limb'.

Inquiry Question – What do we know already?

Theme – Justice. Is it ever good to take revenge?

Theme – value. What makes something valuable?

Links to other stories – King Midas

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Choosing reading response tasks

Golden Hand

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Establishing Literal Comprehension

Narrating – Tell a story or describe events

Explaining - making something clear or understandable to someone

Imagining – creating a mental image

Connecting the text

Reasoning – Coming to a conclusion, or making a decision based on what you know.

Analysing – Breaking the complex into smaller parts based on the evidence gathered

Exploring – Search and discover things to find out more about them

Solving – to find an answer to a problem

Apply knowledge, experiences and values

Speculating – Guess possibilities without firm evidence to be certain

Imagining – creating a mental image

Exploring – Searching and discover things to find out more about them

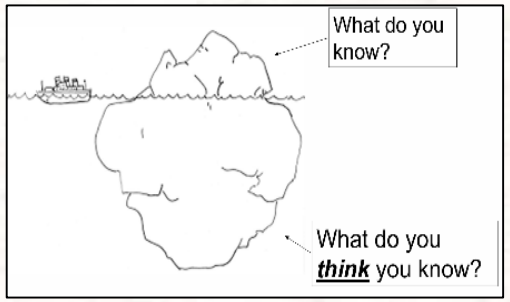
Evaluating – Making a judgement

Justifying – showing that your thinking is reasonable

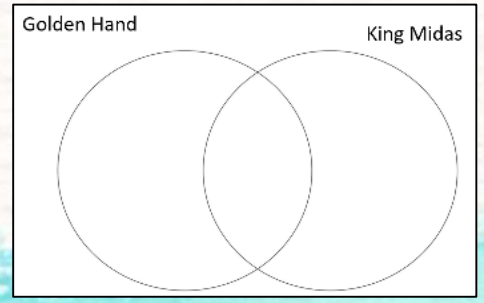
Imagining

The woman at the beginning	The woman at the end

Exploring Characters



Exploring texts



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