Reading Pedagogy at Birkwood



Birkwood Primary School

100% Effort, 100% Kindness, 100% Respect...
Birkwood is for Everyone!

Purpose

This document has been created to support teachers in delivering high-quality reading experiences for every child. It brings together current research, expert classroom practice, and national guidance, to continue building a consistent and evidence-informed approach to reading pedagogy at Birkwood. The suggested activities compliment the *Sequence of a Birkwood Reading Lesson* document and can be adapted to meet the needs of all children.

Birkwood is a school where effective reading is embodied within everyday classroom life and shaped by a strong understanding of children's needs. Reading **underpins** and **builds through** the curriculum.

Research Informed

The document draws on the research and writing of Isabel Beck, Christopher Such and Timothy Rasinski, whose work helps us to understand how reading develops and how best to teach it, from decoding and fluency to vocabulary and comprehension. It also aligns with the Department for Education's Reading Framework and Writing Framework, as well as Ofsted's English Research Review, ensuring that our approach reflects both evidence and national expectations. Additionally, data collected by the National Literacy Trust reminds us that reading is more than a skill: it is at the heart of how children connect with ideas, language and the world.

Using the Guide

Teachers are encouraged to use this document as a practical tool for reflection, planning, and professional development. It is intended to support collaborative practice - through shared planning, coaching, and professional dialogue to refine approaches to reading over time. Birkwood has been identified as a Barnsley LA reading school where a whole school reading culture is embedded. Every classroom provides children with the best possible opportunities to become confident, fluent, and motivated readers.

"Pupils are supported effectively to build reading stamina, for example through lessons that focus on fluency. There is additional, effective support for pupils who need to catch up. The school has also developed a strong culture of reading. Pupils say they enjoy reading books on offer within the inviting book corners and in lessons."

- Ofsted 2024

The Birkwood Reading Approach

At Birkwood, reading is taught through a primarily oracy-based approach. We read together throughout each day, prioritising the teaching of fluency and language comprehension. This guidance is best suited to meet the needs of children who have progressed past foundational phonics and are ready to focus on fluency, advanced word study and comprehension strategies. Each section does not equate to one lesson. At Birkwood, we advocate for teacher professional judgment in determining when a class, group or child has achieved sufficient mastery to move on. Please refer to *The Sequence of a Birkwood Reading Lesson* for daily and weekly structure.

The Reading Process

	Active listening.
	Paired and group discussion.
	Independent work or sharing.

Teacher demonstration
Working together to explore a text
Becoming independent

Based on Barak Rosenshine's Principle of Instruction:

Teacher demonstration "I Do"	The process begins with the teacher modelling reading. They engage children in the text by using their 'storyteller voice' to demonstrate how the text should sound and introduce the context, background information and basic plot. Teachers inspire a love for reading from the very beginning where children can enjoy being deeply immersed in the text.
Working together "We Do"	At this stage, children have opportunities to read fluently and discuss a section of the text in detail with their peers. They explore actual or visual aids as well as specifically chosen vocabulary. They read the text aloud, emulating the 'storyteller voice' modelled previously and work together to explore or annotate a text to deeply understand what it is they are reading. They will also identify specific language, punctuation and grammatical choices which lead to successful comprehension. Children learn how a text sounds and analyse how the text is structured.
Becoming independent "They Do"	The final stage of the process is the application of learning. Children are asked to complete a task (fluency performance or oracy driven comprehension tasks) where demonstrate their level of understanding for the section studied.

Inspiring a Love of Reading

Promoting joy in reading sits at the heart of our reading curriculum in conjunction with regular, high quality reading instruction and comprehension. Children 'zoom in' to a part of a text to study it deeply. It is also very much encouraged that, especially when reading a novel, teachers take time to 'zoom out' and read the text for pleasure and to move the story on. There are many opportunities in any school day for reading for pleasure.

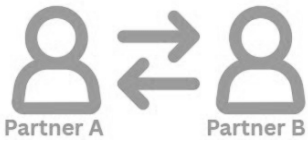
Common Useful Talk Strategies

• MTYT (My Turn Your Turn)	Adult modelling and children repeating.
• Think-Pair-Share (TPS)	Give thinking time, allow partner discussion and take feedback.
• Repeaters You said … I think …	Encourage children to repeat what has been said by their partner and then build on this, showing they have been actively listening. Partner A speaks (use of sentence stem where appropriate) Partner B says what Partner A said and then builds on.
• Warm calling	After giving thinking time and talk to partners, children choral answers. Also, child shares what their group have suggested and discussed.
• Talk three times	Give a question and allow children three opportunities to talk to different children before feeding back.
• Lists	Activate prior knowledge by giving children lists of vocabulary as a basis for comparison and discussion.
• ABC	I agree because … I want to build on that by … I respectfully challenge because …

National Literacy Trust

Please see NLT Pedagogical Suggestions document for a full range of oracy-based reading activities.

Choosing Partners



Children should be partnered carefully.

Partner A should be slightly more able than partner B.

Consider the Readers' Ranked document and pair accordingly.

It is also recommended that children are given the opportunity to work with different peers so that they are able to converse with a number of their classmates. Flexibility is therefore encouraged.

Consider group work with different individuals having different roles in the collaboration.

For example – reader, speaker, highlighter, checker, feedback, talk tracker and so on.

Selecting extracts from within the whole text



At Birkwood, children read entire texts over each half term. When choosing places to 'zoom in', think of an extract as a window into the text, not the whole story. It should be manageable, purposeful, and rich enough to allow children to practise reading strategies, explore meaning, and respond creatively or critically.

Things to consider

Cognitive Load and Text Length

Short, manageable extracts are recommended to reduce cognitive load and allow focused attention. Extracts should be short enough for children to learn to read independently. These could be as short as a sentence, a paragraph or a page, depending upon needs and stages.

Purposeful Selection & Knowledge and Skill Development

Extracts should be selected to teach specific objectives from the National Curriculum (progression document), such as fluency, vocabulary, etymology, morphology, syntax, structure, point of view, authorial intent and so on.

Accessibility vs Challenge

The extract should be accessible enough for children to read and understand but include some challenge to promote discussion. All texts on the **Birkwood Reading Spines** have been Lexilled to provide age-appropriate progression. Background knowledge and vocabulary understanding are prerequisites to inference.

Motivation

Select extracts that are engaging and memorable, ideally with strong imagery, emotion, or tension. Children respond better when the text sparks curiosity or empathy. We are learning to be expert readers.

Diversity and Representation

Include a variety of texts in terms of culture, experience, and perspective. Different authors, settings, and characters expose children to a wide range of language and ideas, and foster empathy and critical thinking.

Variety of Text Choices

Using narrative, descriptive, dialogue, plays, poetic and non-fiction extracts reflects the research-backed principle that reading instruction should expose children to multiple text structures to develop broad readers.

Context Emersion



Background Setting / Emersion

Before even starting reading, children are provided with a brief introduction to the text.

Explain the purpose of the text at this point.

Use objects, images, maps, story boxes or similar well-known texts to set the scene.

Provide oracy opportunities to engage with the context. What do we already know about…?

Start by talking in pairs then break out into groups. Encouraging children to share knowledge that they know as well as what others know. Repeaters could be used here.

The children's prior knowledge could then be mind-mapped, discussed as a class and displayed.

Immersion

Children are then immersed in the context. The way this may happen will entirely depend on the context of the book. Here are some examples:

Children may explore specific materials such as a sand pit, if the book is set at the beach. Another example of this is, if the book is about recycling, children may explore materials that decompose and those that do not.

Children may watch film clips or listen to music that are related to the book they are about to read.

There may be an opportunity for children to explore costumes related to a particular character, job or season.

Google Earth may be used, or virtual tours, if the book is set in an unfamiliar part of the world or in a specific building.

Food tasting or fragrance smelling may be useful if there are certain cuisines that are central to the book.

Children should be encouraged to verbally participate in the immersion stage.

Get the children excited about the text!

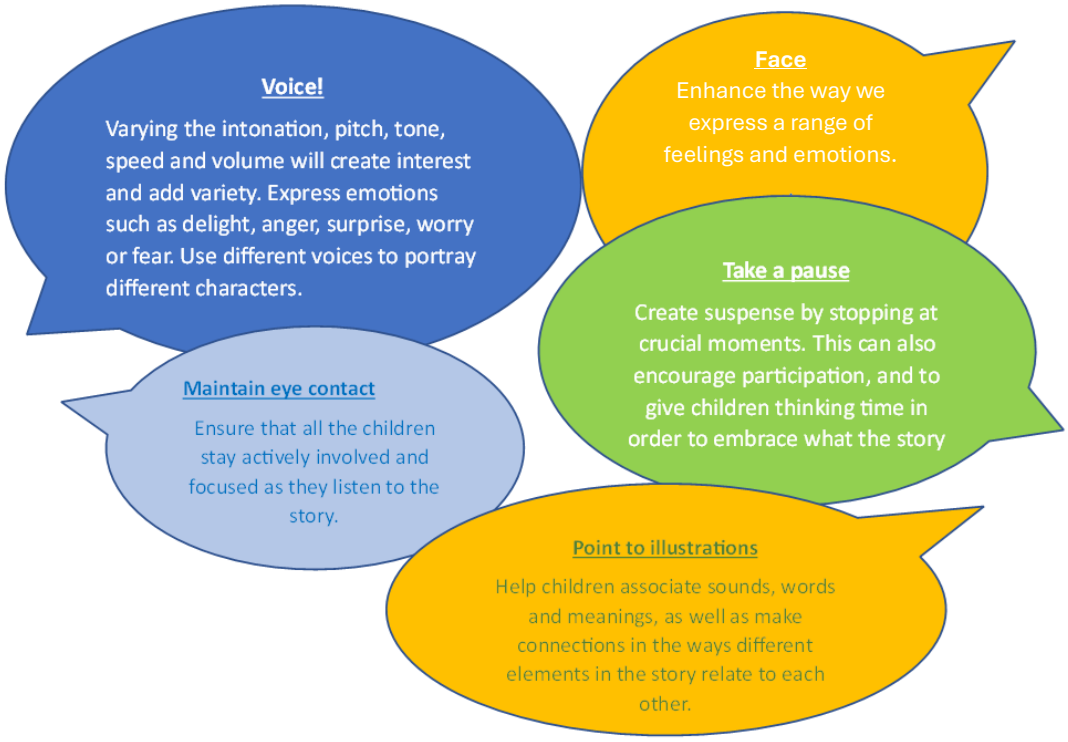
Story baskets or sacks can be created for children to interact with items which can help to set the story context.

Three Reads



1. Introduce vocabulary and read phrases or sentences including it.
2. Read the section modelling 'storyteller voice.' Children listen to the extract, enjoying the text.
3. Children follow the text. A/B pairs. Sharing the same copy of the text may be useful for finger tracking. Teacher checks all children are following and keeping up. Teachers should ask questions throughout to check that children understand and can retrieve the basic plot / information given – attentive reading.

Teacher Reading Aloud Modelling Tips



Context Vocabulary

Before beginning reading, children should be introduced to unfamiliar vocabulary that will repeatedly occur and that the children need to understand in order for them to access the text.



Tier 2 and/or tier 3 words which are integral to the understanding of the text are chosen.

The teacher introduces the words one by one. As each word is introduced, a brief description of the meaning of the word, in the context of the current text, is given. Actions, freeze frames or signs can help to internalise.

One strategy for teaching vocabulary might be:

The teacher says the word and the children repeat this (MTYT).

The teacher repeats the definition, and the children repeat this (MTYT).

For specific words or phrases, a picture may be useful so that children are able to visualise what this means.

Children could then quiz each other to learn the meanings.

Another effective strategy is:

FASTEST FINGER FIRST – children scan the text to find the word. Teacher reads this word in context.

Children read the word in context with their partner. Teachers ask children to articulate meaning.

Fluency Read

Teachers initially model how to read the passage, verbalising their internal thought process about how and why they may read certain parts in certain ways.

ACTIVE FLUENCY READ - as teachers read, they explicitly point out how they are reading aloud and any why they are choosing to read in this way. The teacher and/or children annotate the extract, highlighting specific areas and making brief notes

Children are then asked to imitate the teacher read. This can be done in small sections, building towards the children fluently reading the whole extract.

Partner A begins by reading to Partner B. Children are encouraged to track with finger/lolly stick. Then swap roles. Children take it in turns reading a paragraph each using their 'storyteller voice.' They correct, support and provide feedback for each other, commenting on what went well and ways in which they can improve.

Teachers need to model how to give feedback about how something was read and why. Teachers model critiquing reading and how to do so politely and respectfully. If possible, make use of a classroom assistant or call upon a capable child to model these conversations.

It is recommended that 'Partner A' is the more able reader. The more that partner B hears the text, the more confident they will become when reading aloud.

Stem Sentence Examples to Aid Pupil Feedback



I like how you used a _____ voice when you said _____ so that the reader felt _____.

I liked how you paused because it made me feel_____.

Perhaps you could try pausing when you see … so that you can add suspense.

I noticed …

I think …

I wonder … (I wonder if you could try saying it this way - give example).

Exposition

Start this section by asking the children to review the piece, using the annotated extract they created to read aloud.

Teacher can draw attention to the choices the author has made regarding the structure of the piece.

Teacher can provide information about why the text has been written and who it has been written for.

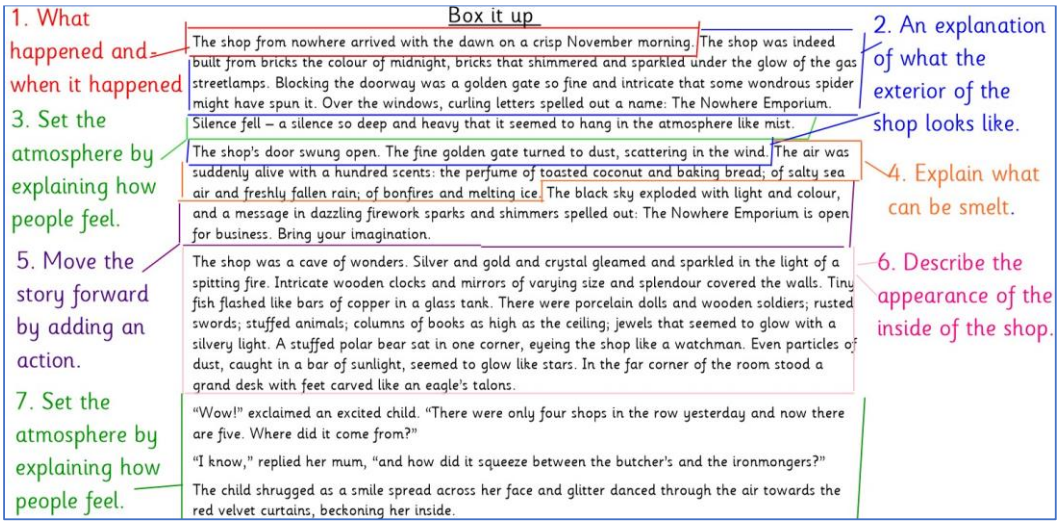
Keep the children in the throng of the text as much as possible when moving on to the comprehension.

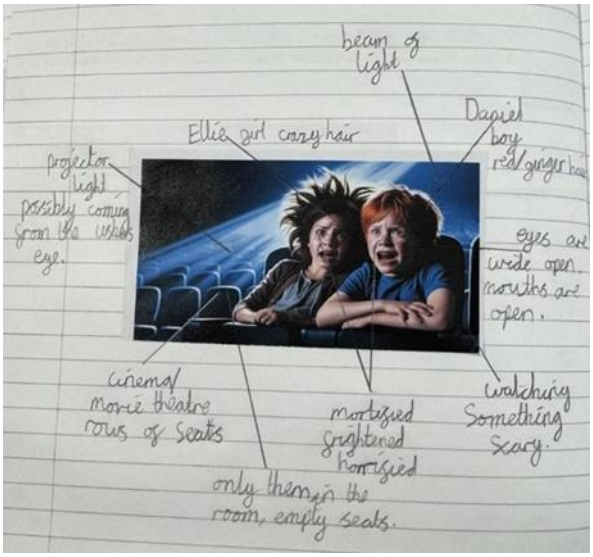
Possible Writing Links

In a writing lesson, you could identify sections by grouping areas and discussing authors choices.

Discuss the impact of the structure on the audience and purpose?

Examples





Grammar Links with Writing

Where appropriate, discuss syntax – understand that order of words in a sentence creates meaning.

Use grammar language.

Comprehension

Building a Picture in the Reader's Mind

Re-read / recap the specific section of focus for this session.

Children are presented with an image or images linked to the extract.

Teacher to provide background information or relate image to prior knowledge from the wider curriculum.

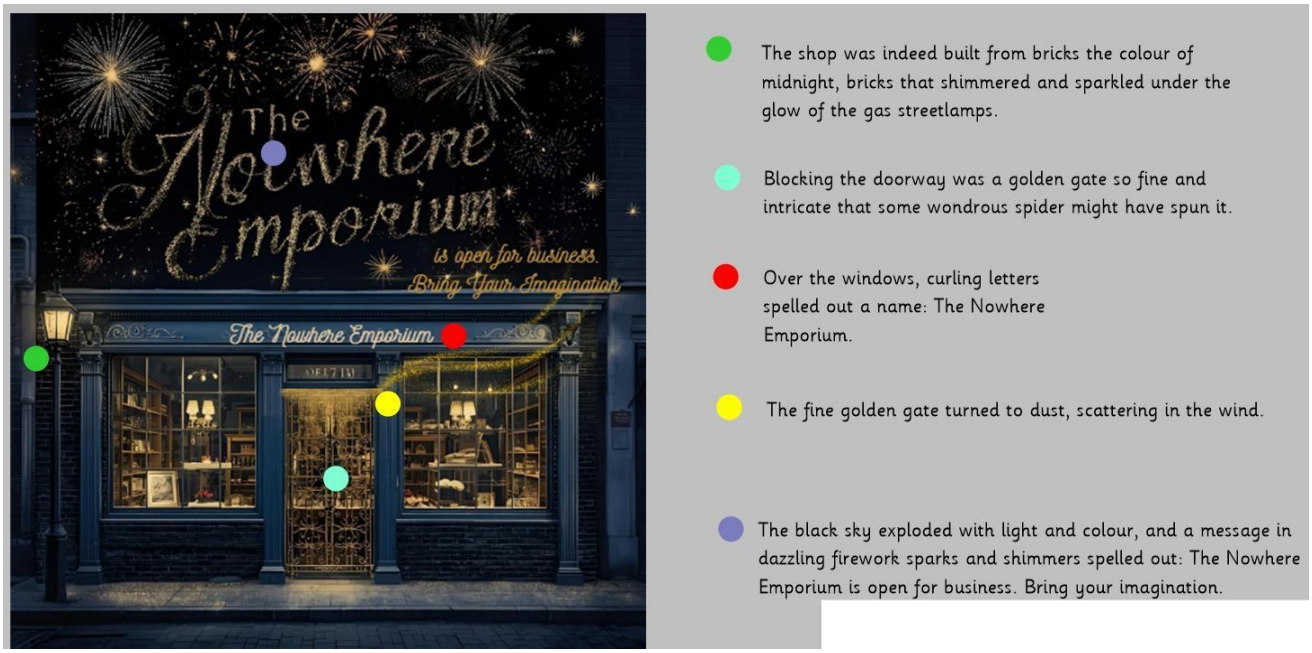
Children discuss – sentences stems may be appropriate.

Collaboration – teacher could annotate image with children's verbal thoughts and ideas.

Images can be taken straight from the text or may need to be AI generated. Also consider using film clips.

Two images which are **almost** similar can be used to compare similarities and differences. Children give explanations to justify observations.

Retrieval



Children could be asked to focus on specific areas of the text, finding the exact quote in the text that links to the picture.

Vocabulary Activities

SELECT

Identify the tier 2 words that will be the focus for the session taken from the extract.

LOCATE

Ask the children to locate this word in the extract.

Children read aloud the sentences or phrases where the key words are located.

EXPLAIN

Share a child-friendly explanation / definition of the word.

EXPLORE

Explore the morphology, etymology and/ or context.

Provide pictures where necessary.

Discuss definitions.

Consider where a word has been used correctly and why.

Encourage discussion about the why. Provide many examples of the word in use for different contexts.

REPLACE

Ask the children to replace the word in the sentence with an appropriate synonym.

Ensure the children say their sentences aloud.

CONSOLIDATE

Ask the children to say and write their own sentence using this word.

Display the word so that this can be revisited and used again and again.

FLASHCARD

Add words and definitions to the flashcard packs (if the teacher deems it necessary) for revision.

Vocabulary exploration and application

Semantics – ensure children understand meaning of vocabulary in context

Give children the opportunity to explore specific words in many different contexts so that they deepen their knowledge of the vocabulary used.

Opportunity to teach and play with affixes, syntax, synonyms, antonyms and so on.

Analysis

Only once a text section has been taught through the fluency read session should analysis begin.

Begin by asking the children to read the whole text aloud. A choral read works well here.

Teachers 'think out loud' to show children what your thought process could be when analysing an extract.

Comprehension monitoring

The process of (we as a reader) updating our situation model as new information emerges through reading.

Model aloud your internal monologue to show children how you comprehend text explicitly.

Situation model

The image in your head that you are updating as you read and gather more information.

Teacher models the metacognition of updating the mental picture in the reader's mind when further information reveals itself in the text. Reveal the coherent mental representation or situation model.

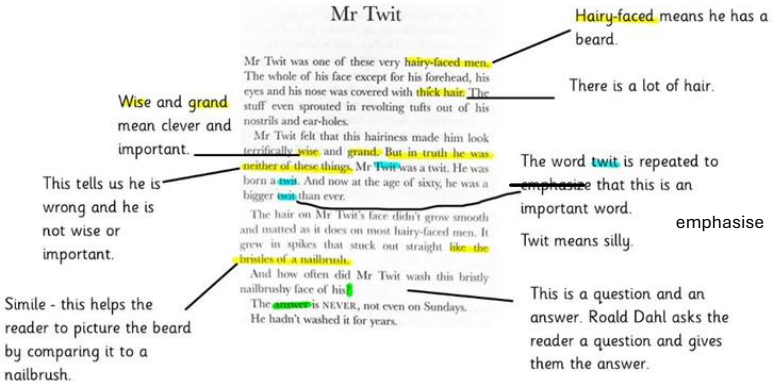
Children should be encouraged (through carefully planned questioning) to activate the prior knowledge they have about words, sentences and sections of the text.

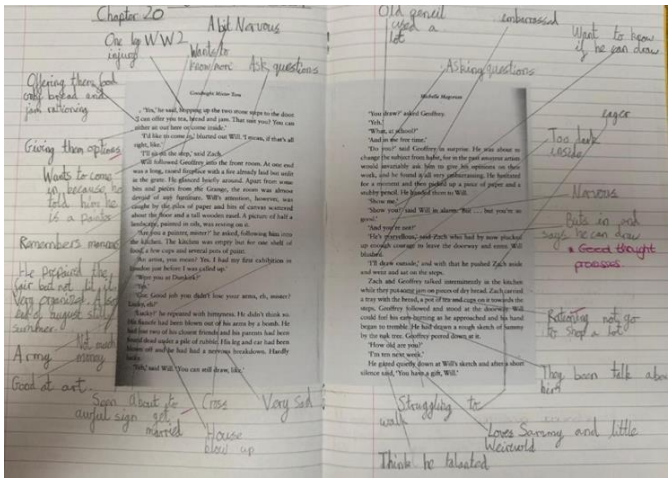
Make connections - Have you ever seen/ felt that way before? Do you know any other books/ texts like this?

Keep children "***in***" the text.

When children are ready, it may be useful to annotate to aid comprehension. But this must not become an onerous task especially for younger pupils.

Examples of lesson annotations UKS2





Fabulous Fluency Fridays

Option 1 - Re-read



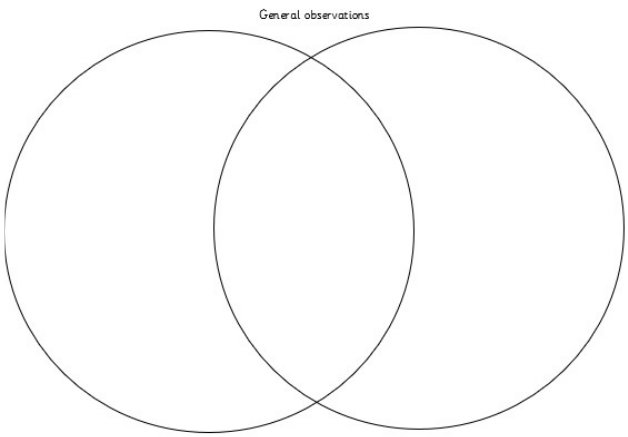
Pull all the learning together by re-reading sections from the week or weeks of teaching.

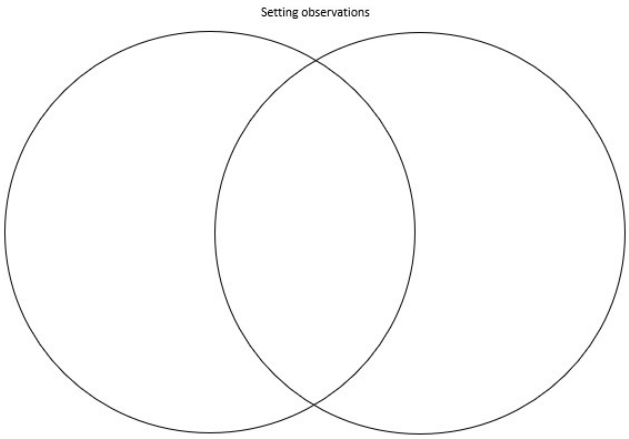
Option 2 - The Unseen Text

Introduce the children to new section from the class text or a separate extract from a different source.

Unseen sections should have similar themes / vocabulary to the main class text.

- Teacher (very briefly) reading this text section or extract.
- A reads the text.
- B reads the text.
- Children draw general comparisons between the two extracts.
- Children draw specific comparisons between the two texts. E.g.; setting, character or structure.





A Venn diagram to make these comparisons can be created as a class, on tables or independently. Adaptations can be made by providing children with a scaffold of words, phrases or images to discuss and sort.

Assessment / Intervention Opportunity

Whist the whole class are A/B engaged in Fabulous Fluency Friday reading, teacher may work on gaps in fluency with a smaller group or individuals. This would take the form of repeating any steps from the week's teaching to improve fluency on a previously taught section. These children will still have accessed the unseen text because this has been shared with the class.

Fluency Rubric

At Birkwood, the Timothy Rasinski fluency rubric has been bespoke for our children. It can be used as a diagnostic tool for the whole class or more specifically for individual assessment of weaker readers.

This can be found on the school website on:

Curriculum/Reading/Documentation/Reading Assessment/Reading-Fluency-Assessment – Birkwood.

Checking for Understanding



Build up a story map over the teaching sequence weeks, for reference.

Ask children to retell the story.

Repeat this often.

Encourage children to use learned vocabulary and phrases in their retell.

End every text with a **Book Talk** – see *Appendix 1* - Adrien Chambers questions.

Assessing Fluency

Birkwood spines have been carefully lexilled and progressed to ensure correct level of challenge for the stage.

There is no need to formally assess fluency with the whole class – children are reading aloud daily! Use a.f.l.!

Some children will need a diagnostic assessment to ascertain strengths, weaknesses and next steps.

Use the Fluency Rubric. Ask the child to read an unseen or less well studied section of text from the whole.

The text MUST Lexile at age related (all class texts). Assess the child's reading fluency by using the rubric.

How do we use this information?

To inform teacher assessment and next steps.

To share with anyone listening to the child reading – e.g. their daily fluency read.

Plan to address gaps through whole class teaching. What's good for the weakest reader is good for us all!

As a diagnostic tool to plan next steps, adaptations and support for individual children.

Further low stakes comprehension assessment suggestions:

- Sorting activities

Children could be given cards with events (written or pictorial) to order.

- Sequencing

Children order events on strips 1-3 or 1-5. (Tip – 1st, last, middle!)

- True or false?

Children work in groups or pairs to discuss and organise statements into categories. Why?

- Debate and Explain

Present a statement. Children must agree or disagree with it. Convince Me! Prove it!

- Why is the picture wrong?

Children are presented with a picture linked to the text and they must justify why this is incorrect, using the text to support their answer.

- Act out a short play script version of the book (or section of).

Children use character voices to demonstrate understanding and add actions or freeze frames.

**This document was produced by Louise Wilkie, English Lead, with reference to Let's Talk About Reading, written by Rachel Maul, Gawber Primary School, quality assured by Leah Charlesworth (Senior Leader of Education).*

Appendix 1

Reading comprehension—the sum of many parts
Adapted from Hogan, Bridges, Justice, and Cain (2011)

