

Reading VIPERS: A Guide for Parents

To ensure that every child leaves our school a reader, we have a robust approach to teaching reading. Following on from the children's daily reading practise in the form of Phonics sessions, following the Sounds-Write Phonics scheme, reading lessons are taught from Year 2-6, through the use of the VIPERS Reading approach.

The term 'Reading VIPERS' was created by Rob Smith from The Literacy Shed. VIPERS encourages children to actively think about each of the skills they need for reading. It focusses on comprehension and the ability to understand what has been read.

Vocabulary

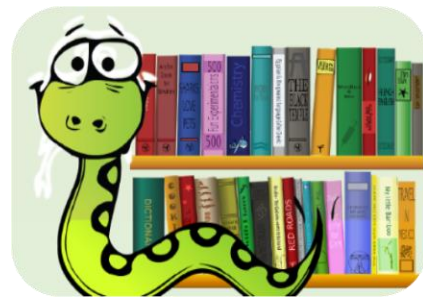
Infer

Predict

Explain

Retrieve

Summarise



Even our youngest children in school begin to hear the VIPERS terminology used in relation to reading. These terms are gradually introduced, with each explained and contextualised. Once the children reach Key Stage 2, they see these terms regularly throughout their reading lessons, English work and other areas of the curriculum. These reading skills are taught through a wide range of fiction and non-fiction texts, to capture interest and imagination.

An explanation of each of these VIPERS skills can be seen in this document, in addition to some examples of the sorts of questions that you might ask your child whilst reading at home.

Vocabulary

Children are taught to draw upon knowledge of word meanings in order to understand the text. This may also include finding and explaining the meaning of words in the context of what they have read. These conversations are a great way to discover which words children know and fill gaps in their knowledge, expanding their own repertoire of vocabulary. For older children, you could show them how to use a dictionary or the internet to find definitions. 'Vocabulary' questions might include finding alternative words or discussing which words are the most effective in an extract.

- What does _____ mean?
- Can you tell me another word that means _____?
- Which word tells you that the character is angry?
- Which word tells us something bad is about to happen?
- Which word in this section do you think is the most effective in building the suspense?

Infer

To infer is to find meaning that is not made explicit in the text. Children will use their understanding of a wide range of prior experiences to make sense of events in what they see and read. As children get more confident, they should start to increasingly back these inferences up with evidence from the text. They may paraphrase or even directly quote to justify what they think.

- Why was the character feeling happy?
- Why did the character run away?
- What kind of person is _____? How does the author show that?
- How can you tell the animal is in pain?
- How can you tell this house has not been looked after?
- How is the character feeling? How do you know that?
- What impression do you get of this setting?

Predict

Children are encouraged to predict what they think might happen based on the events so far and details that are implied in the text. The emphasis here is not to necessarily be right (if all books were predictable, that could become very dull!), but to engage with the plot and actively think about where the journey of the story might go.

- Look at the cover. What do you think this book will be about?
- What do you think will happen next? What makes you think that?
- Do you think they will be successful in their quest? Why/why not?
- How do you think the character is going to react? Why do you think that?
- Look at the title of the chapter. What do you think might happen?

Explain

Children are encouraged to explain their preferences, thoughts and opinions about a text. As they get more confident, children should also be able to explain themes and patterns across a text as well as why authors have made certain choices and the impact of these on the overall effect of the writing.

- Who is your favourite character? Why?
- Would you like to live in this setting? Why/why not?
- Is there anything you would change about this story?
- How does the author build up the tension here?
- Why has the text been arranged in this way?
- Why do you think the author hasn't name the villain yet?

Retrieve

This skill is around finding and recording information located in the text. It tends to cover some of the more straightforward and closed questions that don't require as much inference (often beginning with who, what, when and where). However, the challenge can lie in children

having to skim back over large quantities of text. You can support your child by helping them to narrow down sections to search and scan for key words that will help them look for the information they need.

- In what year did the astronauts land on the moon?
- What did the parents decide to name their baby?
- Who was the first character to climb on the boat?
- Give an example of one of the grandmother's warnings.
- Where did the squirrel hide the food?
- What were the three things Bob was asked to pack?

Summarise

Children are taught to recap the events of a narrative and put them in order (sequence) or sum them up (summarise). This can be an effective way to remind children of the story so far in a longer text or to build familiarity with a shorter book or traditional tale. For younger children, the ability to retell a well-known story from their head is an important step in their development and will give them the foundation on which to build their own stories later on.

- How did the story start?
 - What happened next?
 - Number these events 1 – 5.
 - Can you summarise the story so far?
 - How has the character's life changed throughout this book?
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VIPERS for Picture Books

Here are some examples of VIPERS questions you can adapt to use with children who read picture books or wordless books.

V – Use some words to describe the scene in this picture. What words could you use to describe how the Stick children are feeling?



I – What time of year do you think it might be? How are the Stick children feeling? How can you tell? What do you think they might be saying to each other?

P – What do you think is going to happen on the next page? How do you think the story will end?

E – Did you like that story? Why/why not? What would you have done if you were Stick Man's family? What would you have done if you were Stick Man?

R – What time of year do you think it is now? What happened before this part of the story? Where is Stick Man now?

S – What happened to Stick Man in the story? How did he get home in the end?