

Written Reading Comprehension



‘I read for pleasure and that is the moment I learn the most.’ Margaret Atwood.

Reading
Assessment
Foci

Retrieval

Inference

Language

Text

Authorial

Summary

Prediction

Deduction



We'll use this poem as a model:



Grannie 2018 Reading SAT KS2

It's the writing practise that's important.

For the future, children will need to read and write at speed.

For reference, the SATS test in Year 6 gives three separate texts and three separate lots of questions.

The children have just one hour to do all the reading and all the questions!

Please don't use past papers at home!

I stayed with her when I was six then went
To live elsewhere when I was eight years old.
For ages I remembered her faint scent
Of lavender, the way she'd never scold
No matter what I'd done, and most of all
The way her smile seemed, somehow, to enfold
My whole world like a warm, protective shawl.

I knew that I was safe when she was near,
She was so tall, so wide, so large, she would
Stand mountainous between me and my fear,
Yet oh, so gentle, and she understood
Every hope and dream I ever had.
She praised me lavishly when I was good,
But never punished me when I was bad.

Years later war broke out and I became
A soldier and was wounded while in France.
Back home in hospital, still very lame,
I realised suddenly that circumstance
Had brought me close to that small town where she
Was living still. And so I seized the chance
To write and ask if she could visit me.

She came. And I still vividly recall
The shock that I received when she appeared
That dark cold day. Huge grannie was so small!
A tiny, frail, old lady. It was weird.
She hobbled through the ward to where I lay
And drew quite close and, hesitating, peered.
And then she smiled: and love lit up the day.

Retrieval

Simple

In their simplest form, retrieval questions can ask children to find and copy the exact information from a text. They have to be very proficient at skimming and scanning.

All examples taken from 2018 KS2 SAT poem 'Grannie'



Simple Example

21

What does the poet ask his grannie to do?

1 mark

The answer is in the text - but it's hidden at the end of the verse. The child would need to run their finger down the middle of the page, skimming and scanning for quite a common, small word - 'ask'. It won't jump out as memorable.

Years later war broke out and I became
A soldier and was wounded while in France.
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Trickier (a)

More often, they will ask children to find and copy information that is subtly different to the question stem.

All examples taken from 2018 KS2 SAT poem 'Grannie'



Trickier (a) Example

17

How did the poet's grannie react when he behaved badly?

1 mark

The answer is in the text but it relies on the children understanding the word 'scold' and also linking 'no matter what I'd done' to behaving badly.

I stayed with her when I was six then went
To live elsewhere when I was eight years old.
For ages I remembered her faint scent
Of lavender, the way she'd never scold
No matter what I'd done, and most of all
The way her smile seemed, somehow, to enfold
My whole world like a warm, protective shawl.

Retrieval

Trickier (b)

They can be posed as multiple choice questions and true/false questions.

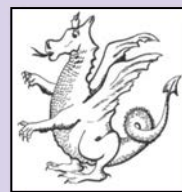
Plausible distractor - could mix up place of wounding

Multiple choice & true/false questions always have plausible and implausible distractors. A child needs to recall the meaning of the text enough to get rid of the implausible ones quickly.

Some options will be word for word in the text, other will be paraphrased.

The plausible distractor will be very close to the right answer. The child must check carefully referring to the text to decide.

Trickier (b) Example



Which of these statements are true and which are false?

| Statement | T/F |
|--|-----|
| The poet was wounded close to the town where granny lived. | F |
| Grannie looked after the poet when he was six. | T |
| Grannie hesitated when she saw the poet in the ward. | T |
| The poet was always lame. | |

Implausible distractor

Trickiest (c)

These are usually ordering or matching pairs statements.

They're tricky as the child has to read the whole text again to order events (summary question).

It relies on them memorising the position of different themes in the text - see next slide for more information.

Also, the child cannot order a single one wrong!

Trickiest Example



28 Number the following sentences from 1–5 to show the order in which they happen in the poem.

The first one has been done for you.

The poet arrives in France. ☐

The poet lives with his grannie. ☒

The poet is injured. ☐

The poet's grannie visits him. ☐

The poet writes to his grannie. ☐

1 mark

Most common error was mixing up the final 2 statements, even though in reality the order should be clear.

Possibly reading fatigue by the latter part of the poem - stamina is important - reading every day for 20 minutes!

**For all retrieval questions,
the ability to remember
paragraph/verse themes
is very important.**

**The child needs to know
where to go back to
(quickly).**

**Check this with your child
but asking where they
would find information
about a certain topic.**

**Does their finger quickly
go to the right place?**

Where do we
find out about
the poet's life
as an adult?



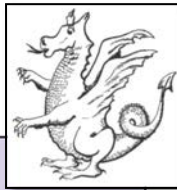
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Language



Language questions check that children know the meaning of less common words and phrases. Thus, they test the child's knowledge of →

- ★ word synonyms
- ★ common idioms
- ★ the way figurative language has been used.

An idiom is a term whose meaning cannot be determined from the literal meanings of the words i.e. *it was raining cats and dogs outside.*

Here's some more common figurative language examples:

- ★ **Simile** : using 'as' or 'like' to compare two or more things: *The tunnel was like a huge mouth.*
- ★ **Personification**: giving human characteristics to a something that is non-human: *The leaves whispered secrets as the dancing breeze blew.*
- ★ **Hyperbole**: deliberate exaggeration: *the tree line stretched as high as the moon.*
- ★ **Metaphor**: saying something is something else as a comparator:
a) He gave a wolfish smile
b) The tunnel was a huge mouth waiting for me to enter.

Language

All examples taken from 2018 KS2 SAT
poem 'Grannie'

Example

Here the child needs to have heard the phrase 'seized the chance' before or be aware that opportunity is similar in meaning to 'chance'.

They may have heard the word 'seizure' not seized which could be confusing for them.

20

Look at the verse beginning: *Years later...*

Find and **copy** a group of words that means the same as 'took the opportunity'.

1 mark

Years later war broke out and I became
A soldier and was wounded while in France.
Back home in hospital, still very lame,
I realised suddenly that circumstance
Had brought me close to that small town where she
Was living still. And so I seized the chance
To write and ask if she could visit me.



Language

All examples taken from 2018 KS2 SAT poem 'Grannie'

Example

Here the child needs to know two synonyms for 2 marks - both vividly and recall.

22

*She came. And I still **vividly recall**...*

What do the words *vividly recall* mean?

2 marks

So ideally, through long term exposure to books and talk, children will know what some less common words mean. But what happens if they don't?

On the next slide are some strategies to support them...



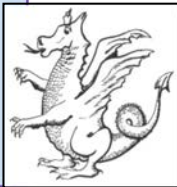
Teaching strategies for unknown words (in order of usefulness):

She came. And I still vividly recall
The shock that I received when she appeared

1. Think about the class of the word (s) you are looking at. What does that tell you about the word and its purpose?

For example, vividly is an adverb of manner - thus, its purpose is to give additional information about an action or the way something is said.

1. Take the suffix off the root word - particularly adverbs. You may be more familiar with the word as an adjective = **vivid**.
1. Think about where you might have heard that word in 'real life' i.e. **vivid dream, vivid colours** & think of a word that might mean the same linked to the picture/sentence in your head.
1. Try your idea in the sentence from the text, adding back on the -ly i.e. **'clearly'**
1. Read the few sentences surrounding this sentence, does your word make sense for the text? For example in Granny, the words vividly recall link to the word 'shock'. Does your word link to this?



More practise questions...

The author used the word *undulating* . What does this tell you about the waves?

What does the phrase *'bite the bullet'* tell you about what the character needed to do next?

What is the writer telling you when they say that Grannie *'never scolded'*.





Inference questions check a couple of things:

1. That children understand what effect the author's choice of words & phrases has on the reader.
2. What effect the author's choice of how to structure the text (its layout and its order) have on the reader's understanding of the content, specifically →
 - a) The way a character behaves and thinks.
 - b) How they perceive a setting through the way it is described.
 - c) The impression they get of a character through the character's behaviour, speech and actions towards others.
 - d) How they (as a reader) use their knowledge of what's happened in the current story and other stories to support their thinking.
 - e) What's the general atmosphere or feeling that the text generates at different points - through the author's language choices.

Inference

A common error in this question was the children forgetting to actually say their impression *i.e. not saying, 'she is kind' or 'she is protective'*. Instead they quoted exact excerpts from the text - treating the question as a retrieval one.



Example Questions:

18

The poet describes his grannie as standing *mountainous between me and my fear*. This makes her sound big and powerful.

What other impressions do you get of his grannie in the same verse?

Give **two** impressions.

1. _____

2. _____

2 marks

24

*She hobbled through the ward to where I lay
And drew quite close and, hesitating, peered.*

Why does she hesitate?

1 mark

For this one, the children had to remember what had happened before
i.e. *the poet was injured and lame or it
had been a long time since Grannie
had seen the poet.*

Of course, they also had to know what
'hesitate' meant too!

**Language is
everywhere...**



Example Questions:

27

The experience in the last line could best be described as...

Tick **one**.

amusing.

☐

shocking.

☐

puzzling.

☐

comforting.

☐

1 mark

For this one, the children had to remember what the relationship between Grannie and the poet was like, from all the clues they had had so far. I think of this as deduction too as they have to collect clues throughout the whole text.

Very difficult if you're not reading for meaning!

Again there are implausible answers that the child should dismiss straight away. Some children did not dismiss *amusing* as there was a smile, but this means they didn't understand the rest of the text!

Deduction

Inference

1. What do those words make you feel about the character?
2. Why did she decide to do that?
3. What picture does that description create in your head?
4. What impression do you get of Grannie?
5. What do you think she was thinking when she approached him?
6. What suggests that she was reluctant to go close?
7. How can you tell that Jess was nervous?
8. What does Jess think about Em?
9. Why is Em so impatient with Jess?

So, ways to help at home...

Best kind of question:

Make a statement about the text. Ask the child to agree or disagree. They must justify their answer i.e.

The poet had an unhappy childhood.



These are linked to the layout, structure & order of the text.

Techniques:

- a) Look from afar first - what can you say straightaway about the layout ?
- b) Does this help you understand what text type it is?
- c) Is it fiction or nonfiction ?
- d) If it's nonfiction, think purpose: explain, persuade or inform ?
- e) If it's fiction: modern or classic? Sci-fi, adventure or fantasy?

Example Questions:

Why is the poem arranged in this order?

What is the purpose of the subheading in paragraph 2 (not Grannie)?

What section did the author wish to emphasise? How did he do this?

What is the impact of starting with the poet's childhood experiences?

How is this writing different to the writing in the previous text?





The Giant Panda Bear

Panda bears are very popular animals, partly because of their unusual appearance and partly because there is something mysterious and fascinating about them. However, their numbers are falling. It is thought that only around 1600 giant pandas still survive in the wild.

Appearance

Giant pandas have the same type of body shape as other bears. They have thick black and white fur, which some scientists think may be to disguise them in the snowy and rocky surroundings where they live. An adult can grow up to 1.5 metres and weigh up to 150 kilograms. They might look cute but they have razor-like claws. They also have powerful jaws for crushing and grinding bamboo!

Habitat

Giant pandas in the wild live on mountainous slopes in western China. Their habitat is densely populated with fir trees and bamboo. It is the forests in these mountains that attract the panda as bamboo is their favourite food.

Diet

In the wild, their main diet is bamboo. To survive, they need to eat for most of the day. In fact, they eat 15 to 30 kilograms of food every day and spend 10 to 16 hours feeding. In zoos, they have a specially prepared diet of bamboo, eggs, fish and honey.

Cubs

Newborn cubs weigh around 150 grams (about the weight of an apple) and are all white at birth. The black spots develop after about a month. They begin eating bamboo at six months and weigh 31 to 36 kilograms at the end of the first year. Cubs stay with their mother for two to three years, reach maturity at five to seven years and live in the wild for about 25 years.

Other interesting facts

- Giant panda bears have to eat every day which means, unlike other bears, they cannot hibernate in the winter.
- Giant pandas' bodies are able to digest meat but they rarely eat it.
- Until recently, scientists thought that pandas spent most of their lives alone, but new studies show that small groups of pandas can share a large territory.

Non -fiction

In comprehension tests, children are always exposed to different genres of writing - here's another two texts from the 2018 SATs paper. Remember, Grannie was also included as the middle text.

Fiction

Albion's Dream



There were rooms in the old farmhouse which I never saw used and which smelt of a past that held extraordinary fascination for me: little windows where unknown ancestors had sat on autumn evenings; old leather-lined bookcases with books that no one had handled for fifty years; dust that no one had bothered to remove; piles of candle wax in unlikely corners; huge chamber pots and cracked basins, and everywhere a great generosity of space.

Outside there was a big lawn hardly walked on, flowerbeds hardly looked at, a vegetable garden which always produced too much, a vast horse chestnut with enough conkers to satisfy the needs of a whole village of boys, a second lawn that nobody ever sat on, and the poignant smells of animals and harvests of a bygone age.

Summary

31

Look at the first two paragraphs.

Which sentence below **best** describes the farmhouse?

Tick **one**.

It had always been a lifeless place.

☐

No one ever went there by choice.

☐

It seemed stuck in the past.

☐

The outside was better looked after than the inside.

☐

1 mark

Summarising a theme - from the information you've had so far...

Again plausible and implausible distractors...



These questions are probably the trickiest. They usually ask children to think about the text as a whole or the theme of a paragraph. You've seen a retrieval one early on in the video.

Example Question:

Can you summarise in a sentence the opening part of the story?

What was the most important message in this book?

What do you know now about the character that you didn't know before?

Prediction



These questions are also tricky: everyone can give an opinion within a prediction BUT it must be backed up with evidence from the text.

There's also a lot of writing involved, they're usually at the end of a long test (3 mark questions) and they usually involve inference and deduction to create a authentic prediction: PEE

The good news is that there are several possible answers - as long as the point can be justified and evidenced.

Question: Will Grannie and the poet see more of each other from now on?

Point : Make the point clearly - *I think that Grannie and the poet will stay in contact now.*

Explanation: *because Grannie was pleased to see the poet and he was so pleased to see her.*

Evidence: *I know the poet was pleased because it says 'she smiled and love lit up the day.'*

Prediction



More examples:

1. Jess is in a difficult position. What will she do next?
1. Based on what you know about Em, how will she react to....?

Authorial



Authorial questions very much pull everything else together with a focus on the purpose of the text, the audience for the text and the reasons why the writer has chosen the techniques they have to engage the reader.

Here's some examples linked to a narrative text about two boys snorkeling and coming across a secret cave.

1. What is the main theme of the second paragraph?
2. What other word could the author have used instead of X?
3. In paragraph 4, what technique does the author use to help the reader understand that the cave looks dangerous?
4. In the paragraph starting 'as they got closer to the rock', which do you think is the most effective way that the author explains how Jack feels at that point?
5. Where in the text does the writer use figurative language most effectively?
Explain your answer using evidence from the text.
6. In the paragraph starting 'Ben looked at him...' why does the writer avoid using direct speech?