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Find the Gap

Free KS2 SATs Reading Diagnostic

32 original questions across fiction, non-fiction, narrative non-fiction and poetry - designed to reveal reading patterns, not just a score.

How to use it

Ask the pupil to work independently. Record which skill types repeatedly cause difficulty. One wrong answer may be a slip; a pattern of errors is a teaching clue. Use the results to choose a matching Reading Misconception Mastery module.

Text 1

The last rehearsal

The last rehearsal

The hall smelled of floor polish and warm stage lights. Amara stood behind the curtain, listening to the orchestra tune. She had performed the opening scene dozens of times in rehearsal, yet tonight the familiar lines seemed to have vanished from her mind.

Mr Bell appeared beside her. He did not ask whether she was nervous. Instead, he handed her the small wooden compass used in the first scene. 'Your first prop,' he said. 'Start there.'

Amara turned the compass over in her hand. The scratched lid, the tiny hinge and the painted arrow were exactly as they had been all week. She pictured where she would stand, who would speak before her, and the first sentence returned. Then the second.

When the curtain began to rise, Amara stepped forward before she had time to feel afraid.

1 Where is Amara standing at the start? [Retrieval]

Answer:

2 Why do the familiar lines seem to vanish from Amara's mind? [Inference]

Answer:

3 What object does Mr Bell give Amara? [Retrieval]

Answer:

4 Why does Mr Bell say 'Start there'? [Inference]

Answer:

5 What does 'familiar' mean in this context? [Vocabulary]

Answer:

6 Give one detail showing the compass is well used. [Evidence]

Answer:

7 Why does the writer list 'where she would stand, who would speak before her...' ? [Structure]

Answer:

8 How is Amara likely to feel once she has spoken her first lines? Why? [Prediction]

Answer:

Text 2

How beavers reshape rivers

How beavers reshape rivers

Beavers are often described as ecosystem engineers because their dams can change the shape and movement of water through a landscape. By piling branches, mud and stones across small streams, they slow the flow and create ponds.

These ponds can provide habitats for insects, amphibians, fish and birds. Slower water may also allow sediment to settle, while surrounding ground can remain wetter during dry periods. In some places, this can help reduce the speed at which heavy rainfall travels downstream.

However, beaver activity can also flood farmland, paths or roads. Successful reintroduction projects therefore need careful monitoring and, where necessary, practical solutions such as flow-control devices or protective fencing.

1 What materials do beavers use to build dams? [Retrieval]

Answer:

2 What does 'ecosystem engineers' suggest about beavers? [Vocabulary]

Answer:

3 What happens to the speed of water behind a dam? [Retrieval]

Answer:

4 Give one main benefit of beaver ponds for wildlife. [Summary]

Answer:

5 Why might wetter ground be helpful during dry periods? [Inference]

Answer:

6 Give one way beaver dams may affect heavy rainfall. [Evidence]

Answer:

7 Why does the final paragraph begin with 'However'? [Balance]

Answer:

8 Summarise the whole text in one sentence. [Summary]

Answer:

Text 3

Across the salt flats

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At sunrise, the salt flat looked solid enough to walk across forever. By mid-morning, heat shimmered above the white ground and every distant rock seemed to float.

Our guide, Tarek, checked the tyre pressure twice before we left the track. 'The crust is strong here,' he said, 'but not everywhere.' Twenty minutes later he slowed the vehicle beside a patch of darker ground. Without stepping out, he pointed to a faint ring of damp salt.

'Old spring,' he explained. 'Looks dry. Isn't.'

We drove around it in a wide arc. The detour added nearly an hour to the journey, but when we stopped for lunch, Tarek only smiled. 'The shortest route is not always the quickest one.'

1 What does 'shimmered' suggest about the air? [Vocabulary]

Answer:

2 What does Tarek check twice? [Retrieval]

Answer:

3 Why does he avoid stepping onto the darker patch? [Inference]

Answer:

4 What does 'crust' mean here? [Vocabulary]

Answer:

5 Give one clue that the old spring is not completely dry. [Evidence]

Answer:

6 Why does the group take a wide detour? [Inference]

Answer:

7 What does the phrase 'every distant rock seemed to float' help the reader imagine? [Language]

Answer:

8 Explain Tarek's final comment. [Interpretation]

Answer:

Text 4

Rain on the roof

Rain on the roof

Rain writes softly on the roof, then drums its fingers fast; it fills the gutter, rinses leaves, and polishes the glass.

Inside, a kettle starts to sing, the windows cloud with steam; outside, the garden bends and shines, half waking from a dream.

1 What is rain compared to in the first two lines? [Language]

Answer:

2 What does 'rinses' mean here? [Vocabulary]

Answer:

3 Why does the poet say the kettle 'starts to sing'? [Language]

Answer:

4 What happens to the windows? [Retrieval]

Answer:

5 What mood is created inside the house? [Inference]

Answer:

6 What does 'the garden bends and shines' suggest? [Language]

Answer:

7 How does the poem contrast inside and outside? [Structure]

Answer:

8 What is the poem mainly about? [Summary]

Answer:

Diagnostic answer & skill map

Mark for meaning, not exact wording. Use the skill labels to spot repeated patterns.

Text 1: The last rehearsal

1. Retrieval: Behind the curtain in the hall/stage area.

2. Inference: She is nervous/anxious about the performance.

3. Retrieval: A small wooden compass.

4. Inference: He wants her to focus on a familiar first step/prop to trigger the rehearsed sequence.

5. Vocabulary: Well-known because she has practised it many times.

6. Evidence: Its lid is scratched / it has been used all week.

7. Structure: To show Amara rebuilding the sequence of the scene step by step.

8. Prediction: More confident/settled because remembering the sequence has reduced her panic.

Text 2: How beavers reshape rivers

1. Retrieval: Branches, mud and stones.

2. Vocabulary: They alter/shape habitats and the environment.

3. Retrieval: It slows.

4. Summary: They create habitat for many animals.

5. Inference: It can retain moisture/support habitats and reduce drying out.

6. Evidence: They may slow the speed at which water travels downstream.

7. Balance: To introduce drawbacks/limitations after benefits.

8. Summary: Beavers can improve habitats and water management but their effects need managing where they cause flooding.

Text 3: Across the salt flats

1. Vocabulary: It appeared to waver/move in the heat.

2. Retrieval: The tyre pressure.

3. Inference: He suspects the surface may be unsafe/soft because of an old spring.

4. Vocabulary: The hard top layer of salt.

5. Evidence: There is a faint ring of damp salt.

6. Inference: To avoid unsafe ground.

7. Language: A heat mirage/distorted view across the flats.

8. Interpretation: A direct route can be slower or more dangerous; a safer detour may get you there more reliably.

Text 4: Rain on the roof

1. Language: Writing softly / drumming fingers.

2. Vocabulary: Washes.

3. Language: To personify its whistling/boiling sound.

4. Retrieval: They cloud with steam.

5. Inference: Warm, cosy, calm.

6. Language: Plants are pushed by rain and made wet/glossy.

7. Structure: Inside is warm/steamy with kettle; outside is wet/rainy and moving.

8. Summary: A rainy scene and the different sounds/changes it creates indoors and outdoors.

Turn the result into a teaching plan

Repeated diagnostic issue	Suggested mastery module
Retrieval	Module 1 - Retrieval & locating evidence
Vocabulary	Module 2 - Vocabulary in context
Inference	Module 3 - Inference
Evidence	Module 4 - Explaining with evidence
Summary	Module 5 - Summarising main ideas
Prediction	Module 6 - Prediction
Language / Structure	Module 7 - Author's language & structure
Comparison / mixed	Module 8 - Comparison & mixed reading reasoning

Important

This diagnostic is designed to guide teaching. It is not an official SATs paper and should not be used to predict an exact scaled score.