Introduction

The Primary National Strategy's renewed Literacy Framework gives great importance to the teaching of comprehension. Within the 'simple view of reading', comprehension has equal importance with word recognition/vocabulary enrichment, and developing good comprehension skills is one of the most important aims for pupils at Key Stage 2.

TreeTops Comprehension offers you a flexible tool for the direct teaching and reinforcement of comprehension skills, in line with the requirements of the National Curriculum and the Literacy Framework. It is also fully aligned with the requirements of the Scottish and Northern Irish curricula. TreeTops Comprehension uses high quality texts taken from TreeTops fiction and non-fiction titles, as well as other trade and educational books from Oxford University Press.

Comprehension skills and strategies

The renewed Literacy Framework identifies five crucial comprehension strategies: predicting, questioning, clarifying, imagining and summarising. In TreeTops Comprehension we have followed the Framework's lead in grouping questioning and clarifying together, since they call on very similar skills.

Predicting

Predicting allows readers to use prior knowledge and experience to make confident guesses about what a text is about, what will happen next, etc.

Questioning and clarifying

Questioning can help readers understand a text by clarifying aspects of it that might be puzzling. Rereading a text, discussing it and thinking about the author's intentions are all good ways of using questioning to clarify a text's meaning.

Imagining

The images readers form in their heads while reading can be powerful tools for understanding. Using their imagination helps readers visualise what is happening in the text.

Summarising

Summarising involves taking information from different parts of a text and using it all together. It is a crucial part of understanding the overall meaning or purpose of a whole text, and it also helps readers find the key points in a section of text.

The Year 5 TreeTops Comprehension CD-ROM gives a range of activities for each text, to help you activate each of these comprehension strategies. The Year 5 Pupils' Book also gives hints and tips to remind pupils to use these strategies as they read.

Comprehension question types

In TreeTops Comprehension, we have included plenty of practice and reinforcement of the four main types of comprehension question: literal, deductive, inferential and evaluative. The CD-ROM activities and questions cover all the question types, as do the Pupils' Book comprehension questions. In the Pupils' Book Answers section of this book (pages 53 to 72) the question type of each question has been noted, so you can assess whether pupils are struggling with any particular question type.

Speaking, listening and drama

The CD-ROM includes speaking and listening and drama activities for each text, which are suitable for whole-class or group/paired work. They enable you to focus on different aspects of the text in a lively way, whilst sharpening speaking and listening and drama skills. The Partner Activities for each text in the Pupils' Book also give many opportunities to practise these skills through paired work.

Word recognition and vocabulary enrichment skills

For each text on the CD-ROM, you will find 'word work' ideas to help enhance pupils' word-level knowledge and enrich their vocabularies. The activities include spelling, word-sorting and opportunities to experiment with different word choices in the context of the texts.

Writing

Both the CD-ROM and the Pupils' Book Partner Activities provide opportunities for writing. Short bursts of shared or modelled writing are often an outcome of the CD-ROM activities, and the Partner Activities in the Pupils’ Book can be used for focused individual, paired or guided writing in response to the texts.

Whole-class teaching

The CD-ROM is intended for use on an interactive whiteboard, and will allow you to model and teach the full range of comprehension skills and strategies. The CD-ROM is designed to allow you to work interactively with the texts, annotating, highlighting and using the templates provided to enhance pupils' understanding.

In this book you will find step-by-step notes on using each of the CD-ROM texts on your whiteboard, and also suggested answers to the comprehension questions. The texts can be used very flexibly; ideas are given for two sessions per text, but you could take more or fewer sessions depending on the needs of the class. See pages 6–7 for an annotated guide showing you how the CD-ROM screens work.

Paired, individual and group work with the Year 5 Pupils' Book

The Pupils’ Book can be used as a follow-up to the CD-ROM, or on its own. It includes Partner Activities for paired work on each text, involving speaking and listening, drama and writing, as well as ten comprehension questions per text which cover the whole range of question types.

If pupils are working in pairs, encourage them to complete the Partner Activities together before moving on to the 'Think and Write' comprehension questions. You can also ask pupils to work in larger groups, or to work individually (in which case they could omit the Partner Activities).

The Pupils’ Book units are ideal to use in guided or group reading sessions. By using the texts in this way you can support pupils who are struggling, and model the skills needed to answer the different types of question.

Differentiation and assessment

The CD-ROM texts are pitched at an appropriate level for whole-class work, and with support all pupils should be able to access the texts.

The Pupils' Book texts are differentiated at three levels:

- denotes the easiest texts
- denotes medium-difficulty texts
- denotes the most difficult texts.

In the teaching notes on each CD-ROM text you will see suggestions for follow-up texts from the Pupils’ Book for pupils working at different levels.

Assessment for Learning

The suggested lessons for each CD-ROM unit have an overarching learning intention, with success criteria in child-friendly language. These relate directly to the activities and questions on the CD-ROM and will help you to make learning intentions and outcomes clear for pupils.

In the Pupils’ Book, the Partner Activities for each text have clear success criteria in child-friendly language.

At the end of this book (pages 73–78) you will find Assessment Grids showing the assessment opportunities in TreeTops Comprehension.

Planning

The grid on pages 79–80 suggests a possible three-phase plan using the texts on the CD-ROM.