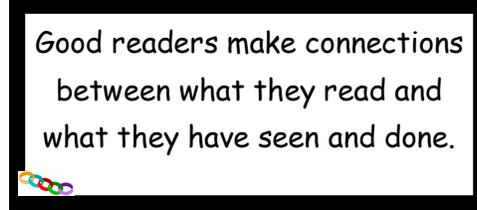


News from the English Team

Extracts from:

Helping your child to succeed in reading

This newsletter is the first of a series that the English team will use to explain the comprehension keys. These keys are strategies that we teach children to use when they are reading to help them understand and some are described in your child's reading journal. We are sure that you will notice the difference in your child's ability to explain what is happening in their book when they use these strategies.



At Beacon Hill we teach children to **make connections** to what they are reading in three ways:

Text to text How does the book connect to something you have already read or a film you have seen?

Text to world How does the book connect to real life, people and places around the world?

Text to self How does the book connect to your life and the things you have seen and done?

Making connections is an easy strategy to model for your child, "This reminds me of the time.." "This is just like the other story we read when..." "Do you remember when we went ...you felt...?" etc.

By linking the text to their experiences children find it easier to understand what a book is about.

Helping your child to succeed in reading

Every day in school your child is asked to read to find out information and much of what the children are accessing is about topics which are unfamiliar to them. By using the comprehension keys the children can **unlock the meaning** of what they are reading. Comprehension keys are strategies that good readers use almost without thinking which is why we need to explicitly teach them at school.

This week we are going to focus on the comprehension key of **developing vocabulary**.

An extract from Words by Steve Turner

I like words

Do you like words?

Words aren't hard to find:

Words on walls and words in books,

Words deep in your mind.

Words in jokes

That make you laugh,

Words that seem to smell.

Words that end up inside out,

Words you cannot spell.

Words of love

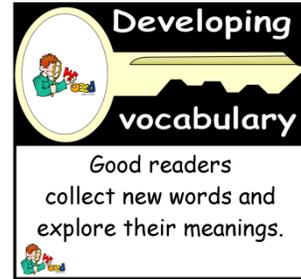
That keep you warm,

Words that make you glad.

Words that hit you, words that hurt,

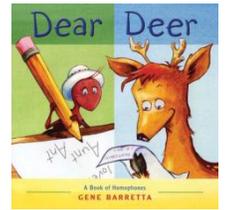
Words that make you sad.

Developing vocabulary is an easy strategy to practise at home and shouldn't just involve asking the children to look up unfamiliar words in a dictionary, although this is an important skill to learn.



Here are some ideas to try:

- The idea of **collecting new words** is a good starting point; you can easily make this into a game where children have to spot unfamiliar words when they are reading or out and about. Talk about the meanings, ask- what do you think it means? What would make sense in this sentence? What other word could we use instead of it? You could challenge your child to try and use a new word ten times in the right context in one day.
- It is essential that your child learns the context of new words so try putting them in **different sentences**.
- Go on a **homophone hunt**- a homophone is a word that is pronounced the same as another word but differs in meaning. Help your child find examples in their readers, for example hear and here or deer and dear.
- Before reading with your child ask them to guess all the **key words** that might be in the book – this works particularly well with nonfiction. After reading add up all the ones they listed which were actually in the book- can they beat their score next time? What new words have they learned?
- Help your child to create a poem called 'My Favourite Words'. Steve Turner who wrote the poem above begins another poem titled 'Words I like'....



Billowing, seaboard, ocean, pearl,
Estuary, shale, maroon;
Harlequin, runnel, ripple, swirl,
Labyrinth, lash, lagoon.

Helping your child to succeed in reading

Another strategy that we teach children to use when they are reading is the **Background Knowledge** comprehension key. This strategy goes well with **Making Connections** which we described in the last newsletter and is an accessible one for all children as it simply asks them to use their prior knowledge to help them understand.



Good readers use their own knowledge to help them understand what an author is saying.

Encourage your child to use this key even before they begin reading their book, discuss the cover of the book and ask: What do you already know about this topic or story? What do you think will happen?

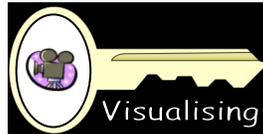
By asking the children to make predictions about the books content you are asking them to draw on their previous knowledge and you can do this at various points of the story. For example, stop before the ending and ask the children to think about what might happen based on what they have already read. Children can also predict the actions of a familiar character in a book, for example "What would Geronimo Stilton usually do now?" or "How do you think the wolf will act based on what you know about storybook wolves?" or "How will Perfect Peter react to what Horrid Henry has done?"

One method we use at school to help children record their previous knowledge of a topic is a KWL chart. You could use the chart headers to structure your discussion about your child's home reading, particularly of a non-fiction text.

K	W	L
What I Think I <u>Know</u>	What I <u>Want</u> to Know	What I <u>Learned</u>

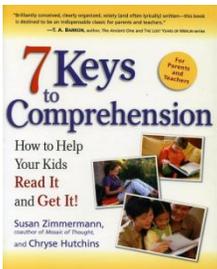
Good readers use the comprehension keys to help them understand

So far the English team has used the newsletters to explain:



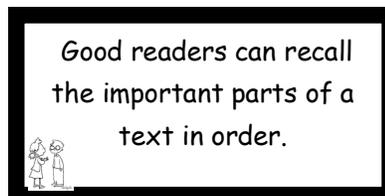
These are tools that the children will become increasingly confident in using during their time at Beacon Hill.

Is your child using these comprehension keys as part of their discussion with you about their reading?



There is a lot of material online about different comprehension strategies. If you are interested to find out more we have a good book that several parents have borrowed in the past which talks about the importance of these strategies being explicitly taught to children. Let one of The English Team know if you would like to borrow it.

This week's focus is on the comprehension key of:



Retelling is a very important skill and it is the first part of the assessment that the teachers do to determine your child's reading ability. If a child can retell a story or piece of nonfiction fluently we know that they have understood it. A retell needs to be more than repeating the title or saying one event and the main characters. The children should use characters names, describe things in detail and put events in order using time connectives; words like first, next and finally. The children should also talk about things that the story made them think about or feel.

Here is a reminder for children about what to include in a retell of a story:

Characters Setting Problem Events Solution Connections