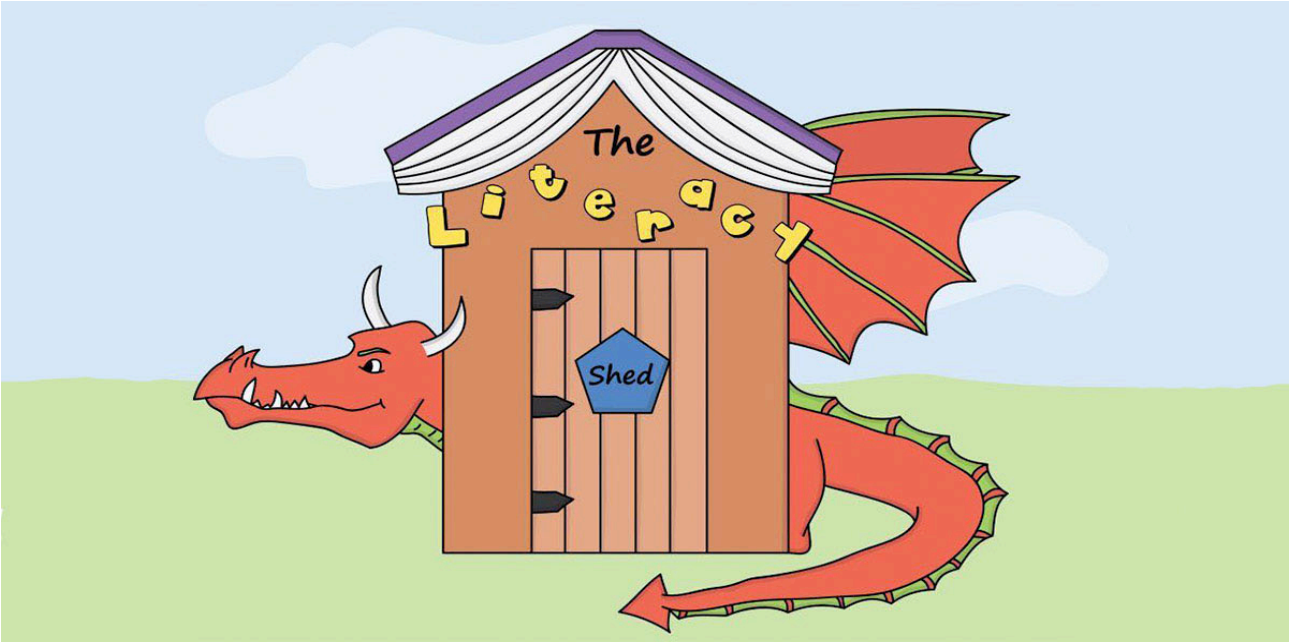
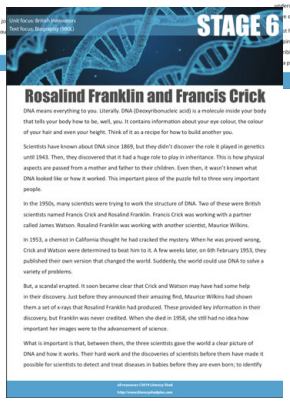
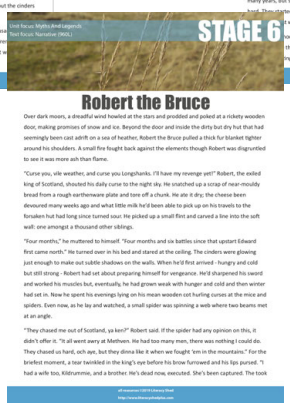
Comprehension Shed



Stage 6
Comprehension pack





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Stage 6
Comprehension Pack

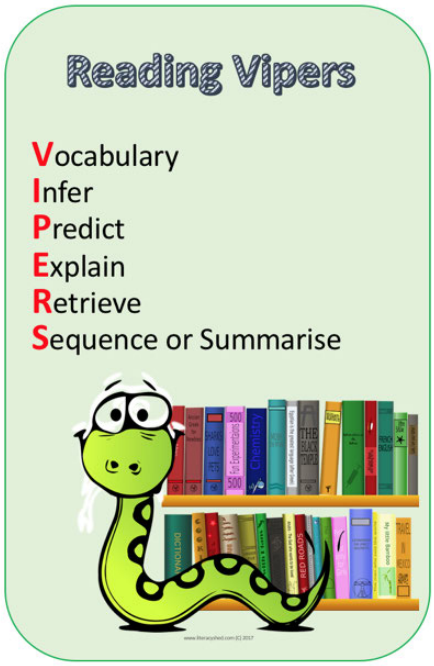
This free pack is aimed at those children working at the expected reading level for a child in Y6 in England. P7 in Scotland and Ireland. (Ages 10-11) The texts have a Lexile level range between 890L and 980L.

<u>What do the letters mean?</u>

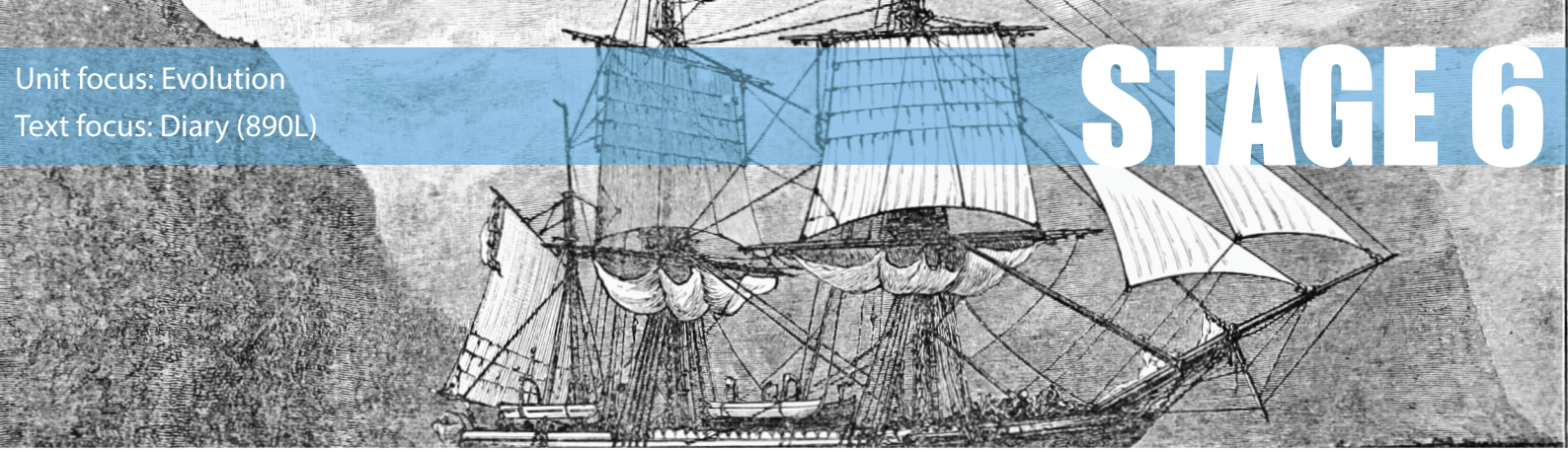
The questions in the comprehensions are not numbered but labelled with a letter from VIPERS. These letters correspond with key reading skills. Many schools use these codes in reading lessons so lots of children will be familiar with them.

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



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



Unit focus: Evolution
Text focus: Diary (890L)

STAGE 6

Diary From The Beagle

Diary,

It finally feels like the adventure has begun. We set sail over a fortnight ago but, until now, I didn't dare assume we would get far. We were due to leave under the summer sun of September, but this blasted ship took longer than anticipated to complete. Gales and the like delayed us further and the captain was far too merry over Christmas. You can forgive me for thinking this voyage was cursed in some way.

Our first stop was at Madeira. We weren't allowed to disembark and were soon on our way again. In Tenerife, we had received word of a cholera outbreak back home in England and were quarantined offshore. What I would have given at that point to set foot on land that didn't rock with every movement. Alas, it wasn't to be.

Bereft of anything else to do, I turned my hand to creating a net to trail behind the ship. It was easy enough work, and we soon had it in the water. The wonder of the creature that we caught, even so far out to sea, is something that I shall remember forever. It created a feeling of wonder that so much beauty should be apparently created for such little purpose.

Much to my relief, today we finally set foot on land. We landed at Praia on the island of Santiago. How I yearned for the rolling hills of Her Majesty's own land, but instead we were faced with nothing but endless volcanic rock. I've never felt such discomfort underfoot.

Nevertheless, first impressions can be deceiving. I took myself away from the crew and ventured inland to the town. What glory lay before me - tropical vegetation towering above us all and the glorious colours and sounds of a thousand creatures.

FitzRoy set out to Quail Island to conduct his own experiments into the islands' locations. I joined him, of course, but I am far too entranced by the overwhelming novelty of the sights and sounds to be of much use.

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On the beach, I noticed the oddest thing. Squashed between layers of black lava rock, there is a line of white, most probably created by crushed coral and shells. A similar phenomenon occurs on the island of St. Jago, only much further above sea level. At some point in time, these were probably aligned. I shall have to pass these findings on to my good friend Charles Lyell, who suggested that the Earth's crust rises and falls like the tide. He will be most interested.

With that, I must return to my duties. FitzRoy possesses one of the shortest tempers I know; he will not suffer me being late for supper.

Charles Darwin

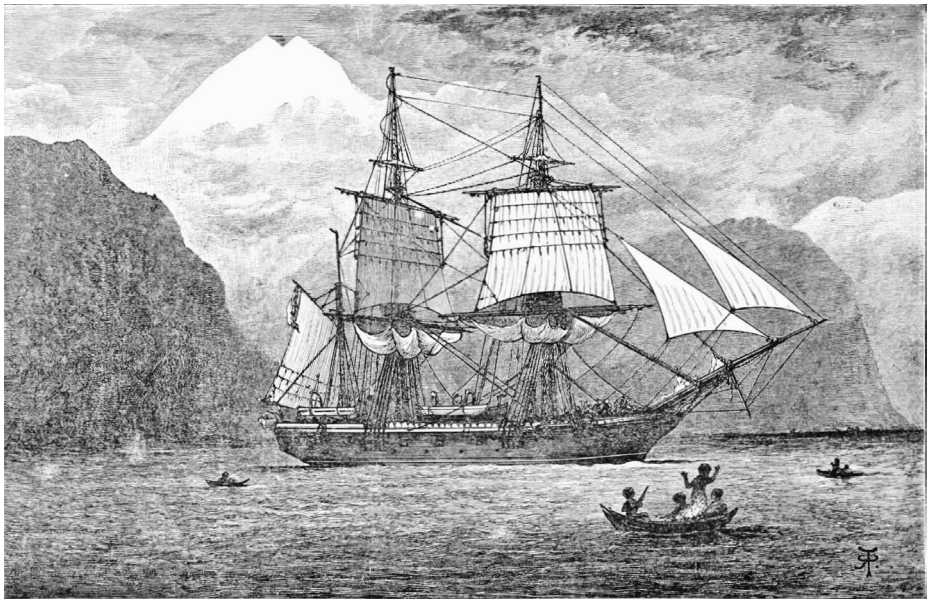

Illustration of the HMS Beagle from 1890

INFERENCE FOCUS

1. When they arrived at Tenerife, how was Darwin feeling? What tells you this?
2. How did Darwin feel when they landed in Praia. What tells you thing?
3. What impression of Praia do you get when Darwin ventures furth onto the island?
4. What do we know about Darwin's state of mind when he first went to Quail Island?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

V What does the word "alas" mean?

S What happened after they arrived in Tenerife?

V Find and write a definition for the word "bereft".

E How do you know that this text is from a different period in time?

S Where was the first stop for the boat?

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Answers:

1. He thought it might be cursed, he was desperate to land and walk on solid ground
2. Happy to be on land but disappointed by what he found
3. It is a lush tropical place with lots of animals and colour
4. He was distracted and amazed by everything he was seeing

V: Unfortunately

S: They were quarantined offshore

V: Deprived or lacking something

E: The use of old-fashioned language like alas, nevertheless, glory, shall. His amazement at finding creatures in the sea, which they wouldn't have known then.

S: Madeira

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Robert the Bruce

Over dark moors, a dreadful wind howled at the stars and prodded and poked at a rickety wooden door, making promises of snow and ice. Beyond the door and inside the dirty but dry hut that had seemingly been cast adrift on a sea of heather, Robert the Bruce pulled a thick fur blanket tighter around his shoulders. A small fire fought back against the elements though Robert was disgruntled to see it was more ash than flame.

“Curse you, vile weather, and curse you Longshanks. I’ll have my revenge yet!” Robert, the exiled king of Scotland, shouted his daily curse to the night sky. He snatched up a scrap of near-mouldy bread from a rough earthenware plate and tore off a chunk. He ate it dry; the cheese been devoured many weeks ago and what little milk he’d been able to pick up on his travels to the forsaken hut had long since turned sour. He picked up a small flint and carved a line into the soft wall: one amongst a thousand other siblings.

“Four months,” he muttered to himself. “Four months and six battles since that upstart Edward first came north.” He turned over in his bed and stared at the ceiling. The cinders were glowing just enough to make out subtle shadows on the walls. When he’d first arrived - hungry and cold but still strong - Robert had set about preparing himself for vengeance. He’d sharpened his sword and worked his muscles but, eventually, he had grown weak with hunger and cold and then winter had set in. Now he spent his evenings lying on his mean wooden cot hurling curses at the mice and spiders. Even now, as he lay and watched, a small spider was spinning a web where two beams met at an angle.

“They chased me out of Scotland, ya ken?” Robert said. If the spider had any opinion on this, it didn’t offer it. “It all went awry at Methven. He had too many men, there was nothing I could do. They chased us hard, och aye, but they dinna like it when we fought ‘em in the mountains.” For the briefest moment, a tear twinkled in the king’s eye before his brow furrowed and his lips pursed. “I had a wife too, Kildrummie, and a brother. He’s dead now, executed. She’s been captured. The took

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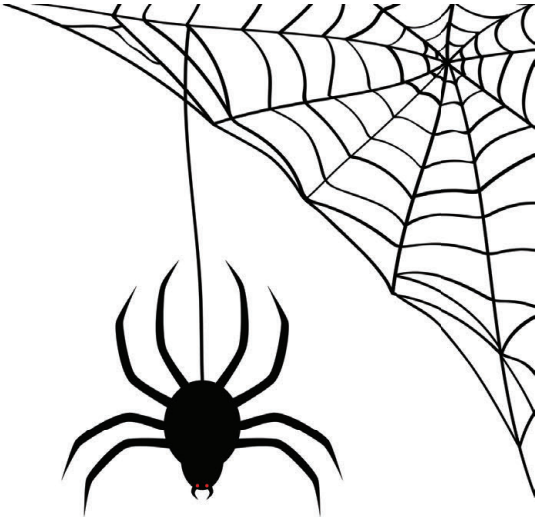
everything, the blasted English, that devil Longshanks."



Robert threw himself back down in a huff and tried to get to sleep, but the small spider occupied his thoughts. Up above, the arachnid was attempting to cast a web from one beam to another; each time it would throw itself into the abyss and fall just short, plummeting towards the ground before its safety line pulled it to safety. He watched captivated as it tried over and over again: four times, five, six. The irony of the spider trying and failing six times (as many as Bruce had failed against the English) wasn't lost on the king, and he sat bolt upright. If the spider makes it this time, he thought, then I too will try a seventh time. If it fails, I will travel to the Holy Land and join the Crusades.

Sure enough, the spider leapt again between the beams and, this time, it made it. Snatching up his sword and armour, Robert the Bruce set out into the bitter night and led the clans of Scotland to victory over the English. He went on to become one of the most loved kings in Scottish history.

INFERENCE

1. How is Robert feeling in the first paragraph? How do you know?
2. What do you think he was doing when he carved a line into the wall?
3. How does Robert feel as he's telling the spider stories of his battles? Explain.
4. Why was the spider occupying his thoughts?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

V What do you think "Ya ken" means?

V What contraction does "dinna" replace?

E Explain how Robert used the activities of the spider to influence his own thoughts.

R How many times did the spider fail?

S What is the moral of the story?

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Answers:

1. Cold and lonely. He wraps the blanket around him and is grumpy about the fire

2. Keeping track of the days

3. Proud and reminiscent - there's a sparkling tear in his eye

4. He is fascinated by it - it's his only company

V: You know/understand

V: Didn't/don't

E: He used its perseverance as inspiration

R: Six

S: Don't give in - keep trying

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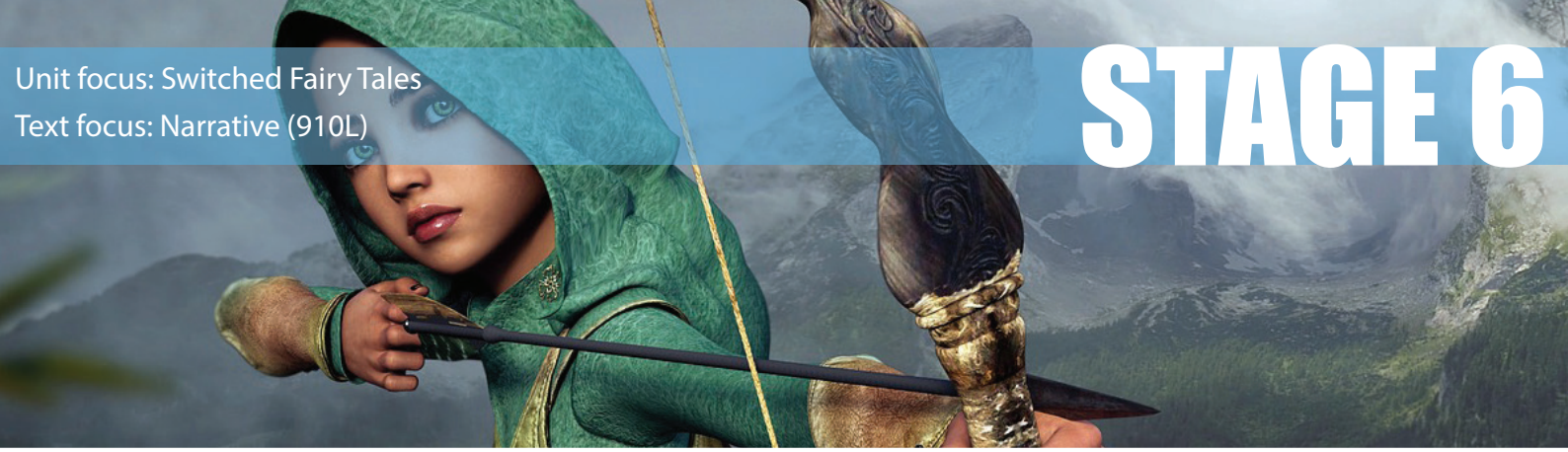

Unit focus: Switched Fairy Tales
Text focus: Narrative (910L)

STAGE 6

Robyn Hood

Back home in Nottingham, the other girls had made fun of Robyn when she'd spent her nights practising with her yew bow. They'd laughed when she'd said that she wanted to rise up against Prince John. They'd sniggered when she'd said she wanted to lead her own army. They were all wrong.

Over the years, Robyn became an accomplished thief. Even though she could steal anything she wanted, she only stole what she really needed. Bread was her speciality. She soon became known for her dark green hood that she wore over her head and shoulders to conceal herself in a crowd. Eventually, the name Robyn Hood stuck.

She'd often head out hunting in the Prince's forest that surrounded the city. The royal deer were sacred and hunting them was punishable by death. This didn't stop Robyn though, and soon a band of other misfits started to tag along with her hunts. Inevitably she was caught. Instead of sentencing such a young girl to death, the Prince took pity on her and gave her a choice. She could marry the Prince, or live as an outlaw in the forest. The Prince was a hideous and unkind man, and so Robyn's decision was easy. The Prince never forgave the snub and swore revenge on the girl and any who followed her.

Robyn feared for her safety. Luckily, a giant girl named Joan stood by her side. As tall as a bear and just as strong, "Little" Joan was fiercely loyal. Thinking back to the girls who had laughed at her, Robyn now set out recruiting an army of rebels who would fight for her against the Prince. It took many years, but she eventually had a group large enough and loyal enough to start to hit the Prince hard. They started by holding up his waggons and stealing his gold. After taking their cut of the bounty, the rest was given back to the people of Sherwood.

Legend of the hooded maiden and bear-girl stalked through the knights of Nottingham. Not a day went by where their feats weren't exaggerated even further. With Robyn's talent with her bow and Joan's devastating quarterstaff, there wasn't a man in the county who would face them willingly.

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Soon, word of the renegades reached the ear of Prince John. All of his attention now focused on reaping vengeance on his foe. His brother, King Richard, was fighting in the Crusades in the east along with most of the army, but he had enough soldiers to lead a siege on Robyn's woodland hideout.

Stars were scattered across the night sky like diamonds on a jeweller's canvas when his men set out. What Prince John didn't know was that one of Robyn's merry maidens was the sister of one of his guards. The night before, a message had been sent to Robyn, and she had fled. She didn't go far. Instead, her band of rebel girls doubled back in the forest until they formed a silent net around Prince John and his men. The first thing they knew about this trap was the sound of a heavy yew bow creaking under the strain of a drawn string.

PREDICTION

Write the next paragraph in the story. Make sure you use the language and style of the original.

VIPERS QUESTIONS

V As an accomplished thief, what does this say about her skills?

R List the ways that the other girls had responded to Robyn wanting to defeat Prince John.

I What do we know about Robyn's personality when she continued to hunt deer?

E Explain how the stories of Robyn and Joan spread.

I How did Prince John feel when he heard about Robyn? What tells you this?

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Answers:

V: She was very good at it

R: Made fun, laughed and sniggered

I: She's brave and a trouble-maker

E: Rumour and gossip and exaggerations of their feats across the land

I: He was angry - he focussed on his vengeance

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Rosalind Franklin and Francis Crick

DNA means everything to you. Literally. DNA (Deoxyribonucleic acid) is a molecule inside your body that tells your body how to be, well, you. It contains information about your eye colour, the colour of your hair and even your height. Think of it as a recipe for how to build another you.

Scientists have known about DNA since 1869, but they didn't discover the role it played in genetics until 1943. Then, they discovered that it had a huge role to play in inheritance. This is how physical aspects are passed from a mother and father to their children. Even then, it wasn't known what DNA looked like or how it worked. This important piece of the puzzle fell to three very important people.

In the 1950s, many scientists were trying to work the structure of DNA. Two of these were British scientists named Francis Crick and Rosalind Franklin. Francis Crick was working with a partner called James Watson. Rosalind Franklin was working with another scientist, Maurice Wilkins.

In 1953, a chemist in California thought he had cracked the mystery. When he was proved wrong, Crick and Watson were determined to beat him to it. A few weeks later, on 6th February 1953, they published their own version that changed the world. Suddenly, the world could use DNA to solve a variety of problems.

But, a scandal erupted. It soon became clear that Crick and Watson may have had some help in their discovery. Just before they announced their amazing find, Maurice Wilkins had shown them a set of x-rays that Rosalind Franklin had produced. These provided key information in their discovery, but Franklin was never credited. When she died in 1958, she still had no idea how important her images were to the advancement of science.

What is important is that, between them, the three scientists gave the world a clear picture of DNA and how it works. Their hard work and the discoveries of scientists before them have made it possible for scientists to detect and treat diseases in babies before they are even born; to identify

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the age and origins of ancient human beings and for police forces to determine if somebody is innocent or guilty of a crime.

Francis Crook and Rosalind Franklin may have had their differences, but they were both pioneering innovators and British scientists who changed the world.

VOCABULARY FOCUS

1. Find a definition for “inheritance” in the text.
2. Which word tells you that working out what DNA looked like was difficult?
3. Which word or phrase has a definition that most closely matches “to solve or find a solution to a problem”?
4. Write a defintion for “variety”
5. Which word or phrase tells you that Rosalind Franklin’s x-rays were important?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

E Why has the author put Deoxyribonucleic acid in brackets?

S List one of the things that DNA controls, according to this text.

I Why does DNA mean “Literally” everything to you?

R When did scientists first discover DNA?

S Make a list of three things that DNA allows us to do now.

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Answers:

1. This is how physical aspects are passed from a mother and father to their children
2. Puzzle
3. Cracked
4. Many or lots of, all different
5. Key information

E: It is the definition for DNA

S: Eye colour/hair colour/height

I: Because it tells you everything you need to know about your body and how it works

R: 1869

S: Detect and treat diseases in babies, identify the age and origin of ancient humans and find out if somebody is innocent or guilty of a crime

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Unit focus: Victorians
Text focus: Information Text (980L)

STAGE 6

Worst Jobs For Kids

Ever moaned about having to do your homework? What about cleaning your bedroom, or hoovering the floor? Count yourself lucky you weren't a child during Queen Victoria's reign. You were lucky if you were sent to school back then; most children were sent out to work in some of the most horrific conditions you can imagine. You've probably heard about chimney sweeps and flower sellers, but there were much worse jobs out there if you were desperate.

Do you love rolling around in the mud? How about scraping through the dirt to find any coins or lost bits of jewellery? If that sounds good, then a job as a tosher might have been right up your street. It wasn't just the muck and filth on the street though, you'd spend most of your time down in the sewers rummaging around for anything that the rich folk up above might have dropped into the drains.

Tiny children have tiny hands, and they were perfect for fixing the fiddly little mechanisms on the enormous looms that factories used to weave fabric. The sound of the shuttles flying backwards and forwards would have caused quite a din; however, they couldn't stop working just to fix a machine. Instead, children would scuttle around underneath the vast wooden machines and try to time their movements perfectly. Quite often they would get it wrong. The lucky ones only lost a finger. The unlucky ones? Well, I'm sure you can guess.

It wasn't just fixing the looms that children's dainty digits were perfect for. The rise of the steam train meant that lots of children were needed to scrape out the cinders and clean the undercarriage of the engine. Not only did this involve a lot of choking dust and ash, but the cinders were often still red-hot, and many children suffered horrific burns.

Most houses were lit by candles back then, and so matches were needed by the thousands. Dipping the sticks in the toxic phosphorus was another job saved for the cursed children. The horrible chemical would rot their teeth and often led to fatal lung disease. Not sure it was worth it for a penny a day.

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Dick Whittington said that the streets of London were paved with gold. More accurately, they were often paved with filth, particularly dog droppings. Luckily for the children of the time, they could earn money by scraping it up and selling it to the tanners - people who turned the hide of a cow into leather. If they really wanted to earn some money, they could help the tanners by stamping the poo into an odorous mix of chemicals (barefoot, of course) and using it to soak the skins. Unfortunately, many poor children didn't have access to a bath afterwards!

So there you have it. There were some pretty vile jobs for luckless lads and lasses in Victorian times, and we haven't even mentioned leech collectors, coal miners, rat catchers, navvies (canal diggers) and grave robbers. No wonder so many children were desperate to go to school!

SUMMARY FOCUS

1. What were most children lucky to do?
2. Which features of children made them perfect for many jobs?
3. What did all of the jobs have in common in terms of children's health?
4. What happened that meant more children were needed in railway stations?
5. Put the jobs in the text in order from worst to best. Give a reason for each one.

VIPERS QUESTIONS

V What word tells the reader how loud a noise was?

I What did Dick Whittington mean when he said, "The streets are paved with gold"?

I How do you think the author felt about Victorian children? What tells you this?

R What ingredient did tanners need?

P If you still had to do these jobs, do you think you would moan about school? Give reasons.

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Answers:

1. Go to school

2. Their small size and tiny hands

3. They were all dangerous

4. The rise of the steam train

5. Any suitable order so long as appropriate reasons are given

V: Din

I: There was a lot of opportunity in London

I: Feels sorry for them. The use of language, such as luckless or cursed.

R: Dog poo

P: Any suitable prediction with reasons.

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