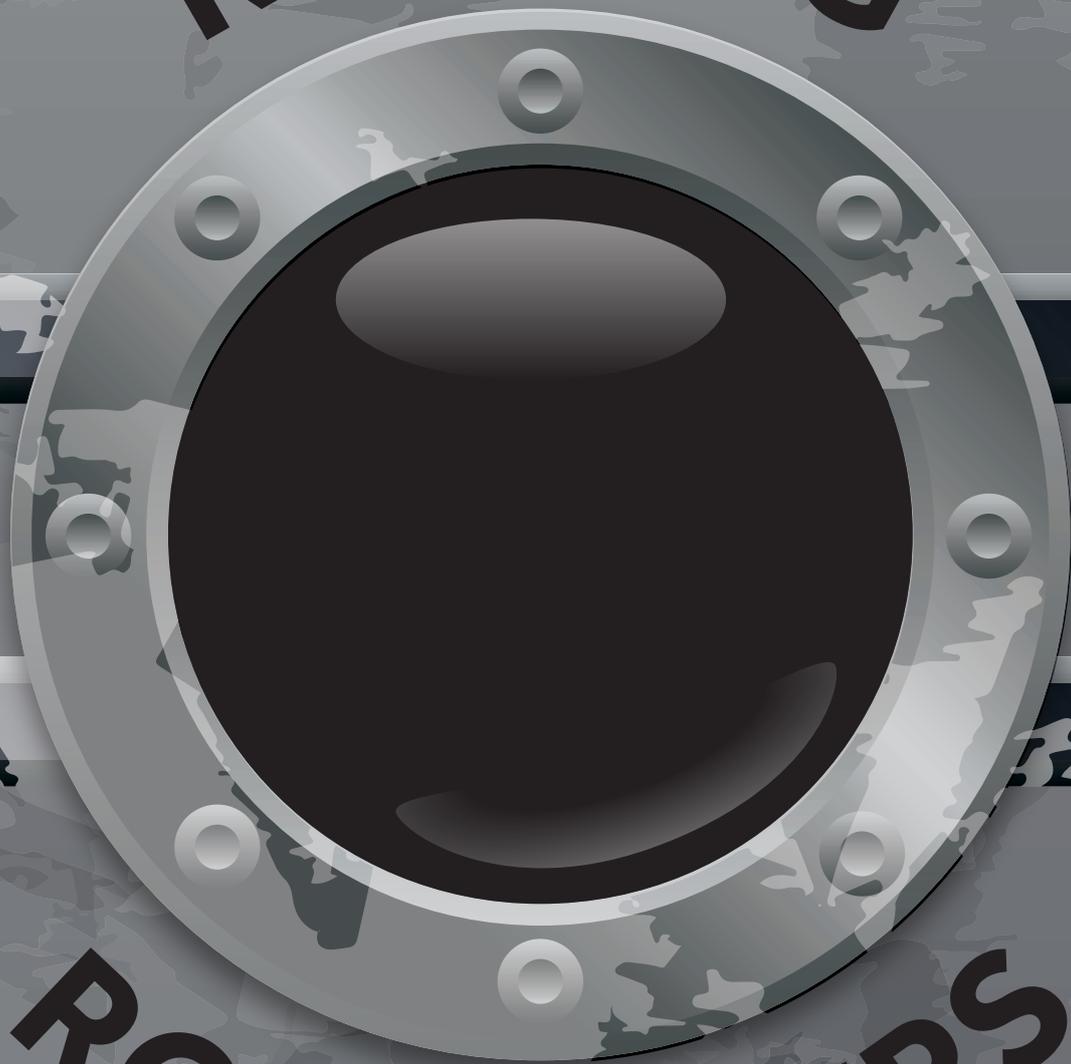


READING



ROCKETEERS



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Introduction

Reading Rocketeers has been written for those readers who have secured their ability to decode but still lack confidence in their reading ability and require support in order to strengthen and develop core reading skills.

Designed as a Reading Intervention tool for teaching those who struggle with comprehension, this resource is easily adaptable to help learners secure expected levels of reading attainment by the end of Key Stage One or to use with weaker readers in Key Stage Two and beyond.

This is achieved by enabling learners to focus upon and engaging with three key elements of reading comprehension:

- The explicit teaching and learning of specific higher order reading skills including deductive and inferential reasoning.
- Creating opportunities for wider understanding of contextualised language in order to ensure concrete understanding of what has been read and create important links both within the text and beyond.
- Developing meaningful fluency that supports and enhances deeper understanding of the text.

Setting up your reading group

Research suggests that the optimum number of readers within any given Reading Intervention group is six. This is particularly important when teaching weaker or less confident readers. It maximises the interaction, discussion and learning opportunities for all, reduces the risk of individual voices being lost or undervalued and provides a safer platform in which all members of the group can express themselves freely and explore both the text and each other's opinions in more depth.

It allows the Guide to monitor individuals within the group more effectively, providing them with valuable feedback that is immediate and pertinent to their needs.

With this in mind, it should be noted that the effectiveness of Reading Intervention sessions has been shown to be reduced when fewer than four or more than eight learners are grouped together at any one time.

How to use this book

Designed for simplicity and ease of use, this book can be used in one of two ways:

- A] As a stand-alone resource to be used daily over a five-week period as part of a robust Reading Intervention programme for those readers who are working towards expectations but who lack the necessary skills and opportunities required to move their reading forward.
- B] As an additional resource to supplement an existing Reading Intervention programme in order to broaden a learner's exposure to a wider range of texts and experiences.

Key focus

The key focus is the explicit teaching and learning of specific higher order reading skills.

By providing them with a well-structured programme, one that includes high-quality discussion and opportunities to apply what is being taught, learners will:

- Be aware of a variety of skills and strategies needed to improve their own reading.
- Understand how each of these works and why they are important.
- Feel confident enough to apply a particular skill or strategy when reading independently.

Choosing the text

The texts contained within this book have been carefully sequenced. A word count is provided in the lesson plan, together with the level of difficulty each text is considered to be:

Easier Medium Harder

This will help strengthen an individual's reading stamina as they are exposed to longer and more complex texts. However, this sequencing is meant only as a guide and discretion should be used when selecting an appropriate text to use with any particular group.

Orientation questions

Ease your learners into the text. Share the text's title. Invite them to talk about what they think the text might be about and how this relates to their personal experiences. This will help root their reading experience in the familiar and allow them to make valuable links later on in the session.

For those in the group who lack the knowledge or experiences necessary to access and explore the text fully (often called Cultural Capital) then this is an opportunity for the Guide to introduce the general theme of the text and link it to the title. Simple orientation questions are provided to help structure this opening conversation.

This soft introduction can also be facilitated by showing the group an object, a photograph or the sharing of a personal experience associated with the text. The group can then be asked to consider what the story might be about, where it might be set, which characters might appear and justify why they think this.

The importance of listening to the text

One obstacle less able readers must overcome is their inability to form a strong visual narrative while reading a text.

Without the need to focus on the text in written form, encourage each learner to create pictures in their head and recreate what they hear in as much detail as they can. This can be achieved in a variety of ways, either drawing ideas as a single picture or as a series of pictures in the style of a comic or story board.

This exposure to the narrative as a pre-reading activity encourages learners to develop a stronger working memory – the ability to make links within different parts of the text rather than simply trying to remember what has happened.

This shift in focus is important if the reader is to move away from focusing on the mechanics of reading as their main goal (the endeavour to get to the end of the sentence, paragraph or page smoothly without making a perceived mistake) and places comprehension at the heart of the reading process.

It also affords the Guide the ability to judge the speed at which the text is read to the group, modelling the reading process and placing the correct stresses and intonation on key words and phrases in order to bring the text to life. It supports the listener as they locate and retell the narrative in their mind's eye.

Creating a strong visual narrative

Not every picture drawn will contain every element of the story. However, the sharing of each other's pictures will act as an important recap and allow you to draw attention to key words and phrases that they are about to come across in the text itself.

An exemplar picture is supplied with each lesson so that the group can compare their efforts with that of the illustrator. Discussion can then take place as to why certain characters and objects have been located in the picture in specific places and what this might tell us about the story as a whole.

This snapshot in time helps create an overall sense of what is happening in the story and encourages the use of contextualised language. It also provides an interesting opportunity to ask what was happening before this snapshot was taken and how it might change in the immediate and longer term - what has led us to this point in the story and what might the repercussions be that follow?

Reading the text

Now that the reader has a greater awareness of what is happening in the narrative, including having discussed key events, words and phrases, the group is ready to be given the text without any picture cues.

Dependent upon the group before you, you can allow your readers to access the written text in one of two ways:

- I. Provide the group with the text as a whole, giving time for them to read the text on their own or to follow the words on the page as you read the story again.
- II. Layer the text gradually by using the power point presentation accessible by scanning the QR code included within each lesson plan.

Do not ask individuals to read out loud.

This is a valuable opportunity for the Guide to model the reading process and to demonstrate the pleasure reading can bring to the reader. It will also help prevent individuals placing too much emphasis on the decoding process and remove the potential stress of having to read out loud in front of others.

The important aspect of reading fluency will be considered at a later stage.

Understanding the narrative as a whole: Gist

Before looking at specifics within the text, it is important to understand the text as a whole. What kind of text is it? Where is it set? Who has it been written for and why?

This allows the listener to 'tune in' to the narrative - the language, tone, pace and inflections of the speaker's voice combining to help the listener gain a strong sense of what is happening. It gives the text context.

It also helps the group consider broader areas that impact understanding such as setting, audience, purpose and writing style.

Understanding specifics within the text: Literal

Now that we have a broad understanding of the text we can begin to focus upon the detail, sign-posting specifics within the text in order to give the text greater substance. This attention to specifics within the text is essential. It helps anchor the narrative and provides important stepping stones that allow the reader to walk through the text, explore it more fully and gain a wider appreciation of what is happening within the text and why.

This detail not only helps join the dots between various parts of the text together but also gives the text its vibrancy. It allows the reader to 'filter out' non-essential text and instead focus on specific words, phrases and grammatical constructions essential when discovering meaning.

This mapping out of the narrative in more detail strengthens core scanning and skimming techniques, enabling the reader to find key words quickly and read around them to retrieve information. Together with vocabulary, it gives the text cohesion and strengthens Working Memory.

Understanding the detail: Deductive & Inference

This is the main focus of the session and a substantial amount of time needs to be given over to it.

Less confident readers often enjoy building their deductive reasoning skills - the looking for clues and evidence in the text that point to their answer being correct. These clues can usually be highlighted on the page itself.

However, reading between the lines and developing inference skills is much more difficult. Answers are often ambiguous and open to interpretation. Coupled with the fact that they are not necessarily right or wrong, it is easy to see why this higher order reading skill is often the most problematic for the less confident reader.

For this reason, it is strongly suggested that the Guide familiarise themselves with both the text and its answers before the session begins. This will maximise discussion and facilitate greater critical thinking.

Improving vocabulary

Developing a reader's personal word bank is essential. The knowledge of what particular words mean, together with having a sound understanding of what effect these words have upon the reader, is the glue that binds all other reading skills together.

For this reason, it is important to consider carefully the improvement of a reader's vocabulary in two distinct areas:

1. Word Knowledge:

- Meaning: Are they able to articulate what a word means and understand how and why a similar word (or synonym) is subtly different?
- Roots: Can they work out what an unknown word might mean because it relates to a word they already know or have already seen?
- Context Clues: Can they deduce the meaning of an unfamiliar word using clues within the text?

2. Word Choice:

- Impact: What effect does this word have upon the text and its reader?
- Speculate: Why do they think an author has chosen this particular word rather than use another and what does this mean to us as future storytellers?

Key words

Simple cue cards are available to encourage readers to sound down specific key words and phrases that appear in the text.

However, it is important that readers are not confined to these words. Others chosen, whether taken directly from the text or indirectly as part of the group's discussion, should also be considered and explored further in order to widen their exposure to and interaction with contextualised language.

Summarise/Predict/Evaluate:

Now that the text has been considered in more depth, it is important that individuals are given the opportunity to reflect upon both the text and the reading experience itself.

Questions provided in this section have been deliberately left open so as to encourage personal responses. They have been split into three key question types:

Summative: How effective is the title of the story and am I able to suggest an alternative?

Predictive: What do I think might happen next in the story and why do I think this?

Evaluative: Can I reflect upon an issue raised within the story and discuss it more fully?

Independent reading

Should the Guide wish to check an individual's comprehension of a text, additional independent worksheets are available.

If these are being used as an assessment tool, then no teacher input should be given.

Once completed, the Guide can retain their answers for evidence and assess which aspects of comprehension an individual is struggling with. For this reason, the additional independent pages correspond directly with those questions considered in the guided session.

This can be coupled with a Fluency Check to provide a well-rounded assessment of a child's understanding of the text.

Fluency check

Reading aloud can be a daunting prospect even for the most competent of readers, whether it is to an audience of many or an audience of one. For this reason, it is important that the reader clearly understands why they are being asked to share a text with you and which areas of their reading they can focus upon to help them bring their text to life.

In this sense, it is essential that both reader and listener do not focus unduly upon the mechanics of reading and go beyond simply measuring an individual's reading competency as being their ability to read a certain number of words per minute.

To help structure a more coherent approach to gathering evidence of a child's reading fluency, one which actively involves the reader and incorporates comprehension at its heart, a Fluency Check sheet is provided on page 8.

Engaging with text & audience: a meaningful experience

It is important to consider carefully which text you are choosing to read and why it has been chosen. It is much harder to engage fully with a text (and demonstrate your reading prowess) if you have no interest in the text put before you or haven't practiced reading it beforehand.

When reading an unseen text, one which has not been considered by the reader, it is likely that the mechanics of reading will take precedence. In effect, the reader enters 'survival mode', their main aim being to complete the passage without stumbling over or mispronouncing specific words or phrases. When this is the case, reading is often perceived as a matter of 'getting it right.' Reading for meaning recedes into the background.

This is not to say that the decoding process is not important, far from it. It provides a foundation upon which reading skills are built. However, it must be stressed that in the early stages of reading development we do not learn to read by decoding alone and that, in terms of comprehension and understanding text at a deeper level, providing meaningful opportunities to share and interpret text must be given priority. This is especially true once an individual has made the transition from decoding into skills-based reading.

Ensuring such meaningful opportunities must be planned for.

Steps to success: fluency for meaning

Phase I

Having had the chance to select a text and practice it, either alone or with others, we are now ready.

- Step 1: Settle the individual down – a less formal setting than beside you at your teacher's desk will help them to relax. Ask them about which text they are going to share with you and why they have chosen this passage. Let them know that you are looking forward to them sharing it with you, the onus being placed upon the text rather than their actual reading. This conversational introduction can be recorded as part of the reading process.
- Step 2: Let them read uninterrupted, recording their reading in audio form. It is not necessary to video a child's reading. Not only can this be distracting but, more importantly, it has the tendency to shift the focus away from the audio towards the visual – how their reading sounds as an authentic storyteller is much more important than how their performance appears on screen.
- Step 3: Once completed, thank them and tell them what you liked about their choice of text. Again, avoid commenting upon their actual reading. This will come later.
- Step 4: While you are listening to others read, allow them to take the recording back to their desk and listen back to it. They now have time to review and reflect upon their own reading by completing sections one and two of the Fluency Check sheet.

Phase II

Now that you have heard everybody in the group read and they have all had time to reflect upon their own reading, you are ready to share your thoughts.

Each reader will need to bring with them their text, audio file and Fluency Check.

- Step 1: Ask them how they felt about their reading in general. Listen back to the audio together, reassuring them that most people do not like the sound of their own voice.
- Step 2: Using a different colour than the one used by the reader, go through the first section of the Fluency Check. Allow the reader to explain why they have given themselves a certain mark before making any comment or explaining why you either agree or disagree with them and giving them your mark. Again, this should be conversational in style.
- Step 3: Having discussed the 6Ps and acknowledging the reader's comments made in section two, the Guide should complete the third section while the reader is present, taking into consideration the extra 2Ps. Pertinent steps can be agreed that will help both an individual's fluency and their understanding move forward.
- Step 4: Once next steps have been discussed and agreed, this can be signed and dated by both parties.

A QR code that links to the recorded audio file can then be printed off and added to the Fluency Check sheet and retained for future monitoring and moderation. Teachers may also wish to retain a physical copy of the text read, especially if the reader has annotated it in a way that has supported their reading, by placing it on the back of the Fluency Check.

The reader & the six Ps

To help learners focus upon their reading fluency, various aspects of reading aloud have been separated into six key elements.

This list is by no means exhaustive and it must be remembered that rather than work in isolation, each aspect works in partnership with the others to produce a rich and vibrant reading performance.



Pitch: The musicality of the reading voice – including tone and intonation.



Power: The strength given to the reading voice – including volume and stress.



Pace: The speed and rhythm at which we read.



Punctuation: The adherence to and understanding of the marks an author has placed upon the page.



Pause: The knowing of when not to read and for how long.



Passion: The emotion of the reading – including empathy and sympathy and the development of a reader's love for the written word.

The listener & the two Ps

Although not directly referred to with the reader, the Guide should also be aware of two further aspects that will influence an individual's reading fluency.



Pronunciation: Letters and sounds, phonemic awareness.

Decoding: The mechanics of reading – how words are constructed: phonics & whole word recognition.

Derivation: Word origins – words that have been appropriated into English from other languages: alien sounds.

Formality of language: Context – how words change depending upon the character, setting and purpose of those using them: annunciation & omission of sounds.



Personality: The reader behind the reading.

There are many reasons why an individual may be a reluctant or less confident reader.

Different influences effect people differently. Here are just a handful:

External influences:

- What opportunities do I have to access books outside of school?
- What role models do I encounter at home and how strong are these?
- Is something happening in my life that is more important to me than reading?

Internal influences:

- Do I view myself as a reader?
- Do I recognise why reading is important and acknowledge what it can offer?
- Is my reading purposeful?
- Am I aware of how good a reader I am and how does this affect me?
- How resilient a reader am I when I am struggling with the text or have made a mistake?
- Do I value the support and opportunities I am being offered, both within the classroom and beyond?

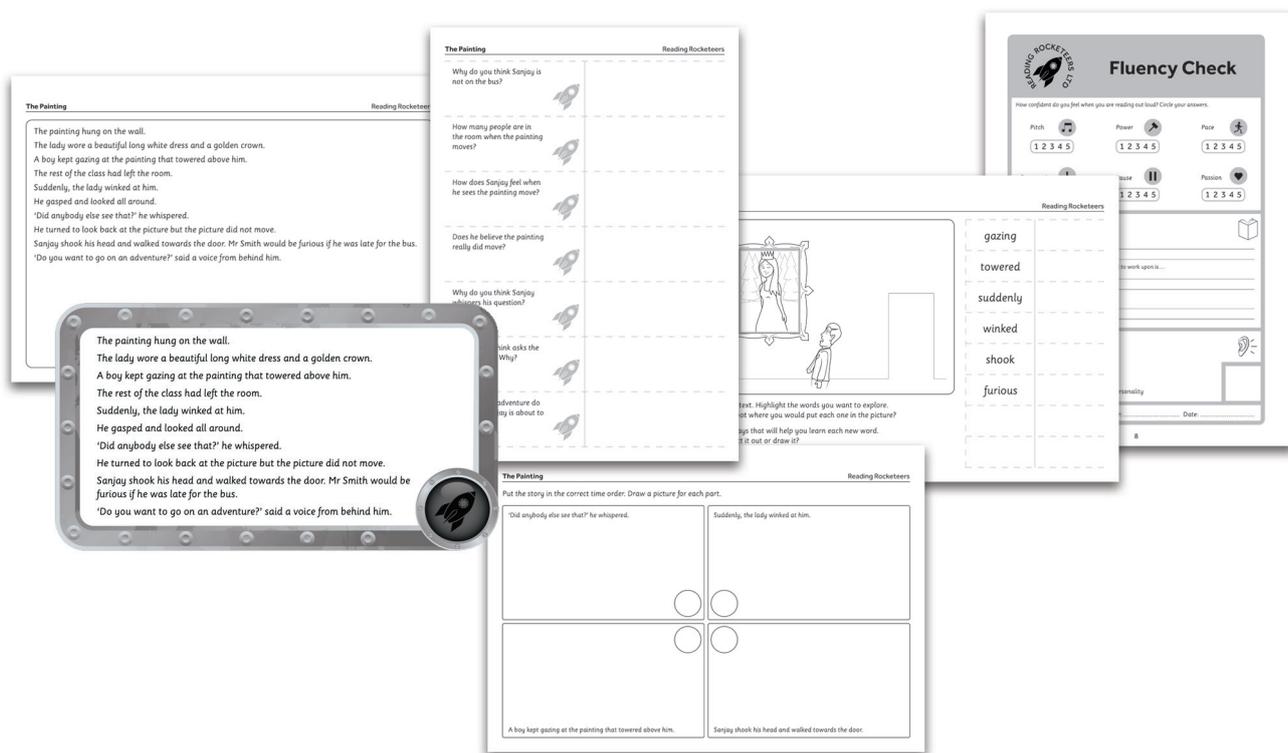
For better or for worse, such influences impact an individual's reading progress. It is wise therefore, to consider the implementation of any Reading Intervention programme within the setting of a much broader and holistic approach to guiding readers and supporting them as they journey towards becoming a capable and confident reader, one who takes ownership of their reading and gains pleasure from it.

Successful readers enjoy this journey.

Additional resources:

Each lesson plan contains a link to where you will find additional tasks and resources that accompany the text.

Simply type the web address into your browser or scan the QR code to access the relevant PDF file.



The Snake

Orientation Questions:

1. What do we call a creature that eats meat?
2. What do we call a creature that hunts for food?
3. Is a snake either of these?

Listen to the story:

Word Count: 89 ○●○

*The snake it slithered silently, across the desert sands.
It could not find a bite to eat, so slid to other lands.*

*It crossed into the jungle and slithered up a tree.
It coiled itself around a branch, to see what it could see.*

*The snake it slithered silently; in darkness it did slide.
It chanced upon a tasty mouse, who froze too scared to hide.*

*Too scared to run, too petrified, to squeak to anyone.
The snake it hisssssed and opened wide, one gulp and she was gone.*

Draw a picture to show what is happening. Talk about it. Compare it to the picture on page 30.

Now answer the following questions:

Gist:

1. Where does the snake live at the start of the poem? (A desert – a dry arid place where nothing much grows and nothing much lives)
2. Why does the snake decide to move? (Food would be scarce in such a land so it is likely that the snake decided to move to escape being hungry)
3. Was this the right decision? (Yes – it isn't too long before the snake chances upon food and gulps it down without much effort)

Literal:

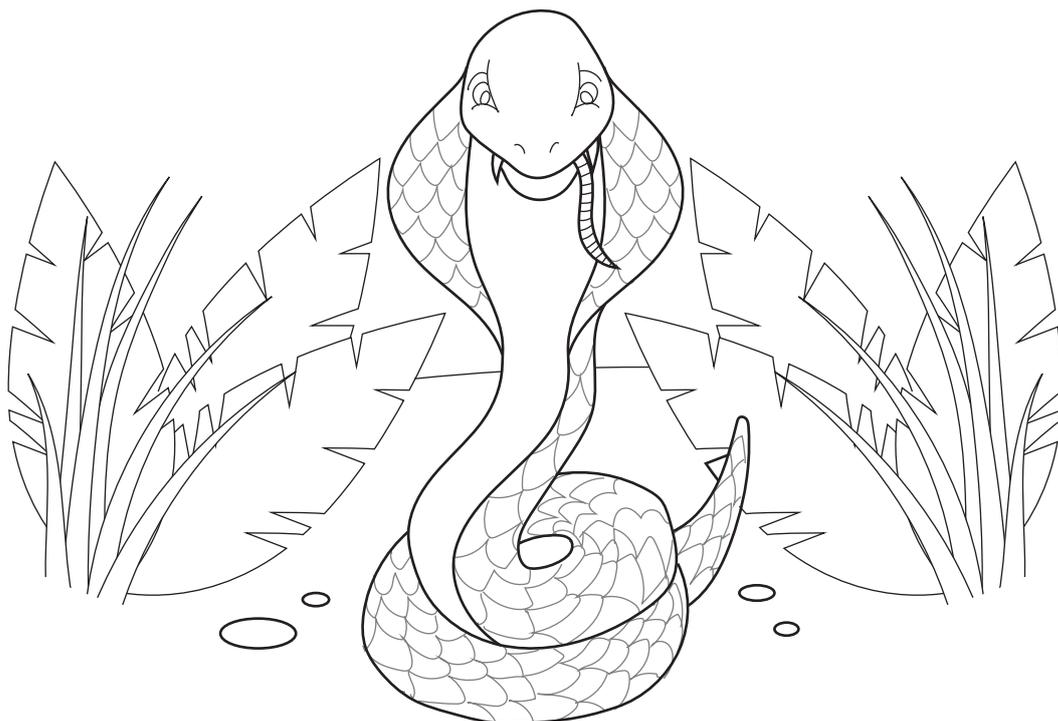
1. Where did the snake cross into after leaving the desert? (The jungle)
2. What did the snake chance upon as it slid in the darkness? (A tasty mouse)
3. Does the mouse squeak to anyone? (No – she is too scared)

The snake it slithered silently, across the desert sands.
It could not find a bite to eat, so slid to other lands.

It crossed into the jungle and slithered up a tree.
It coiled itself around a branch, to see what it could see.

The snake it slithered silently; in darkness it did slide.
It chanced upon a tasty mouse, who froze too scared to hide.

Too scared to run, too petrified, to squeak to anyone.
The snake it hisssssed and opened wide, one gulp and she was gone.



Main Questions:

What sound do you hear repeated in verse one? Why might this be?

The s sound reminds us of a snake's hiss and the danger it represents. With this in mind, verse one fills us with dread. It helps sets the tone for the rest of the poem and we cannot help fear that something bad is about to happen.

Should we read this poem quickly or slowly? Why might this be?

Slowly – remember, the snake is not simply looking for food but is on the hunt for prey. A hunter needs to move slowly and carefully if they are to sneak up on and surprise the hunted. Reading this poem slowly and with a steady pace reflects this hunt and helps build tension as the hunt progresses.

Why might the snake have...

A] Slithered up a tree?

This land is unfamiliar to the snake. By slithering up a tree the snake is able to look down upon its new surroundings and to where the best place to hunt might be.

B] Coiled itself around a branch?

To coil itself around a branch would enable the snake to look around its new surroundings freely and without the fear of falling. It is a safe, sensible and secure way of making sure that no accidents occur.

C] Slithered silently in the darkness?

The snake is on the hunt. In silence and under the cover of darkness it is more likely that its hunt will be a success. Both act as a cloak of secrecy, helping the snake to hide and continue its hunt for food undisturbed. Both reinforce the poem's strong sense of danger and suspense.

Was the mouse the snake chanced upon male or female? Do you think this was a deliberate choice by the poet?

Female – the pronoun 'she' is used to refer to the mouse in the final line. It is likely that the poet chose to use this pronoun on purpose. Discussion should take place as to whether or not this was the right thing to do and how our feelings towards the mouse might have differed if the pronoun 'he' had been used. Further discussion might take place as to why this might be and whether this is fair.

What happens to the mouse in the final line?

She is eaten by the snake, a tasty meal for the hungry serpent. She disappears down its throat and will never be seen again. The hunter has captured the hunted and the hunted has paid the ultimate price. Death has occurred so life may continue.

Summative:

Should we feel sorry for the mouse in this poem?

A printable version of the question and vocabulary cards can be found for 'The Snake' at the following URL:
www.readingrocketeers.co.uk/worksheets/5TSn.zip



Vocabulary:

1. A habitat is a natural environment where an animal or plant usually lives. Find two in the poem and describe them.
A] Verse one: (Desert – an area, often covered in sand, where there is very little rain and not many plants)
B] Verse two: (Jungle – a tropical forest where trees and plants grow very close together)
2. The snake 'slithered' silently across the desert and into the jungle. How did the snake move? Show your teacher. Why do you think it did this? (Allow for personal response)
3. Copy the word 'silently' on to your wipe board. (Silently) Underline its root. Why might the writer choose to describe the snake's movement with this adverb? (The lack of noise increases our sense of fear and makes the snake seem more sinister)
4. An adverb can help describe a verb or adjective . Adverbs often end in +ly. However, if a word already ends in +y, we must replace it with an i before adding +ly. Use this information to fill in the table below.

Adverbs					
quick	slow	quiet	noisy	sad	happy
(quickly)	(slowly)	(quietly)	(noisily)	(sadly)	(happily)

5. Find and copy a word that means 'very scared' in the final verse. (Petrified)
6. We are told the mouse is so scared it 'froze'. What do you think this means? Act it out.
A] The mouse was so scared it turned cold with fear.
B] The mouse was so scared it could not move. ✓
7. Your teacher will show you a glass of water. If you were to 'gulp' it down, what would you do? (Drink it down quickly by swallowing it in large amounts) Interestingly, we might also gulp when we are scared. Who do you think the gulp belongs to in the final verse? Discuss.
8. Which word on the page has an odd spelling? (Hissssssed) How is this word normally spelt? (Hissed) Do you think this was a spelling mistake or that the writer did this on purpose? (On purpose) Why do you think they did this? What effect does it have on the reader? Discuss.

Key Words:

What can you do to remember what each word means?

desert

froze

gulp

jungle

petrified

slithered

Fluency Check:

Practice reading this poem to a talk partner.

- How will you bring the words alive with your voice?
- Would you like to mark your reading text to help you?
- If you are listening to somebody else reading, what will you tell them to make them read better?
- What examples of good reading can you take from your partner and apply to your own reading?