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**What are StoryBytes and InfoBytes?**

These resources were originally developed to provide teachers with short pieces of text that could be completed in one guided reading session. They are especially formatted for our SharpReading approach to reading instruction but can be used in any way the teacher wishes.

Our SharpReading Guided Reading lessons for Stage 3-6 are aimed at habitualising deep processing skills, so four paragraphs usually take around 25 minutes, an ideal timeframe for a guided reading lesson. Follow-up activities provide independent responses for the students who have processed the text deeply. Visit our website for a more extensive explanation of the way you can use StoryBytes and InfoBytes.

**Why no illustrations?**

Our understanding of the developmental progression of the reader is that it generally takes about two years of instruction before the beginning reader develops true fluency with decoding strategies. During this time it is important for the text they are reading to include picture prompts which helps to scaffold the constructing of meaning.

However, once decoding strategies have been habitualised, (often at a reading age of around 7-8 yrs) the reader is now free to work on the skills required to construct meaning at a deep level. This is what we aim for in SharpReading Stages 3-6 and our research tells us that this process is aided by the absence of picture prompts.

**What do the levels mean?**

There is a lot of debate about the validity of ‘Reading Ages’. We maintain that, despite the controversy, they still provide a quick, understandable benchmark for measuring achievement. The levels referred to here coincide with the levels in our Informal Prose Inventory testing procedure and line up with PAT Levels (Progress Achievement Test - NZCER and ACER).

These levels assigned to the text allow for the quick identification of appropriate reading material once an instructional reading age (or level) has been identified.

**Why are there only some levels?**

We have started off providing a spread across the levels from Level 1 (RA 7-8 years) to Level 9 (RA 14+ years). The idea is to back fill some of the missing levels (the odd numbers) as time and motivation allows.

For more about our SharpReading approach to reading instruction visit our website www.sharpreading.com. We specialise in teacher workshops or you can do the training online.

**Characteristics of the Levels**

Level 1 (RA 7-8 yrs): Simple sentences with one or two ideas strung together. Concepts are clearly explained without the need for much inference.

Level 3 (RA 8.5-9 yrs): The progression from Level 1 is that the content remains similar but the sentence structure becomes more varied thus slightly more challenging. There are still usually only two ideas in a sentence for the reader to hold onto but some changes in the vocabulary.

Level 5 (RA 10-11 yrs): Text at this level reflects the ability of the reader to hold onto more complex ideas over longer sentences. Vocabulary is more challenging and meaning may be spread over several sentences. This level is the most often used for students with a 10+ reading age as it provides variety and interest in sentence construction while not overwhelming the student who is developing Stage 3 SharpReading skills - constructing meaning at a deep level.

Level 7 (RA 12-13): Coming soon. We are developing this level because we have found that the jump from Level 5 to Level 9 is too big. This text will provide a challenge for the more able primary aged children without putting them in the cognitive overload that can occur with Level 9.

Level 9 (RA 14+ yrs): Here we have attempted to provide **very** challenging text to test your most able readers. Text at this level includes complex sentence structures and high end vocabulary. However, just because a student can read text at this level, it doesn't mean they can process and understand it adequately. Guided reading should not be a vocabulary lesson so use this level with some caution.
Cats vs Dogs

Possibly the worst thing about having a dog for a pet is when they need to go to the toilet. No matter what the weather is like, rain, hail or snow, they have to be taken for a walk. With cats, going to the toilet is never a problem. They are quite comfortable using a litter-box or they will wait patiently by the door until you let them out. Outside, they are very thoughtful and cover up their business. They don't need you to pick up after them.

Have you noticed how smelly dogs are? Take a dog for a walk and immediately he will want to roll around in the dirt. He is not the least bit worried about being dirty or smelly! Even if you give a dog a bath he will still have that doggy smell. But you will never have to give a cat a bath. Cats spend hours every day carefully licking themselves clean. No one has to remind them, it just comes naturally. It is important for their health and keeps them happy … and you as well.

Cats aren't noisy. They have learnt to save their meows for the important things, like telling you it is time to be fed. Dogs get excited about almost anything. They will bark at any sound they hear. They will even bark at harmless things like butterflies. This can be very annoying for you, your family and the neighbours. Cats will always be quiet around you, letting you get on with the important things you need to do.

Cats are great at getting rid of pests. When was the last time your dog caught a mouse? That's right - never! Mice and rats will leave the house when they know there is a cat about. Mice and rats often carry diseases so having a cat makes your house so much more healthy. I know, it may not be very nice when a cat drops a dead mouse at your feet in the morning. You have to remember that this is a present and the way your cat shows that she loves you. Say ‘thank you’ and be glad that you don't have a dog.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Select three tricky words from the InfoByte.
   Look up the meaning of each word and write it down.
   Use each word in a sentence to show you know what it means.
2. For each paragraph decide on a heading which tells you what the paragraph was about.
3. Make a poster showing some of the information about cats and dogs that you have read about.
4. Write a poem about the things you like about cats or dogs.
5. Design something that will keep dogs from barking all the time.
   Use diagrams and labels to explain your interesting ideas.
Tattoos

Today it is popular to have tattoos. When you wander down the street you will see them everywhere. People have tattoos on their arms, legs, sometimes even on their faces. But it hasn't always been like that. Not so long ago it was only sailors, bikers and gang members who had tattoos. It was not a good idea to have a tattoo if you wanted to get a decent job. Now it doesn't seem to be a problem. Tattoos are the fashion of the day.

People decide to get tattoos for many different reasons. It could be to hide ugly scars on their bodies. Some people tattoo the name of a person they want to remember on their body. Other people get tattoos to show that they belong to a special group or organisation. Many people get tattoos because they think it looks beautiful like a piece of art. Some people spend a lot of time carefully planning the design of their tattoo. Others just decide to do it on the spur of the moment.

If you are starting to think about getting a tattoo, here is some information that could help you make up your mind. A tattoo is made by poking lots of small holes into your skin. Ink is pushed into these holes. If you make lots of these little holes you can create a picture or write words. The holes that have been made heal over and the ink is trapped under the skin. Of course once it is there you can't wash it off.

If that hasn't put you off, here are some very good reasons for not getting a tattoo. What will happen if you get bored with your tattoo and don't like it anymore? What will happen if in a few years it is no longer popular to have a tattoo? If you want to remove your tattoo it will cost a lot of money and it is very painful. Getting a tattoo is a serious business. Maybe you should think before you ink.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Select three hard words from the InfoByte. Look up the meaning of each word and write it down. Use each word in a sentence to show you know what it means.
2. For each paragraph write down a heading which describes what the paragraph is about.
3. Make a poster showing how to get a tattoo.
4. Write a poem about getting a tattoo.
5. Design your own tattoo. Use diagrams and labels to explain your interesting ideas.
The Truth about Pirates

We all know something about pirates. Through books and TV we have met funny pirates like Captain Pugwash. We have met scary pirates like Captain Hook and strange pirates like Captain Jack Sparrow. At some stage we have all been to a pirate dress-up party where everyone is wearing an eye patch or a fake beard and waving around a fake sword. But what is a pirate? Were they real people in history? What did they do and why did they do it?

Three hundred years ago there were lots of pirates. In their pirate ships they sailed the seas attacking and robbing other ships. In those days there wasn’t much work so becoming a pirate gave men a chance to get rich quickly. But it was also a very dangerous life. Many pirates were killed in battle or died from horrible wounds. Because they were outlaws, they were at sea for many months at a time. This meant the food was terrible. They drank lots of rum to pass the time between their pirate attacks.

At this time, ships were being used more and more to transport cargo. That meant that there were more targets for pirates. They would sail up to a ship out at sea and unfurl their pirate flag. If the crew of this ship surrendered the pirates would go on board and take everything that they thought was valuable. Often the pirates would then let the ship sail on. But if the crew put up a fight the pirates would attack, often killing the crew and sinking the ship.

In 1720 there were so many pirate ships that something had to be done. Big ships loaded with canons and soldiers were sent out to hunt the pirates. There were many fierce battles during which a lot of the famous pirates were killed. Other pirates were captured and brought back for trial. They were hung in front of large crowds and their bodies were left hanging in cages as a warning. In the next few years the number of pirates was greatly reduced.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Select three tricky words from the InfoByte. Look up the meaning of each word and write it down. Use each word in a sentence to show you know what it means.
2. For each paragraph decide on a heading which tells you what the paragraph was about.
3. Draw a picture of a fierce pirate that would scare anyone into surrendering without a fight.
4. Write a short story, a poem or a rap about a day in the life of a pirate.
5. Design a pirate ship that was never boring on a long sea journey. Use diagrams and labels to explain your interesting ideas.
A Bright Idea

In 2002 Alfredo Moser, came up with an invention that is now lighting up the world. His workshop in Brazil was always being shut down because of power cuts. He designed a solar powered light bulb to light up the inside of his workshop with just a plastic bottle filled with water. His bright idea is now being used in houses and workshops that do not have power in many countries throughout the world.

This light bulb can be made by just about anyone. Fill a clean plastic two-litre soft drink bottle with water. Add a little bit of bleach to stop anything growing in the water. Next cut a hole in the roof of the house the same size as the water bottle. Push the bottle half way up into the hole. Use something to seal any gaps between the bottle and the roof so that no water gets in when it is raining outside.

How does it work? Sunlight falls on the top part of the water bottle that is poking out through the roof. As the light passes from the air into the water it gets broken up and changes direction slightly. When the light comes out of the rounded bottom of the bottle it gets bent even more in all sorts of directions, lighting up the room. The amount of light given off depends on the brightness of the sun outside. Of course this light bulb only works during the day.

This simple invention is making life easier for the millions of poor people in countries all over the world. They are forced to live and work in small huts with no windows and no electricity. They have to use kerosene lamps for light. The kerosene is expensive and the light is not good. The lamps also give off unhealthy fumes and there are many accidental fires that spread quickly from house to house. This new solar light bulb costs nothing and is healthy and safe.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Select three tricky words from the InfoByte. Look up the meaning of each word and write it down. Use each word in a sentence to show you know what it means.
2. For each paragraph decide on a heading which tells you what the paragraph was about.
3. Draw a diagram with labels showing how the Moser light works.
4. Make an advertisement for the Moser light so that more people will know about it.
5. Design something else that you could do with plastic drink bottles. Use diagrams and labels to show your wonderful ideas.
What to do with all that ...

Every living thing has to go to the toilet to get rid of the things it doesn't need. This was never a problem for the first humans. They were hunters and gatherers who were always on the move looking for food. When they needed to go to the toilet they did it on the ground like all the other land animals. Nature would then go to work on their body wastes returning the useful bits back into the soil.

Later on people began to live together in large numbers in towns and then cities. Getting rid of all the human waste became a problem. Many people dug large pits called cesspools under their houses and the wastes were collected there. These pits needed to be emptied regularly but as more and more houses were built it became very difficult to keep up. Overfilled pits would overflow into the streets. The smell in cities was terrible especially in the heat of summer.

As time passed more people moved to live in cities. London was the first really big city. There were not enough houses and not enough toilets. People used special buckets, called chamber pots, and emptied the body wastes out into the street. When it rained the streets were flowing with stinking human waste. All of this drained away into the River Thames, which was also where the people got their drinking water. Because of the dirty water supply many people died from terrible diseases.

Today, many cities have huge underground pipes to collect human waste. Every house has a toilet that is connected up to this system of pipes. Everything is pumped away to a special place where it is treated. Liquids are taken out and put back into the surrounding water once they have been made safe. The solid waste is left to dry out until it can be used on farms. However, 60% of cities today still have huge problems getting rid of these wastes.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Select three tricky words from the InfoByte.
   Look up the meaning of each word and write it down.
   Use each word in a sentence to show you know what it means.
2. For each paragraph decide on a heading which tells you what the paragraph was about.
3. Draw a diagram with labels showing how the sewage system in modern cities works.
4. Write a poem or a rap about the disgusting smell in old London.
5. Design a new way of getting rid of human waste in overcrowded cities. Use diagrams and labels to explain your great ideas.
Stay Away from Me

What do you do when something bigger than you sees you as their dinner? All living things have to deal with this problem. They have learned ways to behave when they are in danger. Nature has also given them different body parts to help. Some have very hard shells and spikes and that makes them difficult to eat. Others have sharp teeth and sharp claws. Some have skin colouring to help them hide. Here are three living things that have unusual ways to protect themselves.

The Texas horned lizard has a surprising way of frightening off unwanted visitors. If it is attacked it can squirt blood from its eyes. It aims the blood into the attacker’s eyes or mouth. If the attacker has the lizard in its mouth it will immediately drop it and try to wipe off the blood or shake it off. The blood has a bad taste. A bad taste usually means poison and so most animals will stay away from something that tastes bad.

Another clever way of defending is to play dead. Opossums are the most famous for this trick. But the truth is it is not a trick. When in danger opossums get so stressed that their body shuts down. They really do look and behave as if they are dead. The opossum also gives off a dead smell to help the act. It will stay like that for hours. Many animals do not want to eat animals that are already dead and will move on.

There is one kind of termite that is prepared to die to keep others safe. These insects help each other to build very large nests. When other insects come along the older termites go out to defend the nest. All their life they have been getting ready for this moment. Each insect has a bag of blue liquid poison on its back. When the termites are attacked they make these bags explode all over their enemies, killing them. Sadly, it also means the end for the exploding termite.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Select three tricky words from the InfoByte. Look up the meaning of each word and write it down. Use each word in a sentence to show you know what it means.
2. For each paragraph decide on a heading which tells you what the paragraph was about.
3. Draw diagrams with labels showing how the Texas horned lizard, the opossum and the termite defend themselves.
4. Write a poem or a rap about “Stay away from me”.
5. You are an insect or a mammal. Design new ways of getting rid of other animals that want to eat you. Use diagrams and labels to explain your great ideas.
Unsinkable

In April 1912, the biggest ship that had ever been built set out for her first trip across the Atlantic Ocean. She was called the Titanic and she was built to be a luxury hotel on water. The ship builders had also used all the latest ideas to make her the safest ship ever. The hull of ship was divided into sixteen separate sections which could be sealed off if ever the boat started leaking. People thought that this would make the Titanic unsinkable.

After three days at sea the Titanic received signals from other ships that there were icebergs in the area. The ship’s captain ignored the warnings and kept the boat steaming ahead through the night at almost top speed. At 11:40 p.m. a large iceberg was spotted. The crew tried to steer away from it but it was very hard for such a big ship to change direction quickly. The Titanic crashed side on into the iceberg and water poured into the holes that had opened up in five of the sixteen sections.

By 1:20 a.m. everyone knew that the ship was going to sink. Many passengers in the lower decks were trapped as the water filled the front of the boat. The crew and the passengers had not been prepared for something like this. Not having enough lifeboats for everyone on board was another problem. Women and children were loaded into the lifeboats first and the men and the crew were left behind. But everyone was in such a rush that many of the lifeboats were launched when they were only half full.

At 2:20 a.m., with so much water in the front of the ship, the front deck dipped below the surface. Now water poured in through all the hatches and openings on the deck. As the front went down the back of the boat rose up out of the water, higher and higher. The boat was pointing straight down. Hundreds of people fell into the sea. Others clung to whatever they could. Suddenly the whole ship slid down into the water and disappeared from sight. Fifteen hundred people died in the icy waters that night.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Select three tricky words from the InfoByte.
   Look up the meaning of each word and write it down.
   Use each word in a sentence to show you know what it means.
2. For each paragraph decide on a heading which tells you what the paragraph was about.
3. Draw a diagram with labels showing how the Titanic sunk.
4. Write a poem or a rap about the sinking of the Titanic.
5. Design a ship that is really unsinkable.
   Use diagrams and labels to explain your interesting ideas.
What a Spectacle

“Does anyone know what I have done with my glasses?” If you have to use glasses to see clearly you will know the feeling that goes with these words. If your eyes aren't that good, life without your glasses can be a very frustrating experience. It may surprise you to know that the glasses we wear today are quite a new invention. How did people who couldn’t see very well manage before they were invented?

Many years ago there was nothing that could be done for people with bad eyesight. It must have been very difficult walking around in a blurry, out of focus world. However if your eyes were not too bad it may not have been a problem. There weren’t many books and only a few people could read. If your job was to make things with lots of detail you would have to have good eyes. But if you didn’t there were plenty of other things you could do where good eyesight wasn’t so important.

When the printing press was invented around 1440 there were more books to read and more people wanted to read them. Older people, whose eyes were getting weaker, began to look for ways to increase the size of the words in the books they read. Rounded pieces of glass placed on the page magnified the words. In the 1700s someone came up with the clever idea of joining together two pieces of curved glass and bringing them up close to the eyes - the first pair of glasses!

Once people had the idea of wearing glasses they had to solve the problem of how to keep them in place. For a long time the people who made them tried to get them to fit onto the wearer’s nose. But noses are all different shapes and sizes and this method was never very successful. Another option was to tie them in place with ribbons around the head. It took hundreds of years to finally arrive at what we have today. Now these problems have been solved and many people have no problem wearing them.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Select three tricky words from the InfoByte. Look up the meaning of each word and write it down. Use each word in a sentence to show you know what it means.
2. For each paragraph decide on a heading which tells you what the paragraph was about.
3. Draw a diagram with labels to show you understand how people used pieces of glass to help them read.
4. Write a poem or a rap about the history of spectacles.
5. Design a new way of attaching glasses to a person’s head. Use diagrams and labels to explain your great ideas.
King of the Beasts

Most people think of the lion as the king of all the beasts. I am not sure that other animals would agree about this. Even in the cat family, the tiger is a bigger more powerful animal than the lion. Most fights between the two end with the tiger as the winner. So where do we get this idea of the lion being the king of the beasts? I think it is has something to do with the way they look and their behaviour. They remind us of our own human kings.

People usually think of a king as someone who is very important. The male lion also looks as if he is very important. His long flowing mane makes him look like a king. He has a very loud roar which can be heard from a long way away. He doesn't hide away like other animals. He doesn't seem to be afraid of anything. He doesn’t do very much - most of his day is spent sitting around. All these things make him seem like a king.

The king is the person in charge of the people around him. He makes the rules that the people have to live by so that everyone feels safe. The king expects the people to obey him and pay taxes. Male lions have a similar life in the group of lions that they live with. The biggest and the strongest of the males is the leader or king and he keeps everyone in line. He fights off any other animals that hang around. In return the female lions do most of the hunting and feed and care for the group.

Whenever there is a king there will always be someone else who thinks they can do a better job and try to take over. The king has to be strong and powerful and be able to put these people in their place. The lion king has the same problem. There will always be younger lions wanting to rise up and take over the pride. Eventually, as the leader gets older and weaker, he will be defeated by a younger, stronger lion and the new king takes over.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Select three tricky words from the InfoByte.
   Look up the meaning of each word and write it down.
   Use each word in a sentence to show you know what it means.
2. For each paragraph decide on a heading which tells you what the paragraph was about.
3. Draw a picture showing how the life of a male lion is like the life of a human king.
4. Write a poem or a rap about the wonderful “King of the Beasts”.
5. Design some extra physical features for the male lion so that as he grows older he can still fight off the younger lions and keep his place as the king. Use diagrams and labels to explain your great ideas.
Pompeii

Two thousand years ago, the world was shaken by the worst natural disaster of its time. In one day the city of Pompeii and at least 5,000 of its people, disappeared from the face of the earth. The people of Pompeii didn’t know that the nearby mountain, Mount Vesuvius, was a volcano. Although there had been regular earthquakes, no one was aware that for hundreds of years huge pressure was building up below the mountain and it was ready to explode.

For the people of Pompeii, August 24, 79 AD was just another day. But at 1pm Mount Vesuvius began to rumble. Suddenly, a huge blast of boiling rock, ash and hot gas shot straight up out of the top of the mountain. In minutes it was 15 kilometres high. All activity in the city stopped as everyone watched this amazing sight. Slowly, the cloud drifted over the city. It covered the sun and everything was plunged into darkness. Tons of rocks and ash from the mountain began to tumble from the sky.

People were terrified. They had to decide whether to escape from the city or stay inside their houses and hope for the best. Those who stayed were quickly trapped inside because the ash and rock piled up outside. Roofs collapsed under the weight. In two hours millions of tons of rock and ash had landed on Pompeii. Then it got even worse. Part of the cloud collapsed and super hot gases, hot rocks and ash rolled down the side of the mountain and onto the city.

For the people still in the city there was no chance of escape. The hot gases racing through Pompeii killed everyone. Dead bodies were quickly covered in layers of ash. Eighteen hours after the mountain erupted, everything in Pompeii was completely buried in metres of ash and rock. Nothing remained, everything had changed forever. The river and the port had disappeared. In just a few short years no one could remember exactly where the city had been.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES
1. Select three tricky words from the InfoByte. Look up the meaning of each word and write it down. Use each word in a sentence to show you know what it means.
2. For each paragraph decide on a heading which tells you what the paragraph was about.
3. Draw a diagram with labels showing how Pompeii was buried.
4. Write a poem or a rap about the end of Pompeii.
5. Design a Pompeii volcano shelter which would protect you from the rocks, hot gas and ash. Use diagrams and labels to explain your ideas.
**Insects - Future Food**

Would you like to eat some tasty fried crickets? How about some crunchy roasted ants? That doesn't sound like something any of us would choose to eat. But it may be something we have to think about in the days to come. There are more and more people on the planet and most of them want to eat meat. With only so much land and water it is getting harder and harder to grow enough for everyone. The answer to this may be wriggling around at our feet - insects.

Insects are full of the protein we need to stay healthy so that's one good reason to eat them. We are getting more crowded so insect farms would take up a lot less space than animal farms. The environment suffers from all the gas cows and pigs give off. With insects this is not a problem so we would help the planet. And surprisingly, insects actually grow much more meat than other animals for the amount you have to feed them. You get more for less.

Getting more people to eat insects is the big problem. This is not surprising when you think that many people find eating any sort of animal a bit upsetting. Even the people who love eating meat only choose to eat a few of the different kinds of animal available. No one wants to eat rats or elephants. But what makes insects worse is that we think of most of them as being unhealthy. We see them feeding off waste and we think of them as being dirty and carrying diseases.

Even though people think this way about insects, a lot of work is being done to change our minds. Scientists know that it is hard to get us to eat whole insects. So they have started making things like cricket flour which can be added to our food without making too much of a difference. Maybe it won't be too long before insects do become our food of the future. So watch out - that crunchy thing in your lunch might be a surprise you weren't expecting.

**FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES**

1. Select three tricky words from the InfoByte.
   Look up the meaning of each word and write it down.
   Use each word in a sentence to show you know what it means.
2. For each paragraph decide on a heading which tells you what the paragraph was about.
3. Make a poster telling people why they should eat insects.
4. Write a letter to the owner of an insect restaurant saying why you won't (or will) be coming to their restaurant for an insect meal.
5. Design a delicious insect meal. Use diagrams and labels to explain your great ideas.
Time to Go

Nature has many stories of creatures who do amazing things as part of everyday living. Here is an example. There is a fish (a long finned eel) that lives in a pond along the east coast of Australia. Its day-to-day life is very basic. It just snacks on insects and other small fish and swims around. But as it nears the end of its life, something strange happens. It leaves its familiar home and heads off on a remarkable journey.

It is night-time and it is raining heavily. Instinct tells the fish to leave. It slithers out of its familiar pond and wriggles its way across the landscape. This is new but somehow it knows where it is going. Its goal is a river or a stream that will take it to the sea. But this is a fish? How can it survive out of water? The secret is the rainy night. Provided there is water falling or water on the ground, somehow it can survive.

Sure enough it finds a stream that takes it to the sea. But that is only the beginning of this incredible adventure. Now that it is in the ocean big changes take place. Its fresh water gills quickly adapt to living in salt water. At the same time its stomach shrivels up because it doesn't need to eat any more. Then it embarks on its amazing final journey, a 2,000 km swim north to its breeding ground. The fish is a female and she is carrying millions of eggs. When she arrives she spawns ... and then she dies.

The baby fish now start retracing their mother’s 2000 km journey. It takes two years as the ocean carries them south. Only a few of the young fish make it back. One dark night, when it is raining heavily, they sense the fresh water from the rivers and streams flowing into the ocean. They struggle upstream against the current. They leave the stream and wriggle through the undergrowth until they arrive at the pond and slither in. The circle of life has been completed.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Select three tricky words from the InfoByte. Look up the meaning of each word and write it down. Use each word in a sentence to show you know what it means.
2. For each paragraph decide on a heading which tells you what the paragraph was about.
3. Draw a diagram with labels showing the journey that these eels take - the circle of life.
4. Write a poem or a rap about this eel.
5. Design some new features for the eel that will help it get from the pond to the sea and back again. Use diagrams and labels to explain your great ideas.
Blue Jeans

Today just about everyone has a pair of blue jeans. Somewhere you will find a pair tucked away in everyone’s clothing collection. Everywhere you choose to travel in the world you will find people wearing blue jeans. This includes all ages from kids through to grandparents. Some brave person has even done some research to check this out. They found that out of 100 people counted on any given day, in most countries in the world, over half of them will be wearing jeans.

Why are jeans so popular? Some people wear them because they are so comfortable. Others buy them because it’s the fashion to wear jeans. It is surprising to think that these much loved pants started out as work clothes for farmers in America over a hundred years ago. Somebody decided to use denim because it was hard wearing. They made sure these pants were tough and lasted for a long time. These first jeans made fantastic work clothes and lots of people wanted them.

But the reason that jeans are so popular today isn’t just because they are strongly made and long-lasting. Something else happened. After World War 2, young people began to wear jeans because they wanted to be different. Wearing jeans became a sign of rebellion against the way their parents lived. This made older people nervous. Soon students were banned from wearing jeans in schools in America. But that didn’t work because it just made them even more popular.

By the 1960s, jeans were being worn by lots of different people in America, not just students. The jeans craze was spreading to other countries as well. Everybody wanted to wear them. They didn’t cost much and they looked good if they were old and scruffy or if you had just bought them. Washing them was not important and they never needed to be ironed. No matter where you went it was all right to be wearing jeans. This is still the main reason that so many people wear them today.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Select three tricky words from the InfoByte. Look up the meaning of each word and write it down. Use each word in a sentence to show you know what it means.
2. For each paragraph decide on a heading which tells you what the paragraph was about.
3. Draw a time line showing the history of Blue Jeans.
4. Write a letter to your school principal explaining why you want to wear Blue Jeans to school.
5. Design a new pair of pants that will replace jeans as the best ever pants for everyone to wear. Use diagrams and labels to explain your great ideas.
Ewe Won’t Believe It!

Sheep usually give birth to one or two lambs, sometimes three. But this week, a man living in Thames, Weston Finlay, got a big surprise when his sheep gave birth. Finlay used to be a sheep farmer. When he sold his farm and moved into town he always kept a sheep on his small block of land so that he didn’t have to mow the lawns. Six months ago a friend offered him another one. His friend was certain it was a female, just like the one Finlay already had.

“When I got the second sheep I could tell straight away it was a male,” said Finlay. “I thought that might mean my sheep numbers would increase.” So he wasn’t surprised one morning when his sheep went into labour and gave birth to a lamb. Finlay put the new lamb in a shed out of the cold wind and the rain. He was a bit surprised when he came back to check an hour later and found two more lambs on the ground outside the shed.

These lambs didn’t look very healthy. They had been born in a muddy puddle. Finlay helped them out giving them a bath in a bucket of hot water to get the blood flowing and cleaned them up. He showed them how to feed from their mother. But the sheep had more work to do. She started to wriggle and push and lamb number four was born. Finlay moved them all to a shed out of the rain and left them to rest. When he came back two hours later there was another surprise, lamb number five!

Finlay has heard of four lambs being born to one mother sheep. But he doesn’t know of any sheep that has given birth to five live lambs. Usually, if there are more than three, some will be born dead. He plans to keep the pair of lambs that his sheep is feeding and has found homes for the other three. As for the father, Finlay has plans for him as well. “We don’t have enough room for any more sheep,” said Finlay. “It looks like he will end up in my freezer as sausages.”

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES
1. Select three tricky words from the InfoByte. Look up the meaning of each word and write it down. Use each word in a sentence to show you know what it means.
2. For each paragraph decide on a heading which tells you what the paragraph was about.
3. Draw a map to show where the action took place in the news item.
4. Write a letter to Weston Finlay telling him why you would be the perfect person to look after one of his lambs.
5. Sheep can’t feed more than two lambs. Design a machine that would help her feed five. Use diagrams and labels to explain your great ideas.
Children of the War

How miserable would you be if you had to leave your parents for five years and go and live with a family you didn’t know? This happened to a large number of British children in 1939. With the beginning of the war, Germany started dropping bombs on London. Many parents decided to move their children out of the city to the safety of the country. Families living away from London in small towns and on farms were asked to look after children from the city.

In four days a million children were moved. The railway stations were crowded with scared, sometimes excited children who didn’t know where they were going. They all had a name tag around their neck like they were a parcel going somewhere. Each child had one small bag of belongings. They arrived in the countryside tired and hungry, not knowing whether they would ever see their families again. They were lined up in the village hall where the host families got to pick who they wanted. The neatest, best looking children were always chosen first.

The families who hosted children were paid for looking after them. Many of the children ended up staying with farm workers living in small cottages without electricity or hot water. The toilet was outside in the garden which was a bit of a shock for city kids. Some people just did it for the money and the children were not treated very well. They were often expected to work hard on the farm for no pay and they were often very unhappy.

However it was not all bad. Lots of children were well treated and had great experiences. They met new friends and learnt a completely different way of living in the country surrounded by animals. One girl from a very poor family ended up living with very rich people who had servants. When the war was over many of the children didn’t want to go back to city life. During the six years of the war, about 5,000 children living in the cities were killed. If it hadn’t been for this programme the number would have been much higher.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Select three tricky words from the InfoByte.
   Look up the meaning of each word and write it down.
   Use each word in a sentence to show you know what it means.
2. For each paragraph decide on a heading which tells you what the paragraph was about.
3. Make a list of all the things you would have in your bag if you were leaving the city to go and live in the country in 1939
4. You have been moved out of the city because of the war. Write a letter to your Mum and Dad telling them what it is like with your new family.
5. Design an air raid shelter that would protect you and your family from the bombs. Use diagrams and labels to explain your ideas.
Global Warming

Every day we hear talk about the problem of global warming. What are people talking about? Global warming is a name used to describe the slow increase in the temperature of the Earth. It has taken a long time to convince everyone that this is actually happening. Many people thought it was just the result of different seasons. If every year the temperature of the earth keeps increasing this is going to change our environment and life as we know it. The frightening thing is that it is all our fault.

Why is this happening? Over the last 100 years we have invented many wonderful machines to do our work for us. There are more and more cars on our roads. We have lots of appliances in our homes that need electricity. Every day we need more and more energy to keep these things going. To get this energy we have to burn more and more coal, oil and natural gas. This is what is creating the problem.

The air around the earth is made up of a lot of different gases. Just like being wrapped in a blanket, these gases keep our planet warm. There is one gas (CO2) which is very good at trapping heat and stopping it from disappearing into space. Without it plants and animals could not live. But when we burn oil and coal and gas we add lots more CO2 gas into the air. That means more and more heat is trapped and everything starts to get hotter. This changes everything and upsets nature.

What will happen if the planet continues to heat up? Scientists say that the ice at the North and South Poles will melt and the level of the sea will rise. Places close to the sea will be flooded and lots of people will be made homeless. Fish, plants and animals will also have to find new homes as their habitats change. With higher temperatures some places that are already hot will become deserts that cannot support life. We must do something about this while we still have a chance.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Select three tricky words from the InfoByte.
   Look up the meaning of each word and write it down.
   Use each word in a sentence to show you know what it means.
2. For each paragraph decide on a heading which tells you what the paragraph was about.
3. Draw a diagram showing how global warming works. Include labels.
4. Make a poster warning people about global warming.
5. Design something to help you survive global warming.
   Use diagrams and labels to explain your great ideas.
Clive Staples Lewis

The world of Narnia, with its many strange creatures, is a magic land. There are time travels, beasts that talk, a wicked witch and the great lion, Aslan. All these things came from the mind of the writer, C S Lewis. To begin with, he was not really a children’s writer. Most of his books were written for adults. But the Narnia books have become his most popular works and some have even been made into movies. What sort of person was the creator of this magical world?

C S Lewis was born in Ireland in 1898. From a young age, he was fond of animals and books. When the family’s pet dog died, Lewis took its name, Jacksie. After that, he was always known as Jack by his family and friends. He had a brother, Warnie, who was three years older than him. The boys created a country which was run by animals. They gave this country the name of Boxen. They would sit in a big old wardrobe and make up stories about it.

As a young man, Lewis went to Oxford University in England. He did very well and was given a job there. Then, he entered the army for a short time and fought in World War 1. But for most of his life, Lewis worked in education and wrote books. He became quite well-known and many people looked up to him. When he started to write children’s books, some people thought it made him look foolish!

Here are a few fun facts about C S Lewis. He smoked a pipe. He enjoyed long walks in the country with his friends. He was injured in the war and had some small pieces of metal in his body. He was a good friend of the man who wrote ‘The Hobbit’. He was a generous person and gave away lots of money to help others. He once said, ‘You can never get a cup of tea large enough or a book long enough to suit me’.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Select three tricky words from the InfoByte.
   Look up the meaning of each word and write it down.
   Use each word in a sentence to show you know what it means.
2. For each paragraph decide on a heading which tells you what the paragraph was about.
3. Draw a timeline of C S Lewis’s life using the information you have.
4. Make a poster advertising C S Lewis’s books.
5. Design some interesting, weird characters for your own imaginary world. Use diagrams and labels to explain your great ideas.
Your Own Worm Farm

You really should have a worm farm! Why? There are plenty of good reasons. It is easy, it is fun and it is good for the planet! Everybody has food waste so put this stuff to good use. Instead of dumping it in the garbage, feed some hungry worms! There will be many great outcomes for your home, garden and the earth.

Did you know that having a worm farm can cut down global warming? When you put waste food in the rubbish bin, it is taken to a landfill. It needs a long time to break down there and smells disgusting. It also creates something called methane gas. This gas stays in the air for 10-12 years and causes global warming. If more people had worm farms, there would be less methane gas. And this would really help reduce global warming! Worms may be small but they are very important for the whole planet.

It is said that ‘worm poo is black gold for your garden’. Worms nibble their way through scraps such as apple cores, potato peelings and old salads. They even eat egg shells, hair and coffee grounds! From this waste the worms produce a rich manure for the garden. It is 100% natural, does not smell bad and costs you nothing. It enriches your soil and helps grow beautiful flowers and vegetables. Even if you have no garden, it is wonderful for feeding pot plants!

A worm farm does not take up much space or time. About 28 square centimetres is enough for a bin. The best place for it is in a sheltered part of the garden. But if you live in an apartment building and have no garden you can use a dark cupboard. After your worm farm is set up, it will just take a few minutes a week to maintain. You add the food scraps and make sure that it does not become too dry. Later on, you will be rewarded with rich compost. So, why not become a worm farmer and work your own worm farm?

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Select three tricky words from the InfoByte. Look up the meaning of each word and write it down. Use each word in a sentence to show you know what it means.
2. For each paragraph decide on a heading which tells you what the paragraph was about.
3. Draw a diagram showing how to make a worm farms. Include labels.
4. Make a poster encouraging people to run a worm farm.
5. Design your own super efficient worm farm. Use diagrams and labels to explain your great ideas.
The Island of Pukapuka

Have you ever thought of running away to a peaceful sunny island? Have you dreamed about sandy beaches and blue sea as warm as a bath? Pukapuka, in the Cook Islands, is just like that. It is an atoll made up of three small islands which are connected by huge sandy reefs. In the middle of them is a big warm lagoon. You can swim safely and catch fish there.

The people live on just one of the islands which is the largest of the three. Its name means ‘home’ and there are three villages on it. The other two islands are used to grow food such as taro and bananas. Some food is brought in by boats and planes but most of the time, people find their own food. They fish, work in their gardens and gather coconuts. The children also enjoy catching big coconut crabs for a tasty meal.

The people of Pukapuka have their own special way of life, language and customs. Women weave fine mats and men are good at building canoes. Children collect firewood and husk coconuts. People of all ages love to sing and dance. Teams from Pukapuka travel to Rarotonga and perform in the Cook Islands cultural contests. The crowds there love their style! This is because they sing so well, are cheeky and great fun to watch.

Life on this peaceful island has not always been easy. In the 1600s, huge waves swept away most of the people. Just 17 men, 2 women and some children remained alive but slowly, numbers grew again. Then, in 1863, slave traders captured 145 men and women. They were taken to South America and sold as slaves. In 2005, a severe storm destroyed much of the island. Not many of the houses were left standing and so a lot of people went to live in other places. There are about 500 people on Pukapuka today. About 1,000 people from Pukapuka live in places like Australia and New Zealand.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Select three tricky words from the InfoByte.
   Look up the meaning of each word and write it down.
   Use each word in a sentence to show you know what it means.
2. For each paragraph decide on a heading which tells you what the paragraph was about.
3. Draw a map of the atoll Pukapuka using the information you have been given.
4. Make an advertising poster encouraging tourists to come to Pukapuka.
5. Design some protection for the islands from tsunamis and cyclones.
   Use diagrams and labels to explain your great ideas.
The Planet Venus  

by Hilton Ayrey

Do you enjoy looking up at the night sky? On a fine night, the brightest light will always be the moon. But the second brightest light will be the planet Venus. This planet’s name comes from the name of the Roman goddess of love. It is the second planet from the sun and is the closest one to Earth. Venus and Earth are alike in size but Venus is a bit smaller. Also, it does not have a moon and is always covered with clouds.

The clouds around Venus are very thick and keep the planet hidden. It is the sun reflecting off these clouds that make Venus shine brightly. The clouds are made up of gases that are not healthy for humans. If anyone tried to breathe this ‘air’, it would kill them. The clouds also trap very hot air between them and the planet. This air is made very hot by the volcanoes on Venus as well as the sun. It cannot escape past the clouds and makes Venus too hot to live on. It is hotter than Mercury which is closer to the sun.

On Venus, the land is really dry, bare and rocky. There are thousands of volcanoes, many of them still active. The lava has flowed out to form wide desert plains with low hills. There are also small mountains and many craters to be seen. We know this because photographs have been taken of the planet’s surface.

In the 1960s, people started to send spaceships to study Venus. There was nobody in the spaceships because it was too unsafe. Most of the spaceships did not try to land but sent data from afar. The USA made a map of the surface of Venus from afar, using radar. But Russia was able to land a number of spaceships. These spaceships did not last long and after about two hours they were destroyed. But not before they managed to send good photos of the surface. Now, a few countries continue to work together to study and learn more about Venus.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Select three tricky words from the InfoByte. Look up the meaning of each word and write it down. Use each word in a sentence to show you know what it means.
2. For each paragraph decide on a heading which tells you what the paragraph was about.
3. Draw a diagram showing how global warming works. Include labels.
4. Make a poster warning people about global warming.
5. Design something to help you survive global warming. Use diagrams and labels to explain your great ideas.