The Taj

Synopsis

- The Emperor Shah Jahan has ordered the building of the Taj Mahal in memory of his beloved late wife. A master builder is brought in, and his daughter Nazma proves remarkably helpful in solving arising problems. Nazma’s parents believe the boss’ son will make a perfect husband for her, but she is less convinced.

Group or guided reading

Introducing the book

- **(Summarising)** Look at the front cover together. Ask the children if they recognise or know anything about the Taj Mahal.
- **(Predicting)** Ask the children to predict the status of the couple riding on the elephant and their role in the story.
- **(Predicting)** Read the blurb together and ask the children what Nazma’s hidden talents might be.
- Skim through Chapter 1 to ensure the children are familiar with the format.
- Look at the characters on page 2. Note real and fictional people.
- **(Imagining)** Stress the importance of ‘reading’ the pictures as well as the words, e.g. top of page 11, ask: *How is the importance of the incomplete Taj Mahal emphasised?*
- Note the Time Out sections and explain their function as fact pages, informing the reader of the realities and context behind the story.

Strategy check

- Remind the children to use sounds, familiar words-within-words, sentence and story context and the illustrations to make sense of unfamiliar words or phrases.
- Note the glossary on page 48 and model how to use it.

During reading

- **(Clarifying, Questioning)** Ask the children to read Chapter 1, including the Time Out on page 13, and to focus on how the scale and importance of the Taj Mahal are emphasised. Encourage the children to generate their own questions. What would they like to ask Nazma?
- As the children read independently, listen to each of them in turn, noting and prompting decoding strategies.

Independent reading

**Objective:** Infer writers’ perspectives from what is written and implied.
Deducing, Summarising

Once the children have read Chapter 1, ask them to pair up and discuss briefly clues to the building’s importance.

As a group, list the most striking facts that have been learnt about the Taj.

What do we learn about Nazma’s character?

What appears to matter most to Nazma’s mother?

Assessment: Check that the children:

- can identify the human contributions and physical elements that communicate the monument’s scale.
- understand the emerging female character traits.

Returning and responding to the text

Objective: Use evidence from across a text to explain events or ideas

Summarising, Deducing, Clarifying

When the children have read the whole story, ask them to explain why Masheer changes his mind about Nazma’s betrothal to Baz. How does Nashreen feel about this?

What clues (in writing and pictures) can children find for Baz’s arrogance? How does he feel on page 43?

How is Nazma’s independent spirit depicted?

What experiences help Nazma solve the two building problems? How does her first idea support the poor?

Was Masheer right not to admit the ‘brilliant’ ideas came from his daughter?

Ask the children to evaluate the effectiveness of the Time Out information pages. Which of these was the most useful?

Assessment: Check that the children:

- understand why Masheer rejected Baz’s marriage proposal.
- can infer Baz’s arrogance.
- can see how Nazma helped the poor while also helping her father.
- can comment on the book’s purpose of educating readers on the Taj Mahal’s history and meaning.

Speaking and listening activities

Objective: Reflect on how working in role helps to explore complex issues.

Ask pairs of children to take the roles of Masheer and Nashreen, discussing the appropriateness of Nazma’s engagement to Baz.

Assessment:

- Can the children sustain roles to explore ideas and issues?

Ask a child to take Nazma’s role and explain to the rest of the group how she came up with solutions to the scaffolding and minarets problems.

Assessment:

- Can the children adapt spoken standard English appropriately for purpose, audience and subject matter?
Writing activities

**Objective:** Adapt non-narrative forms and styles to write factual texts.

- Ask the children to create a persuasive leaflet advertising the Taj Mahal's appearance and history to tourists.

**Assessment:**
- Can the children write in a formal persuasive style with a specific audience in mind?

**Objective:** Develop viewpoint through the selection of detail.

- Ask the children to take the role of one member of Masheer's family and write short diary entries from that viewpoint at the end of each chapter.

**Assessment:**
- Can the children write a personal diary using appropriate language and organisation?

Cross-curricular links

**History/Geography**

- Research a different world heritage site for a group presentation/poster on the story behind its construction, preservation and fame.

**Art/Design/Maths**

- Examine lines of symmetry in the Taj Mahal (including the floor plan on page 29). Compare with other world famous buildings and monuments.

**DT/Science/Maths**

- Build a simplified model of the Taj using 3D shapes/blocks and test Nazma's minaret/earthquake theory.
The Taj (Oxford Level 14) curriculum coverage chart

**Links to Oxford Reading Criterion Scale:**
- Can read aloud with intonation and expression, taking into account presentational devices (e.g. capital letters or italics for emphasis) and a more sophisticated range of punctuation, including … () – . (READ) [ORCS Standard 5, 1]
- Can read confidently and independently using a range of strategies appropriately to establish meaning, e.g. self-correcting, widening knowledge of vocabulary. (READ) [ORCS Standard 5, 2]
- Can scan texts to locate specific information. (R) [ORCS Standard 5, 4]
- Can refer to the text to support opinions and predictions. (R/D) [ORCS Standard 5, 7]
- Can use clues from action, description and dialogue to help establish meaning. (D) [ORCS Standard 5, 8]
- Can read between the lines, using clues from action, dialogue and description to interpret meaning and/or explain what characters are thinking or feeling and the way they act. (D) [ORCS Standard 5, 14]
- Can sometimes discuss how a text can affect the reader and the language the author has used to create those feelings. (E) [ORCS Standard 5, 19]
- Is beginning to recognise how a character is presented in different ways and respond to this with reference to the text. (D) [ORCS Standard 5, 22]

**Comprehension strategies**
- Comprehension strategies are taught throughout the Teaching Notes to enable pupils to understand what they are reading in books that they can read independently. In these Teaching Notes the following strategies are taught: Predicting, Questioning, Clarifying, Summarising, Imagining, Deducing

**ENGLAND** The National Curriculum in England: Years 3–4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spoken language</th>
<th>Pupils should be taught to give well-structured descriptions, explanations and narratives for different purposes, including for expressing feelings (SpokLang.5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pupils should be taught to use spoken language to develop understanding through speculating, hypothesising, imagining and exploring ideas (SpokLang.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pupils should be taught to speak audibly and fluently with an increasing command of Standard English (SpokLang.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading:</td>
<td>Pupils should be taught to develop positive attitudes to reading and understanding of what they read by reading books that are structured in different ways and reading for a range of purposes (Y3/4 ReadComp.1ii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>Pupils should be taught to understand what they read, in books they can read independently, by drawing inferences such as inferring characters’ feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence (Y3/4 ReadComp.2iii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pupils should be taught to understand what they read, in books they can read independently, by identifying main ideas drawn from more than one paragraph and summarising these (Y3/4 ReadComp.2v)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pupils should be taught to understand what they read, in books they can read independently, by identifying how language, structure, and presentation contribute to meaning (Y3/4 ReadComp.2vi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing:</td>
<td>Pupils should be taught to draft and write by, in non-narrative material, using simple organisational devices (Y3/4 WritComp.2iv)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**SCOTLAND** Curriculum for Excellence: Literacy and English experiences and outcomes – Second level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listening and talking</th>
<th>As I listen or watch, I can identify and discuss the purpose, main ideas and supporting detail contained within the text, and use this information for different purposes (LIT 2-04a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I can select ideas and relevant information, organise these in an appropriate way for my purpose and use suitable vocabulary for my audience (LIT 2-06a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I can show my understanding of what I listen to or watch by responding to literal, inferential, evaluative and other types of questions, and by asking different kinds of questions of my own (LIT 2-07a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am developing confidence when engaging with others within and beyond my place of learning. I can communicate in a clear, expressive way and I am learning to select and organise resources independently (LIT 2-10a)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Reading

Through developing my knowledge of context clues, punctuation, grammar and layout, I can read unfamiliar texts with increasing fluency, understanding and expression (ENG 2-12a).

To show my understanding, I can respond to literal, inferential and evaluative questions and other close reading tasks and can create different kinds of questions of my own (ENG 2-17a).

I can:
- discuss structure, characterisation and/or setting
- discuss the writer’s style and other features appropriate to genre (ENG 2-19a)

To show my understanding across different areas of learning, I can identify and consider the purpose and main ideas of a text and use supporting detail (LIT 2-16a).

### Writing

By considering the type of text I am creating, I can select ideas and relevant information, organise these in an appropriate way for my purpose […] (LIT 2-26a)

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**WALES Programme of Study for English in Wales: Year 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oracy</th>
<th>Learners are able to listen carefully to presentations and show understanding of main points (Y4_OracList.1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learners are able to organise talk so that different audiences can follow what is being said (Y4_OracSpea.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learners are able to adapt talk showing understanding of the differences between informal talk with friends and more extended talk with a wider group (Y4_OracSpea.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learners are able to explore different situations through role play (Y4_OracSpea.6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Learners are able to deduce connections between information (Y4_ReadComp.2)</th>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Learners are able to scan for specific information using a variety of features in texts (Y4_ReadStrat.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learners are able to identify how texts differ in purpose, structure and layout (Y4_ReadStrat.7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Writing                | Learners are able to organise writing into logical sequences or sections by beginning to use paragraphs (Y4_WritStru.3) |

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**NORTHERN IRELAND Levels of Progression in Communication across the curriculum: Primary Level 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Talking and listening</th>
<th>Pupils can follow the main points of discussions and make contributions which show understanding (L3_com_talk.2i)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pupils can […] respond to questions to extend understanding (L3_com_talk.2ii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pupils can explain their views/thinking (L3_com_talk.3i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pupils can use an expanding vocabulary (L3_com_talk.3ii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pupils can sequence events and plan what to say (L3_com_talk.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pupils can vary their voice and intonation (L3_com_talk.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Pupils can paraphrase with general accuracy (L3_com_read.1ii)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pupils can understand that there are different forms and features of texts (L3_com_read.4i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pupils can make deductions using information from the text (L3_com_read.4ii)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Pupils can structure and sequence their writing (L3_com_writ.2ii)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pupils can use the form appropriately (L3_com_writ.3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>