The reading books in more depth

Project X Origins graphic texts is perfect for developing comprehension skills. Developed by experts, it offers children a rich variety of reading matter across fiction, poetry and non-fiction genres.

Character fiction

The Project X Origins graphic texts series includes seven brand-new fiction stories, with a thrilling new adventure, featuring the ever-popular Project X characters Max, Cat, Ant and Tiger. Many children will already have developed relationships with the four heroes and their special watches that allow them to shrink to micro-size, and this familiarity will ease them into the challenge of increasingly complex graphic storytelling. Moreover, seeing these characters in this different, dynamic form, has the potential to seize children’s attention, and hold it over time. Although the familiar characters provide an instant pull for existing readers, each story stands alone so children who are unfamiliar with the Project X world won’t find themselves at a disadvantage: at the front of each book there is an overview of the plot, ensuring that children will be up to speed before starting to read.

In the first book (Chasing Birdy), a new, unsociable, girl arrives at school (named Birdy). After school, Birdy runs off. Sure that something odd is going on, the micro-friends follow her across town to the highest point in Greenville – the roof of the library. As storm clouds gather, Birdy starts up an odd-looking machine (her Escape Wheel) and a swirling vortex emerges. The friends are pulled into the vortex after her and find themselves transported to another place and time. Before Birdy has time to explain, a strange, malignant, robot (a Tick-Tock Man) appears. After the friends save Birdy from its clutches, she eventually trusts them enough to let them know what’s going on …

In the year 2099, the head of a powerful communications and cybernetics company, Kalvin Spearhead, has designed a time machine to protect the people of Earth from a massive asteroid that will destroy it. He claims he can save humanity – but Birdy and her gran (the head scientist at Spearhead’s company) aren’t so sure. Gran is in favour of trying to find an alternative solution to stopping the asteroid that won’t risk changing the past. Birdy has taken it upon herself to put a stop to Spearhead’s plan – she must travel back in time to collect the seven Artefacts of Time he needs to complete his machine. Unfortunately, Spearhead’s robotic army are also after the Artefacts of Time …

Over the following six books, the four friends try to help Birdy find the Artefacts of Time before the Tick-Tock Men and save future Earth.
> **Classics**

The classics within this series have been devised with a passion for the original material but with a contemporary look and feel which makes it accessible to today's children. For some children, the inherent 'fun' element in a graphic text enables them to engage with the stories, whereas the original versions may feel daunting due to the demands of the vocabulary and the references that can appear archaic to a modern child. It is frequently the case that the graphic medium provides a route into the originals; these are, after all, classics for a reason. It may be that the graphic version remains the favoured one, just as some people prefer a particular film adaptation of *Oliver Twist* or a contemporary re-imagining of *The Jungle Book* to the original.

Some children may, of course, come to these graphic versions having already read the originals, and it is always fascinating to discuss their preferences and how the images in their own minds differed from the illustrated representations. The comparison of the original novel with the contemporary graphic version may be taken further through the exploration of film/television adaptations. Similarities and differences between audio-visual and illustrated art forms may be teased out, enhancing comprehension of the original story in an enjoyable and memorable way.

> **Poetry**

The graphic retelling of classic poetry has many similarities to that of classic novels, but there are some additional elements to consider. A much greater proportion of the language of poetry tends toward the figurative and the graphic form can help the reader to make sense of, often complex, metaphors. As well as helping to lead the narrative through the text, the images used in the graphic form help to make what otherwise might be inaccessible content, accessible. There is a great deal to consider in how the illustrator chooses to represent the imagery of the poem on the page. How do children react to these choices, and how do these choices affect comprehension of figurative language? If they read (or heard) the poem in text-only form initially, how did their visualizations and understanding compare with the pictorial form? Having children produce their own dramatic freeze-frame or artwork in response to hearing the poem, prior to viewing the graphic version, can provoke even deeper engagement and analysis. If, on the other hand, the graphic version is encountered first, it is powerful to explore the extent to which it helps their comprehension of the original, including a better understanding of authorial intent.
The following table details the individual poems included within the theme- or author-linked collections:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Book Band</th>
<th>Oxford Level</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>‘Theme’ of collection</th>
<th>Poems included</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 4    | Grey      | 14           | The Pelican Chorus and other poems | Funny/nonsense poems                                                                  | • ‘The Pelican Chorus’ by Edward Lear  
• ‘There was an Old Man …’ by Edward Lear  
• ‘The Duel’ by Eugene Field  
• ‘Mr Toad’ by Kenneth Grahame  
• ‘My Shadow’ by Robert Louis Stevenson |
| 15   | Dark Blue | 5            | If and other poems            | Poems by Rudyard Kipling                                                               | • ‘If’  
• ‘The Secret of the Machines’  
• ‘The Way through the Woods’  
• ‘Thorkild’s Song’ |
| 16   | Dark Red  | 5            | I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud and other poems | Nature poems                                                                          | • ‘I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud’ by William Wordsworth  
• ‘The Wind’ by Robert Louis Stevenson  
• ‘Pirate Story’ by Robert Louis Stevenson  
• ‘Bed in Summer’ by Robert Louis Stevenson  
• ‘The World Below the Brine’ by Walt Whitman  
• ‘Past, Present, Future’ by Emily Brontë  
• ‘The Falling Star’ by Sara Teasdale |
| 17   | Dark Red  | 6            | The Pied Piper of Hamelin      | Narrative poem by Robert Browning                                                      | • The Pied Piper of Hamelin |
| 18   | Dark Red+ | 6            | Jabberwocky and other poems    | Poems by Lewis Carroll                                                                | • ‘Jabberwocky’  
• ‘How Doth the Little Crocodile’  
• ‘The Walrus and the Carpenter’  
• ‘Humpty Dumpty’s Recitation’ |
| 19   | Dark Red  | 6            | The Raven and other poems      | Animal poems                                                                            | • ‘The Raven’ by Edgar Allan Poe  
• ‘The Tiger’ by William Blake  
• ‘Snake’ by D. H. Lawrence  
• ‘The Eagle’ by Alfred, Lord Tennyson  
• ‘The Snail’ by William Cowper |
| 20   | Dark Red+ | 6            | For the Fallen and other poems | War poems                                                                               | • ‘For the Fallen’ by Laurence Binyon  
• ‘Dulce et Decorum Est’ by Wilfred Owen  
• ‘An Irish Airman Forsees his Own Death’ by W. B. Yeats  
• ‘Here Dead We Lie’ by A.E. Housman  
• ‘To Germany’ by Charles Hamilton Sorley  
• ‘Dirge for Two Veterans’ by Walt Whitman  
• ‘I Saw Old General at Bay’ by Walt Whitman  
• ‘The Charge of the Light Brigade’ by Alfred, Lord Tennyson |
Non-fiction

Project X Origins graphic texts includes enlightening and enriching cross-curricular non-fiction, from the worlds of history, the arts, science and geography, in the form of retellings of the biographies of significant figures in the history of human progress. Just as the graphic medium may ease some children in to encountering awe-inspiring stories and poems that might otherwise feel out of their reach, so it will help them connect with subject matter that might appear dry or unappealing in traditional non-fiction form. The immediacy and inherent humanity of the artwork – the fact that illustrators can show the emotions these figures may have experienced – opens the way to a different kind of classic: one that will enhance children’s knowledge of history and science. The books also include more traditional non-fiction elements – contents page, text-only pages with bullet-pointed facts, glossary and index.

The following table details the ‘Greats’ included within each non-fiction book:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Book Band</th>
<th>Oxford Level</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>‘Greats’ included</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Grey</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Great Artists</td>
<td>Leonardo da Vinci, Claude Monet, Edvard Munch, Pablo Picasso, Barbara Hepworth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dark Blue</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Great Inventors</td>
<td>Archimedes, Johannes Gutenberg, Alexander Graham Bell, Thomas Edison, Garrett Morgan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dark Red</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Great Naturalists</td>
<td>Jane Goodall, John James Audubon, Karl von Frisch, Mary Anning, Kathleen Drew-Baker, David Douglas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Dark Red</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Great Space Explorers</td>
<td>Shi Shen and Gan De, Aristarchus of Samos, Hipparchus of Nicaea, Claudius Ptolemy, Nicolaus Copernicus, Galileo Galilei, Williamina Stevens Fleming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dark Red+</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Great Scientists</td>
<td>Isaac Newton, Carl Linnaeus, Michael Faraday, Marie Curie, Albert Einstein, Alexander Fleming, Alan Turing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Dark Red+</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Great Engineers</td>
<td>Imhotep, Apollodorus of Damascus, Isambard Kingdom Brunel, Emily Roebling, Karl Benz, Sergei Koralev</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Great Pioneers</td>
<td>Pioneers of television, Emmeline Pankhurst, Amelia Earhart, Frank Whittle, Clarence Birdseye, Jacques Piccard, Nelson Mandela</td>
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