

Preparing for the 2022 KS2 Reading Test



In this timely article by **Penny Slater** of Herts for Learning, non-fiction texts are explored and analysed in order to support children to approach the Key Stage 2 reading test with confidence.

Helping children to flex their comprehension muscles on the best texts we can find – those that not only delight, amaze, and intrigue but that align well with the challenge featured in the test – will ensure that the knowledge and skills pupils have honed throughout their primary years are applied confidently during the timed test. Getting the pitch right therefore is key.

Selecting **fiction** texts in line with ARE has been helped by the publication of HF's Assessing with [Age Related Texts \(AART\) document](#). This is a unique reading assessment resource illustrating what 'age-relatedness' looks like at the end of years 3-6, as children move beyond book bands and reading schemes. Many teachers are finding this resource

Herts for Learning Reading TAF - Additional Text Descriptions

Y5	Content and context	Words and phrases	Sentences	Text structure
Wild Robot	<p><u>Themes</u> Traditional themes of friendship and learning how friends behave, family and loyalty, and overcoming adversity for others.</p> <p><u>Settings and characters</u> A fantasy tale of a robot stranded on an uninhabited island who befriends the animals. The family aspect of the animal life is familiar to children as are the challenges of making new friends. Engaging with the robot's initial reactions provides some challenge as it learns to become more human-like.</p>	<p><u>Word reading accessibility – polysyllabic / multi-morphemic</u> Many polysyllabic and multi-morphemic words, e.g. <i>robotically, ordinarily, recommended, negotiating, interrupted</i>.</p> <p><u>Word understanding</u> Prolific use of Tier 2 words e.g. <i>hesitate, blazed, scurrying</i> and occasional Tier 3, which are supported by context, e.g. <i>motherhood, orphaned</i>.</p> <p><u>Language</u> Mostly literal language used with some phraseology challenges where language used is Americanised, e.g. <i>pointed Roz up to</i> (within chapter 28).</p>	<p><u>Sentence length</u> Sentences rarely stretch beyond two or three clauses</p> <p><u>Sentence content and organisation</u> Most sentences start with simpler sentence constructions, for example noun phrase or adverbial phrase, and are broken up with dialogue. Additional demands are often made as text moves from sentences into fragments, lists or a series of thoughts.</p>	<p><u>Narrative ingredients</u> Unconventional narrative structure requires deep engagement with characters before action, which occurs later in the book.</p> <p>The third person narrator provides a range of perspectives.</p> <p>Dialogue requires careful reading to gain a deeper understanding of the characters, events, setting and sometimes underlying themes.</p> <p><u>Text organisation</u> Chapters are short – generally one and a half pages.</p> <p>Understanding of characters and events supported with black and white illustrations throughout with some being whole page.</p>

invaluable in helping them to refine their understanding of what constitutes a well-pitched fiction text for year groups across KS2.

You can find further details, including a video that explores this document, as well as others exploring the wider [HfL KS1-KS2 Reading Toolkit](https://www.hertsforlearning.co.uk/resources/ks1-ks2-reading-toolkit): <https://www.hertsforlearning.co.uk/resources/ks1-ks2-reading-toolkit>.

This article is designed to complement this existing resource by offering an insight into the challenge presented by differing types of non-fiction texts.

By analysing the non-fiction texts that have featured in KS2 Reading SATs past papers, teachers can begin to build up a holistic understanding of the level of challenge presented in the test. Armed with this knowledge, teachers can engage pupils with texts of comparable complexity in the lead-up to the SATs providing them with ample practise of tackling similar challenge in advance of the test day.

The KS2 Reading SATs consists of 3 texts comprising a range of fiction, non-fiction and poetry – although not all appear every year and not in that order. The texts are designed to move from most accessible (text 1) to most challenging (text 3).

Since 2016 (when the test became more demanding), the past papers have featured a non-fiction text in all three positions, thus enabling an exploration of each text to gain an understanding of the features that constitute increasing challenge, according to the Standards & Testing Agency.

What follows is an analysis of the non-fiction texts that have featured in SATs papers from 2016 to 2019.

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Teachers should use this analysis to cross reference with the texts they are exploring with their pupils in the run-up to the KS2 SATs. In order to prepare pupils effectively for the KS2 reading test, it is helpful if children have encountered and explored – to varying degrees as appropriate – texts that contain many, if not all, of the features identified.

The Giant Panda Bear (2018)

Text position 1 – most accessible pitch

The Giant Panda Bear

Panda bears are very popular animals, partly because of their unusual appearance and partly because they are seemingly mysterious and fascinating about them. However, their numbers are falling. It is thought that only around 1,800 giant pandas still survive in the wild.

Appearance
Giant pandas have the same type of body shape as other bears. They have thick black and white fur which some people think may be to disguise them in the snow and rocks surrounding where they live. An adult can grow up to 1.5 metres and weigh up to 250 kilograms. They might look cute but they have powerful claws. They also have powerful jaws for crushing and grinding bamboo.

Habitat
Giant pandas live in the wild in mountainous areas in western China. Their habitat is densely populated with bamboo. It is the forests in these mountains that attract the pandas as bamboo is their favourite food.

Diet
In the wild, their main diet is bamboo. To survive, they need to eat for most of the day. In fact, they eat 10-15 kilograms of food every day and spend 10 to 15 hours feeding. In some, they have a specially prepared diet of bamboo, eggs, fish and honey.

Cubs
Newborn cubs weigh around 150 grams (about the weight of an apple) and are all white at birth. The black spots develop after about a month. They begin eating bamboo at six months and weigh 11 to 16 kilograms at the end of the first year. Cubs stay with their mother for two to three years, which usually allows them to learn how to find and eat bamboo.

Other interesting facts

- Giant pandas have a bear to eat every day which means, unlike other bears, they cannot hibernate in the winter.
- Giant pandas are able to digest meat but they rarely eat it.
- Until recently, scientists thought that pandas spent most of their lives alone, but new studies show that small groups of pandas can share a large territory.

Why are people concerned about the giant panda?
Many people love the giant panda and become excited to see a few at birth in the wild each year and they do not always survive. Bamboo supplies are diminishing in panda habitats, cutting off a vital food supply. In addition, poaching and humans moving into the pandas' territory have also reduced their numbers. There are very few pandas in zoos, although this is changing. Where there are pandas in captivity, important programmes are in place to try to increase their numbers and find out more about these puzzling creatures.

How can people help?
There are projects where people are invited to 'adopt a panda'. The money goes towards researching, protecting and monitoring them. It also goes towards supporting them in the wild.

What about the future?
In 2016, China had 18,000 giant pandas in zoos. 19 cubs have been born. There are over 300 pandas in captivity and the next challenge is to return them to the wild. The Chinese government has created 50 panda reserves to protect the work.

Did you know?
In China, the panda is a symbol of peace. The Chinese word for panda is 'Xiongmao' (giant cat bear) because a panda's eyes are shaped like a cat's. Over the centuries, pandas have also been called 'spotted bear' and 'black and white bear'.

Features of the text:

- fairly standard, prototypical text type - non chronological report;
- consistent use of simple present tense throughout;
- simple sub-headings clearly indicate the content of the paragraph, including the use of single-word headings e.g. 'Appearance', 'Habitat', 'Diet';
- short paragraphs – approx. 4-5 sentences per paragraph;
- majority of sentences begin with the noun relating to the main subject of the text e.g. 'the panda' or use of a pronoun (they) in its place;
- some limited use of fronted adverbials to start sentences e.g. 'In the wild, their main diet is bamboo.'
- most sentences follow a predicable pattern e.g. noun + verb + complement (Giant pandas have.../ Panda bears are.../Newborn cubs weigh...)
- greater reliance on coordinating conjunctions rather than subordinating conjunctions (limited range of subordinating conjunctions used e.g. where, which, as because).

Swimming the English Channel (2017)

Text position 2 – middle challenge pitch

Swimming the English Channel

from Dover in England to Calais in France

The first Channel swimmer
On 18 August 1823, a Frenchman named Germaine was the first to swim across the English Channel. He had been a professional swimmer and had been swimming for many years. He was 25 years old and weighed 100 kilograms. He swam for 17 hours and 45 minutes, covering a distance of 34 kilometres. He was accompanied by a boat with two rowers and a doctor. He was rewarded with a gold medal and a pension.

Frequently asked questions

Q: How cold is the water?
A: The water temperature can range from 12°C to 18°C. Most people would consider water below 15°C too cold for swimming.

Q: How far is it from Dover to Calais?
A: The shortest distance from Dover to Calais is approximately 31 miles, but a swimmer always swims further than that due to the movement of tides.

Q: How long does it take to swim across the Channel?
A: It takes about 17 hours to swim across the Channel. The fastest time recorded is 10 hours and 55 minutes by a Frenchman in 1985. An average swimmer takes 15 to 20 hours. A swimmer who swims faster than 15 hours will be in the water for up to 16 hours, but a stronger swimmer may take only 10 hours.

Q: Why do people swim the English Channel?
A: There are many reasons for swimming the English Channel. Some people do it for exercise, some for charity, and some for fame. It is a challenge and a test of endurance.

Safe to swim?
The French and UK coastguards are responsible for safety and rescue operations in the English Channel. The French coastguard has been operating since 1953 for safety reasons. The UK coastguard has been operating since 1953 for safety reasons. The coastguard has a 24-hour service and a 24-hour service. The coastguard has a 24-hour service and a 24-hour service.

Celebrity swimmer
The author, Germaine, was a professional swimmer and had been swimming for many years. He was 25 years old and weighed 100 kilograms. He swam for 17 hours and 45 minutes, covering a distance of 34 kilometres. He was accompanied by a boat with two rowers and a doctor. He was rewarded with a gold medal and a pension.

Features of the text:

- mixed text type: biography; recount; Q & As; report;
- large chunks of text with limited use of subheadings to introduce new topics/sections;
- increasing variety of sentence constructions: 55% percent of sentences begin with a noun: most other sentences begin with a fronted adverbial e.g. 'Nearly twenty-seven hours later...'/ 'In fact...'/ 'It must be said...';
- some use of figurative/literary language e.g. idioms, metaphor and simile (the lone swimmer);
- cohesion is created through synonymous references to the same subject, moving beyond the simple use of the main noun or pronoun e.g. the lone swimmer/the exhausted man.

Fact Sheet: About Bumblebees (2019)

Text position 2 – middle challenge pitch

Fact Sheet: About Bumblebees

At the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, we are passionate about saving bees. Here is why.

Save our bees
Bumblebees are among the most loved and familiar of garden insects. The sight and sound of them buzzing from flower to flower is an essential part of summer, but sadly these fat, furry little creatures are struggling to survive.



At the time of writing, 24 bumblebee species are found in the UK, but unfortunately, in the last 80 years, two UK species have become extinct and others have declined sharply. In our modern world of paved gardens and intensive farming, our bumblebees find themselves hungry and homeless. The reason for this is simple and clearly visible: there are now far fewer flowers to provide bees with the pollen and nectar that they need to survive. But it's not lost – you can take action today to help save these hardworking pollinators. This fact sheet explains how.

What's so different about the bumblebees?
To most people, bees are instantly recognisable but there are distinct differences between the appearance and behaviour of bumblebees and honeybees. Bumblebees are larger and busier than their cousins which makes them perfectly suited for colder climates. Bumblebees are also much more robust and can fly in colder weather. The reason for this is simple and clearly visible: there are now far fewer flowers to provide bees with the pollen and nectar that they need to survive. But it's not lost – you can take action today to help save these hardworking pollinators. This fact sheet explains how.

Don't 'bee' confused
Don't confuse bumblebees with wasps. Bumblebees do not swarm and are not aggressive. Only female bumblebees can sting and they will only do so if they feel very threatened. Bumblebees will never interrupt your picnic or steal your sandwich!

Buzz pollination
Only bumblebees are capable of buzz pollination. This is when the bee grabs the flower and produces a high-pitched buzz. This intense pollen that would normally be trapped inside the flower is released in this way. Many other common foods such as beans and peas would also be harder to produce and much more expensive without British bumblebees.

Did you know that bumblebees have smelly feet?
Well they do and they're quite useful! After feeding, they leave a scent on the flower which tells other bumblebees where to find more nectar – the flower will contain very little nectar or pollen.

Things you can do to help
Bumblebees help pollinate plants in more than one million acres of British gardens and the flowers they find can be a lifeline for them. No matter how small your garden, you can help to save the sound of summer by providing lots of bee-friendly flowers. Many ornamental plants that are commonly found in British gardens, such as perennials and biennials, are of no value to wildlife. These decorative and colourful flowers often produce little pollen or nectar. However, there are hundreds of beautiful flowers that do offer these rewards, including longhorns, lavender, geraniums, hebe and wild roses that you can add to your garden.

Why not try planting these?

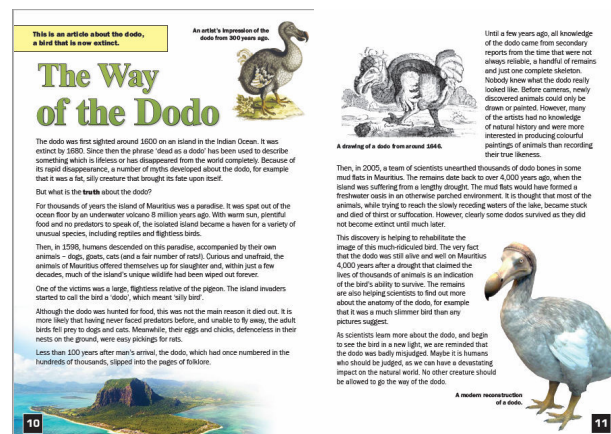


Energy drink for bees
If you feed a weakened or sleepy bumblebee, you can help to boost its energy levels with a simple sugar and water mix. Mix equal parts white sugar and warm water then pour into a small container or syringe. Place both the bee and the artificial nectar near to some flowers.

Act now
You can also help by supporting our work to conserve bumblebee habitats and raise public awareness. There are various ways to show your support including volunteering, fundraising and becoming a member of the Bumblebee Conservation Trust. For more information on all of the above, including access to our bee-friendly gardening web page, visit: www.bumblebeeconservation.org

The Way of the Dodo (2016)

Text position 3 – most challenging pitch



Features of the text:

- no sub-headings;
- use of a variety of sentence constructions: only 40% percent of sentences begin with a noun/pronoun;
- regular use of long, complex sentence constructions: 50% of sentences contain 3 or more clauses;
- limited use of coordinating conjunctions; reliance on use of subordinating conjunctions (45% coordinating conjunctions; 55% subordinating conjunctions)
- considerable use of literary language e.g. idioms, metaphor and simile (easy pickings/ slipped into the pages/ wiped out/ in a new light/ offered themselves up/ brought its fate upon itself);
- increased use of nominalisation (turning verbs or adjectives into nouns or noun phrases) used frequently throughout the piece e.g. disappearance, thirst, suffocation, discovery, indication.

In summary, the most accessible text is a prototypical example of a commonly encountered text type (non-chronological report). This is the sort of reading material often planned into the Year 2 curriculum (and regularly revisited thereafter), with pupils given multiple opportunities to read reports about various topics, often animals, and write their own reports about a topic of choice. The sub-headings aid the reader through their clarity and relevance to the information grouped beneath. Within the most accessible text, the sentence structure is mainly predictable and repeated and most often follows a standard pattern: noun +verb +complement.

There is some limited use of fronting clauses/ adverbials before the main clause. Sometimes a

sentence will begin with a pronoun rather than a noun but due to the limited range of subjects referred to within the piece, it is relatively easy for the reader to keep track of the topic/subject in question.

More challenging non-fiction texts can be characterised by less regular use of subheadings to guide the reader. Where sub-headings are used, they may vary in format, style and purpose. These texts often present a hybrid of text types. Sentence structure begins to vary in more challenging non-fiction texts. Sentences often begin with a fronted adverbial, meaning that key info is delayed which has an impact on the reader's ability to grasp the topic until they have got some way through the sentence and discovered the subject. Cohesion is created within and across paragraphs through the increased use of connecting adverbs, as well as the use of synonymous references to the main subject, or subjects, within the piece. Synonymous references to the subject are often through extended noun phrases rather than single words e.g. *fat, furry little creatures*.

The most notable difference between the most accessible text and more challenging non-fiction examples is in the increased use of literary language, specifically the inclusion of figurative language, including idioms and metaphors. The world of fiction and non-fiction writing collide in more challenging texts. Humour can also feature – in the text examples outlined above, this is evident with the inclusion of a pun (*'Don't bee confused!'*)

In the most challenging non-fiction texts, the average sentence length increases in line with the regular use of multi-clause sentences; the reader moves from one long sentence to another long sentence with little respite. Most notably, literary language is used liberally throughout the most challenging non-fiction texts to create detail, depth and imagery for the reader. Sub-headings are often omitted and readers have to work hard to summarise as they read, teasing out factual detail from often quite lengthy noun phrases. Cohesion is created across a number of paragraphs with multiple subjects being referred to in multiple ways forcing the reader to keep track of several concepts across the piece.

Nominalisation – the process of changing verbs to nouns - is also a more prominent feature of the most challenging text. This grammatical process is a feature

of academic writing and makes the text appear more formal. The use of repeated nominalisation can tire the reader as they must unravel the meaning of a single word that would, in an easier text, be expressed as a more accessible verb chain, using, most probably, a more commonly encountered verb e.g.

Original version from the 2016 text 'The Way of the Dodo':

*'The very fact that the dodo was still alive and well on Mauritius 4,000 years after a drought that claimed the lives of thousands of animals is an **indication (noun)** of the bird's **ability (noun)** to survive.'*

Amended version removing nominalisation:

*The very fact that the dodo was still alive and well on Mauritius 4,000 years after a drought that claimed the lives of thousands of animals **indicates/shows/demonstrates/proves (verb)** that the bird's was able to **(verb chain)** survive...harsh conditions'*

Although nominalisation does feature in the more accessible texts, it is used less frequently. Of particular note is that even though nominalisation often reduces word count (a verb chain is reduced to a single word/or fewer words e.g. 'was able to' becomes 'ability to') the average sentence length remains high in the most challenging text (see below); this reaffirms the challenge that readers face when tackling the hardest texts – each sentence contains a great deal of information meaning that there is a lot for the reader to work through and retain. In summary, it is the combination of more challenging grammatical features, alongside their frequency, paired with the lack of navigational features, such as headings, that creates the cumulative challenge in the hardest non-fiction text presented in the KS2 Reading SATs test.



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