

Stage 5 Comprehension Pack

What do the letters mean?

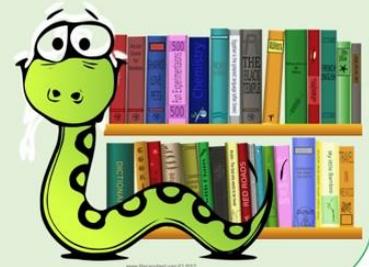
The questions in the comprehensions are not numbered but labelled with a letter from VIPERS. These letters correspond with key reading skills. Many schools use these codes in reading lessons so lots of children will be familiar with them.

If your child is not familiar with the letter codes, then do not worry – it is just highlighting the skill for them.

If you would like to read more about VIPERS then there is an explanation on our blog here:
www.literacyshedblog.com/vipers

Reading Vipers

Vocabulary
Infer
Predict
Explain
Retrieve
Sequence or Summarise



If you enjoy these comprehensions, then further comprehensions can be found in our membership area on www.literacyshedplus.com



Counting

Today, I walked to school. I went a longer way than usual, I'm counting up my steps. I stopped at the newsagent and bought a bottle of water. My teacher says it's important to drink a lot to stay healthy. By the time I'd got to the front gate, I'd already done 5000 steps. What a big number, I thought to myself. But then I remembered what I'd heard on the news the day before. Apparently, there are only 5000 black rhinos left in the wild. Immediately, 5000 seemed insignificant.

Our first lesson was English; we wrote a story. Mine was all about an astronaut blasting off into space to explore the universe. He was looking for another planet for humans to live on. Afterwards, I counted up my words. 800! I told my friend who said it was loads. Way more than they'd written. But then I remembered that there are roughly 800 mountain gorillas left in Africa. After that, the number seemed minuscule.

I dreaded maths after break. We had a fractions test, and I hate fractions. I'd drunk a lot of water to make sure my brain was working well - I'd lost the bottle I bought before school, but luckily we had a pile of plastic cups for us to use at the water fountain. Our maths teacher was cold and had forgotten his coat, so we had the radiators on full. It was sweltering! In the end, the test wasn't too bad. We had 55 minutes, but I finished after half an hour. It felt like such a long time, so many minutes to waste. While I waited, I thought back to an advert on the television: 55 elephants are killed each day for their ivory. How awful! Now, 55 felt enormous. Far bigger than before.

At lunch, my friend reminded me that tomorrow was her birthday. As if I could forget! She always makes such a big deal of being one whole year older. It's only 365 days, I always tell her. 365 get-ups, it's not that big a number to get through. Then, I caught sight of a poster on the wall. It was battered and unloved, but I could just make out the message. Every hour, we dump 365 tonnes of plastic into our oceans. That's five times as heavy as a space shuttle! Or three-and-a-half blue whales! Every hour! Definitely not insignificant. In an instant, I looked down at the plastic cup in my hand - the fourth I'd used today - and thought back to the plastic bottle I'd bought from the shop. Where would they all end up? Would they be part of the 365?

Finally, it was time to go home. As I climbed into my mum's car to drive the half a mile to our

house, I thought back to how I'd started the day. I looked at my watch, I'd only hit another 2000 extra steps. Not as many as I'd wanted. As if by magic, the man on the radio chimed in with the news. Scientists have worked out that around 2000 species of animal are becoming extinct each year. Suddenly, 2000 seemed vast.

"That's 5 species a day!" my mother exclaimed.

I swallowed hard and thought back over all the things I'd done today that weren't helping the planet. I don't think I can live with losing 5 species a day, can you?



SUMMARY FOCUS

Summarise all of the things that she has done during the day that have an impact on the planet and climate.

VIPERS QUESTIONS

V

Find three examples of vocabulary that tell you the size of a number.

R

How many plastic cups did she use over the day?

R

When is her friend's birthday?

E

Explain how the author makes it easier for the reader to understand the scale of the problem.

I

When she thinks about her day, how does the author feel? What tells you this?

19th October 1943

BRAVE YANK FLIES TO THE RESCUE

Pigeon Powers Through

At just after 9 am yesterday, an American soldier flew to the rescue of hundreds of British soldiers. G.I. Joe, a homing pigeon trained by the Signal Pigeon Corps in the USA, was responsible for one of the most daring, last-minute rescues ever seen.

Acting on earlier orders, the 169th Brigade had stormed the Italian village of Calvi Vecchia. Their target was the remaining German soldiers who still held it in a tentative grip. To aid their mission, air-support was to be provided by the US Air Force.

It came as quite a shock when the Allied troops were able to take back the town far ahead of schedule. However, what should have been a time for muted celebration quickly turned to one of panic.

“We knew the Yanks were on their way to us, but the damned radio had packed in. We had no way of letting them know we had taken the city. No way to stop them sending their bombers,” Private J.L. Pickard said on his return to base.

With hundreds of villages and nearly a thousand soldiers now at risk of being bombed by their allies, thoughts quickly turned to how else to solve the problem.

Fortunately, cool heads prevailed and the brave pigeon was called upon. A message was dispatched to the air base 20 miles away. In the end, G.I. Joe covered the distance in 20 minutes, flying at an amazing 60mph.

It was almost too late. It was only as the planes were warming up that the news arrived. Luckily,



it was joyously received, and the raid cancelled.

We reached out to the general in charge at the time. He said that with radios constantly in and out of service, pigeons like G.I. Joe are often the most essential form of communication. This isn't the first time that a pigeon has saved the lives of men.

Last year, a stricken RAF bomber ditched into the freezing waters of the North Sea. With their plane's radio damaged, the men resorted to the homing pigeon that they carried aboard for such an eventuality.

That time, it was a bird named Winkie who flew over 120 miles to her home loft. There, the RAF was able to use the time taken from the plane ditching to her arrival to rescue the pilots within 15 minutes!

At the Wexbridge Crier, we'd love to hear about any animals that you know of that have helped with the war effort. Send your information to PO Box 42, Wexbridge, Leicestershire.

By M. Withers - War Correspondent

RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. What date was the newspaper written?
2. How many soldiers were saved by G.I. Joe?
3. Why did they have no way of letting the Yanks (Americans) know they had taken the town?
4. How long did it take to rescue the pilots after Winkie's message?
5. Where did the RAF bomber crash?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

S

How did the soldiers feel when they first took back Calvi Vecchia? How did this change?

V

Which word explains that the news arriving at the air base was good news?

E

Explain how the problem at Calvi Vecchia was solved.

P

How else do you think animals might have been used to save people in World War II?

V

What are "allies"?

The Contraption

“You’re doing it wrong again!”

Hanna sighed. Pippa was her best friend, but she was so uptight about everything. “I’m sorry!” Hanna called back. She heard a muffled grunt in the mechanism above her. Enormous metal cogs bit into each other, and steam hissed out of well-worn seals in the copper piping that covered the walls like a maze.

The contraption had been Pippa’s idea. She was the brains behind the whole thing. Hanna tried to consider herself the brawn, but one look at her scrawny arms and sparrow legs told her that wasn’t true either. They’d been working on it together for the last few months, and it was finally getting close to testing time.

Something whistled in the bowels of the machine. Hanna heard her friend whoop and holler and bang her wrench on the metalwork. “It’s working,” Pippa called down. “Get her wound up, and we’ll be ready to test it.”

The winding rod was slick with sweat, so Hanna wrapped an oily rag around it and started to wind it slowly. There was a lot of resistance. She knew that the other end of the rod was attached, via a system of cogs and pulleys, to a screw that wound down into the river below. By winding the wheel, she’d start to draw up water into the enormous sump up above. From there, it would be turned into steam that would power the contraption.

A strong wind picked up outside. Hanna heard the creak of the wooden masts twisting as the sails caught the breeze. The contraption rocked but steadied quickly. Sweat dripped into Hanna’s eyes, but it would all be worth it. That was the beauty of her friend’s new creation. Pippa wasn’t content with just being amazing at harnessing the steam, she was, above all else, an alchemist.

Hanna still remembered the day when Pippa came bursting out her lab with a small vial of vivid green liquid. “This is Infinitum!” she’d shouted. Hanna knew she must have looked perplexed

because Pippa had grabbed her by the hand and dragged her into the lab. There, a wheel no bigger than a coin was mounted on an axis. As they both watched, it spun, and spun, and spun. And it didn't stop.

"Infinitum actually generates energy when it gets hot!" Pippa exclaimed. "The wheel spinning on the bearing generates a small amount of heat through friction. This new liquid turns that heat back into more energy. It will never stop spinning!"

Fast-forward a few months and Pippa had built the contraption. She didn't have enough Infinitum to power the machine; instead, she was planning to use it to heat the steam-engine. Providing they drew enough water into the super-hot centre of the machine, it would never slow down and never stop.

Hanna gritted her teeth and wrenched the wheel harder. She heard her friend call down from the hatch up above, "It's full...you can stop. Come and see this! It's working!"



INFERENCE FOCUS

1. How do you know that Hanna thinks Pippa is the more intelligent of the two?
2. What do we know about Pippa's character? Explain how.
3. How did Hanna feel when Pippa first showed her Infinitum?
4. What was Pippa's biggest passion?
5. How hard was Hanna working? How do you know?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

V

Which word or phrase tells you that Pippa is good at using steam to help her?

S

What was the point of the wheel Hanna was turning?

R

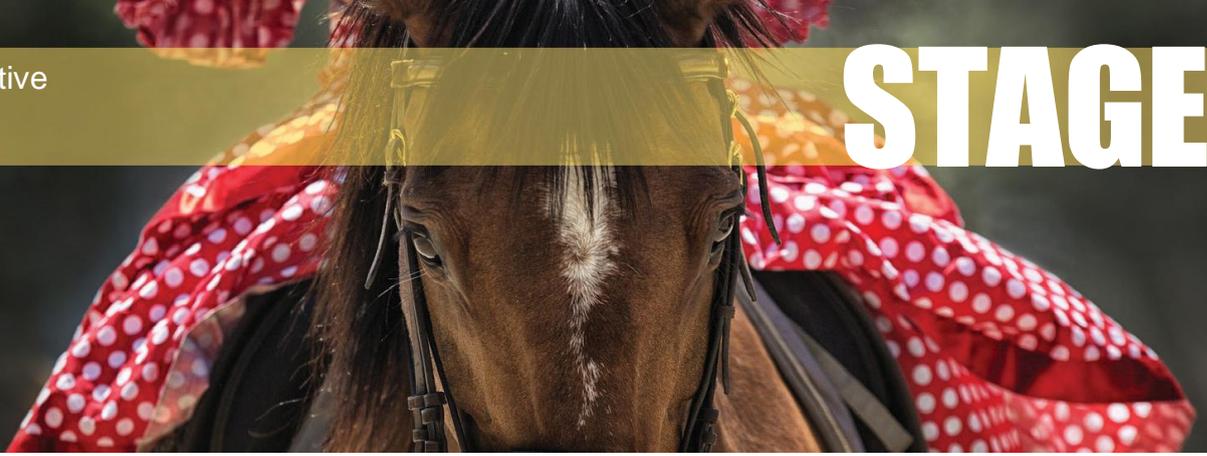
What was the name of Pippa's new creation?

E

Why do you think the new creation is called Infinitum?

S

Draw a labelled diagram of what you think the contraption might look like, using evidence from the text.



The Highwayman

Based on the poem by Alfred Noyes

Storm clouds blew across the night sky, while the moon was tossed upon cloudy seas like a ghostly galleon. A blanket of purple heather clung to the moor below where a ribbon of moonlight stretched far into the distance. Along the road came a highwayman, riding on a handsome white stallion. On his head, the highwayman wore a French cock-hat and a bunch of lace around his neck. His red, velvet coat shone in the light, more for show than protection against the howling gale. He kicked his thigh-high boots into the side of his steed and guided it towards the old inn-door. As he rode, the butts of his pistols twinkled.

When he arrived at the inn, the doors were locked and barred. The highwayman pursed his lips and whistled a gentle tune underneath a particular window. After a short while, the shutters were eased open and Bess, the landlord's daughter, stared down sweetly: her black eyes twinkled.

Unbeknownst to the smitten pair, they weren't alone. Hidden away in the stable, behind a bale of straw, Tim the ostler listened. His hollow eyes, tinted green by what he witnessed, looked out of a pale white mask. Silently, he listened as the highwayman told Bess his plan for the night.

"I shall be back before the morning light," the highwayman promised his love. "Though if the wretched King's men harry me, wait for me by moonlight. I promise I will return!" With those parting words, he rose in his stirrups and leaned to take the girl's pale hand. She pulled it away and released the ribbon around her hair. Smiling at his love, the highwayman kissed the long, black waves and rode away to the west.

True to her word, Bess waited by her window at dawn. There was no sign of her love. No dot on the gypsy's ribbon that looped amongst the heather. Noon came and went, and soon a tawny sunset cast its glow across the lilac hills. And then, from out of nowhere, a troop of red-coated men came marching along the road and knocked on the old inn-door.

King George's men said nothing as they entered, preferring instead to sit and drink the ale. Bess screamed to no avail as half a dozen of them left the rest and bound her to the foot of her bed, a tight gag in her mouth. She screamed a muffled curse as they set themselves down at her casement and kept a tight eye on the growing shadows outside. She dared't move: when they had bound her, the red-coats had strapped a musket to her chest, and she was afraid to struggle against it too much. The handle sparkled in the

moonlight, just like the pistols of her betrothed.

Look for me by moonlight.

They would see him! Now she had no choice but to struggle, despite the threat. The knots held against her writhing, and soon her wrists were sore. Undeterred, she worked against them, hour after hour, until, on the stroke of midnight, she felt the trigger beneath her finger. She knew there was only one way to warn her love. Silently, Bess waited until she heard the familiar sound in the distance.

Tlot-tlot.

The unmistakable sound of her highwayman returning. He had kept his promise! Now, she must keep hers. She closed her eyes and pulled.

Outside in the darkness, the sturdy steed reared up at the sound of a gunshot. The highwayman dug his heels into the white flanks and spurred his horse to the west. It wasn't until dawn that he heard of his beloved's sacrifice.

Shrieking a curse to the sky, the highwayman spurred his horse back towards the road with his rapier held high. His spurs glistened red in the golden noon, but still, he pushed on until he rode straight into the red-coats as they left the old inn. They shot him down like a dog on the highway, his last thoughts filled with Bess, the landlord's black-eyed daughter.

RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. What type of boots was the highwayman wearing?
2. What colour were Bess' eyes?
3. Who listened in to Bess and the highwayman's conversation?
4. How many guards bound Bess to the foot of the bed?
5. What was the sound of the horse that Bess listened out for?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

V

Use the context of the sentence to work out the definition of **unbeknownst**.

V

Use a thesaurus to find a synonym for **harry**.

I

When Bess has to struggle, what is the threat that she faces?

E

When she **closed her eyes and pulled**, what did she do? Explain why she did this.

E

Use a quote to explain how you know the highwayman rode quickly back to the guards.



Tomb Raider

The tombs that sit beneath the ancient pyramids at Giza were designed with one thing in mind: to keep the deceased buried. They weren't built to be opened, and they certainly weren't constructed to allow keen adventurers to go rummaging around trying to find the treasures contained within.

None of this was going to deter Anna Jones, a reckless archaeologist, fresh out of university. She'd grown up watching heroes enter the catacombs and reemerge weighed down with troves of gold. She wanted that. She wanted the riches and the adventure that went along with it.

So far, things had been going to plan. She'd avoided the pit just inside the entrance and wedged a piece of wood into the sliding block that threatened to trap her forever. Now it was simply a case of finding the blasted burial chamber.

In a way, this was part of the fun: wandering aimlessly along pitch-black corridors, finding nothing but empty disappointment in room after room. In another, more real, way, it was infuriating. Nobody ever told you about this bit. As she kicked yet another mark in the sand outside yet another empty chamber, she cursed her bad luck.

Then, she corrected herself. Even though she considered herself a very sensible, down-to-earth kind of person, curses were not something to be taken lightly in the tomb of an Egyptian Pharaoh. There were rumours that any soul who entered the burial chamber would leave a shadow of itself, unable to enter the afterlife. Anna reassured herself that such things were nonsense and carried on along the corridor.

Further along the passage, her weak torch illuminated a large pile of rubble. She scrambled to the top but couldn't find anywhere that it had fallen from. "This looks more promising," she muttered. She jumped slightly at the faint echo of her own voice. She knew that tomb-builders would often block off the main chambers with piles of rocks.

Desperation took over and Anna started to claw at the stones, throwing them behind her as she

tried to make a hole through to the other side. Her fingernails split and bled, but she was too close now to care. Suddenly, she stopped. She held a large stone in her hand. Listening carefully, she tossed it into the darkness. The expected echo reverberated around the stone walls, but there was something else. A tapping sound.

She threw another stone. Again, the echoes died away, and then the tapping sound followed. It sounded like something tapping rhythmically on the hard floor, like drops of water, or a walking stick. She strained her ears and heard a second sound. This one was more like something heavy being dragged or scraped along the floor.

A renewed sense of urgency gripped Anna: she was stuck. Should she continue on into the chamber, or head back towards whatever was making the sound? She turned back to the pile and pressed on. Stone after stone flew behind her; the tapping and scraping grew closer.

With her last ounce of strength, Anna clawed away the final stone and fell into the chamber beyond. A look of terror etched itself on her face, and she screamed silently. Somebody was waiting for her.

RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. Where are the pyramids in the story?
2. What does the language used tell you about Anna Jones?
3. What was Anna scared of?
4. How could she see where she was going?
5. What happened to her hands when she dug the stones?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

V

What does the word deceased mean?

S

What traps had been set to deter robbers?

I

What does the phrase “empty disappointment” tell you about how Anna felt when she went into each room?

P

Why do you think Anna was kicking marks into the sand outside each door?

P

Why do you think Egyptians spread rumours of curses? Do you think they were real?

