COMPREHENSION NINJA

FOR AGES 10–11: FICTION & POETRY

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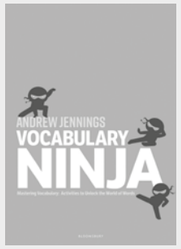
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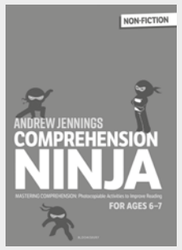
OTHER NINJA RESOURCES

FOR TEACHERS



VOCABULARY NINJA

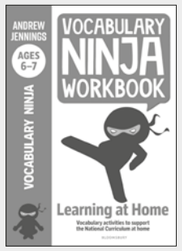
A practical guide containing strategies and photocopiable activities to help transform pupils into vocabulary ninjas. Featuring theory and teaching approaches, as well as key topic vocabulary, etymology and phrases, this book will bring the primary curriculum to life.

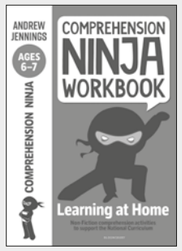


COMPREHENSION NINJA NON-FICTION

A set of six books for ages 5–11 that provide strategies and photocopiable resources to teach comprehension. Each book presents 24 high-quality non-fiction texts and photocopiable activities with strong links to the National Curriculum.

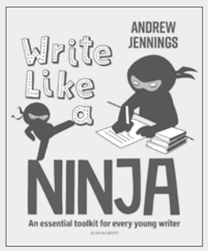
FOR CHILDREN





NINJA WORKBOOKS

Vocabulary and comprehension workbooks to support learning at home. Each workbook contains bespoke non-fiction texts and hundreds of questions that are linked to the National Curriculum. Perfect for developing literacy skills and boosting children's confidence in literacy and reading comprehension.



WRITE LIKE A NINJA

A pocket-sized book full of all the grammar, vocabulary and sentence structures that children need in order to improve and develop their writing skills. Fully aligned to the Key Stage 2 National Curriculum, this book is designed to be used independently by pupils both in the classroom and at home.

FURTHER RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLS, TEACHERS AND CHILDREN ONLINE

Head to www.vocabularyninja.co.uk and follow @VocabularyNinja on Twitter for more teaching and learning resources to support the teaching of vocabulary, reading, writing and the wider primary school curriculum.



INTRODUCTION

THE COMPREHENSION NINJA: FICTION & POETRY SERIES

The Comprehension Ninja: Fiction & Poetry series has been designed to be an essential resource for teaching reading comprehension skills and building pupil confidence. The books focus on information retrieval, using core comprehension skills that underpin the reading domains set out by the National Curriculum.

Each of the six books in the series contains 24 awesome fiction and poetry texts, followed by comprehension activities. The texts have been curated to feature a range of authors, genres and text types from the world of children's literature and poetry.

Quite often, comprehension activities can bombard pupils with a range of question types that they have not yet had time to master – meaning they quickly encounter questions that they find extremely challenging. This series places the emphasis on teachers being able to teach and model each skill, while pupils develop their understanding of each question type individually.

PROGRESSION AND DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS

The books in the Comprehension Ninja: Fiction & Poetry series grow in difficulty via the complexity and length of the texts. The vocabulary in the book for ages 7–8 is more challenging than the vocabulary in the book for ages 5–6, for example. The length of the reading texts falls in line with statutory assessments at Year 2 and Year 6, growing in increments each year, thus increasing the demands on pupils to accurately retrieve information from larger and more complex texts.

Approximate text length* in the Comprehension Ninja: Fiction & Poetry series:

Ages 5-6: 100-150 words
Ages 6-7: 200-250 words
Ages 7-8: 300-450 words
Ages 8-9: 500-600 words
Ages 9-10: 650-700 words
Ages 10-11: 700-800 words

*Within each age range, the poetry texts can vary from the word count ranges shown above. In these instances, the reduced word count is complemented by more complex vocabulary and sentence structures.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book contains 24 fiction and poetry texts for you to use in your classroom. Part 1 includes 12 texts that have eight subsequent pages of questions built around different comprehension skills. These texts and questions have been developed so that you can specifically target and teach each individual skill, and then have a plethora of questions for pupils to work on. In maths, you wouldn't jump from division one day into 3D shapes the next. The same must apply to reading – we should teach each skill and give pupils the opportunity to practise and master the skills before we move on. You now have in your hands 12 texts with associated questions to teach each skill – that's a minimum of 96 lessons from Part 1 of the book.

Part 2 includes texts 13 to 24 and these look more like traditional tests. Each text has a corresponding set of questions. Each set of questions requires pupils to use the comprehension skills mastered in Part 1. You could choose to use these texts formatively across the year to inform which skills require further attention, but here lies a fantastic opportunity for pupils to apply their new skills to each question type independently and with confidence.

It is important to note that this resource hasn't been designed to be a testing tool but rather a teaching and learning tool. A tool whereby teachers support pupils to access texts and to master core comprehension skills. However, because of the nature of testing in schools, it is important that children see and experience test-type texts and questions – as they will from Part 2.

This is a versatile resource: it's up to you how it is used. As pupils grow in confidence and skill level, they will relish completing these activities.

PRE-READING AND KEY INFORMATION TO IDENTIFY IN THE TEXT

Before they answer questions, teach pupils to pre-read a text and identify key information using a pencil or a highlighter.

Here are some examples of the key information pupils could be encouraged to look out for when they read fiction or poetry.

Who or which? Characters, people, animals, events, and so on.

When? Time periods, including times of the day, days, months, years, and so on.

Where? Locations or changes in location.

What or how? Actions that characters perform, linked to verb phrases.

Vocabulary: Key vocabulary that is relevant to understanding and words that pupils are unfamiliar with.

Dialogue: Conversations between characters.

We want to train pupils to underline or highlight pieces of key information as they read through the text. A good guideline is to underline or highlight three-to-six pieces per paragraph. Key information should be single words, or small groups of words, not full sentences. Model this skill to pupils and discuss why you have underlined certain information. As well as physically marking the text, model your thought processes too, showing pupils how you make mental notes about locations, characters, actions, and so on.

KEYWORDS IN THE QUESTION

Once pupils have read the text and underlined key information, they can begin to answer questions about it. We now need to teach pupils to spot keywords or key phrases in a question. These are words or phrases that signpost where to look in the text to find the answer. Take a look at this question:

Why was the dinosaur near to tears?

Pupils should be taught to underline 'near to tears'. They would then need to skim through the text to find the section where the phrase 'near to tears' can be found, then scan that section to find the exact phrase. After this, pupils should be taught to read the sentences or lines before and after the one that contains the key phrase. This will help them find the answer. Pupils might understand that the word 'dinosaur' is not necessarily a helpful keyword, as it is likely to be repeated many times in the text.

Pupils might not understand what the keywords in the question mean. However, they can still answer the question by finding the keyword or key phrase and reading around it.

THE QUESTION TYPES

FILL IN THE GAP

Pupils are given sentences with missing words. They will need to locate the sentences in the text and identify the missing words. Refer pupils back to their pre-reading and marking of the text, which should increase their retrieval speed.

Practise this skill by giving pupils a page of their reading book and the same page with multiple words blanked out. Can they fill in the blanks? Prompt pupils to spot keywords in the rest of the sentence in order to locate the full sentences in the original text.

FIVE Ws AND HOW

These are classic reading comprehension question stems: what, where, who, which, when and how. All of these require pupils to retrieve information from the text to demonstrate their understanding.

Constantly refer back to the pre-reading process and model this skill to pupils, demonstrating how, as a reader, you are constantly identifying the five Ws as you read. Say your thoughts as you read the text aloud, demonstrating how you make mental notes of the question words as you read. Model to pupils how you can begin to predict what the questions are likely to be.

MULTIPLE CHOICE

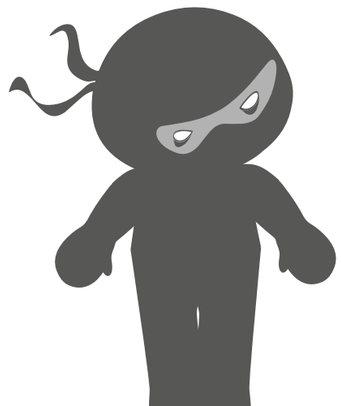
These questions require pupils to choose an answer from a selection of four possible answers. Prompt pupils to locate the required information by spotting keywords in the question and locating them in the text, then reading around this information to find the correct answer.

Teach pupils to discount illogical answers using what they already know from their pre-read of the text. Also ensure that pupils don't answer questions using their own prior knowledge. Prompt pupils to 'prove it' by finding the exact information in the text.

TRUE OR FALSE

Pupils are given a statement and asked if it is true or false. Younger year groups will begin to learn this skill by answering yes or no, before progressing to true or false.

Ensure pupils are not guessing. Train pupils to spot the keywords in the questions and locate this information in the text. By reading around this information and pre-marking the text, pupils will be able to discover whether the statements are true or false.



SUMMARISE

Summary questions require pupils to understand the main idea or main piece of action in a section of text. For some questions, pupils will have to select the correct summary statement from multiple options, while for other questions they will need to write a short summary.

Refer to the concept of summarising as 'What is the main idea of this section of text?'. Try to find opportunities for pupils to summarise information during reading sessions and in other subjects such as history or science.

SEQUENCING

These questions require pupils to sequence information in the order it occurs in the text, from first to last.

Teach pupils to allocate each word or statement (usually no more than five) a symbol – for example, a square, a triangle, a rectangle, a star or a cross. Pupils should then find these statements in the text and mark the corresponding symbol on the text. Once pupils have done this, it is easy to look at the text and see which symbol comes first, second, third and so on. This is a very effective strategy to help pupils sequence information.

FIND AND COPY

These questions require pupils to identify a word when provided with a contextual description rather than a contextless definition. Pupils will need to use keywords to locate the correct area of the text and then find and copy the correct word. For older pupils, questions may direct pupils to a certain part of the text at the beginning of the question, for example, *Look at the verse beginning 'Maggie just froze…'.*

This skill is much more challenging than its name suggests. Teach pupils to follow the instructional part of the question to locate the correct area of the text efficiently. Although counterintuitive, teaching pupils to apply a 'best guess' approach if they are struggling to find the correct word is still a worthwhile strategy and more often than not will produce a correct answer.

CIRCLE A WORD

This skill requires pupils to locate words based on an explicit definition of the word. Pupils may be required to circle words from a single sentence or from a paragraph of the text.

Regularly discuss definitions via Vocabulary Ninja's Word of the Day. Ensure that you explore definitions, play matching games where pupils match words and definitions, and apply the 'best guess' strategy where pupils answer with their own logic without necessarily knowing the answer for certain.

READING AND EXPLOITING FICTION AND POETRY TEXTS WITH YOUR PUPILS

The Comprehension Ninja: Fiction & Poetry series offers so much more than information retrieval. The series offers an unrivalled and unique collection of texts and poetry from a range of poets and authors.

So, how else could you use this treasure trove of texts in your classroom or school?

- Use the high-quality texts to develop lessons focusing on other reading domains such as inference, prediction, comparison and explanation.
- Use the texts and question sets to complement your writing units based on the same text. If children have done lots of comprehension activities related to a text, they will have a better overall understanding of the characters, settings and events depicted in the text.
- Use the extracts as ways to hook children into reading new books and genres. If you're using a text that is an extract from a book, have a physical copy of the book available to give to children once they are hooked.
- Rather than reading a whole book, develop writing units based on the short extracts of books or poems so that children gain a greater understanding of a far smaller extract. This is great for interventions or time-sensitive writing opportunities.



THE CADWALADR QUESTS 1: TANGLED TIME

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1

S.L. AGER

FICTION: EXTRACT

'Oh no, not you!' Claire stiffened, staring at the carpet.

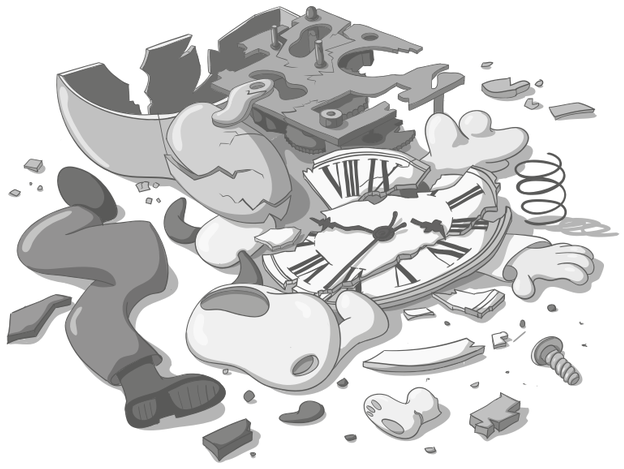
'Wallace! No! No! No!' She thudded down onto bare knees. 'Wallace, what is it? What have I done to you?' she cried as the unfortunate scene unfurled.

She shuffled along on all fours, creeping closer, afraid of what lay on the floor. Dithering and uncertain, she gingerly lifted him to avoid more damage. As she realised it was worse than she'd thought, she almost dropped him. Cradling him, she tried and tried, but it was too late. Her old friend was beyond repair.

As Claire gazed down at his broken body, her earnest face wore a mixture of love and sorrow. Tears glazed her eyes as fond childhood memories unfolded before her. Was this repairable? How could she fix this accident? She held him in her hand.

'I wonder if I could glue you,' she said, holding Gromit in the other hand. 'I'm such a clumsy klutz!'

A regretful smile separated the three friends. She tried to push him back together, but on closer inspection, she feared poor Wallace may well have been silenced forever.



Claire Cadwallader lived in Chorlton, Manchester, England. She enjoyed simple things, like her now-broken Wallace and Gromit alarm clock.

She considered books to be friends, living in her bedroom on dusty shelves. Not a massive fan of pop stars and fashion, she found even school appealed.

'I will try to mend you. Don't you worry, Wallace,' Claire said, forcing a cheery tone.

As if handling the Crown Jewels, she gathered up the broken pieces. Her dad had gifted the talking clock to her brother, Peter, on his fourth birthday. It belonged to her now, and she cherished it like a family heirloom.

Then, bang on time, as if an alarm had sounded, the shrieking commenced. Once Dee surfaced, so did the commotion. They lived in a shouty house.

'Here we go again.' Claire rolled her eyes and snatched at a pile of creased clothes.

'Peter, you're getting the wet flannel treatment! Come on now! Right this minute, I mean it! I'm not kidding this morning!'

On weekdays, chaos ruled. 'The wet flannel treatment' was the threat Dee, Claire's mum, gave Pete, Claire's older brother, every single schoolday yet never carried out.

'If you don't get up right now, I'm going to wet this flannel with freezing water, and it will head straight for you,' Dee threatened again.

'Yeah, right, Mum, course you are,' grumbled Claire, barging past Rebecca, her sister.

With a swift move to the right, a couple of smart steps to the left, she ducked through the bathroom door and locked it. 'First in this morning, ha!' she gloated out loud.

'Hurry up, Choccy Eclair,' Pete whinged, hammering on the door.

Most of her family called her 'Eclair'. She pretended it didn't bother her, but it did. She tended to be weak around chocolate.

To irritate her brother, Claire took ages cleaning her teeth. Struggling to see her blurred reflection through the streaks of splattered toothpaste, she grimaced and pulled funny faces at the grimy mirror. She sucked in her chubby cheeks for the mirror, posing. She lowered her eyelids and pouted, flicking her wavy hair with a flamboyant flourish. Claire would never be a model. Still, acting like one was fun. Crossing her eyes and poking out her tongue, she thought of her dad and Jayne coming to visit at the weekend.

Her parents had recently separated. She missed her dad every day but hid her guilty relief. They had argued badly towards the end, and home had improved without it. Yet things weren't so bad. Claire liked her dad's new girlfriend, Jayne, although her mum and sister despised her. Dee insisted that Jayne had been the reason her dad had left, yet Jayne's kindness hadn't wavered since she had met her, so Claire judged as she found.

'Will you hurry up?' Pete yelled, banging on the door again.

'I'm coming now,' she fibbed, thinking of the weekend.

Rebecca no longer spoke to her dad, and Pete didn't care either way, so Jayne had reserved theatre tickets in town, just for the three of them. Claire hadn't seen a live performance before, and she was so excited she'd spent the week reverting to toddler behaviour, counting the sleeps. They'd booked an expensive restaurant too; she might even be reduced to scrounging clothes from Rebecca. Claire's wardrobe consisted of jeans, hoodies and trainers.

FILL IN THE GAP



Read the sentences and choose the correct word to fill in each gap.

1. The king and queen had been _____ their loss.
2. When she discovered the prince had gone missing, she _____ to bring him back and restore order to the land.
3. The king and queen were glad for anyone to help find their missing son, so she was taken to the _____ and told to choose any horse.
4. "I am to be fed to a terrible monster!" wailed the _____.
5. Wasting no time, the girl turned the horse to face the monster and charged with the sword held out like a _____.
6. The monster was _____ by the sword and exploded into a thousand pieces.
7. "The prince lives at the bottom of the _____…".
8. The girl _____ the eel and pulled at the skin.
9. The expression on the creature's face was a _____ exploding with rage.
10. Its fins, claws, _____ and talons were all moving impossibly quickly towards the prince and the girl.
11. A thick black fog _____ from the stick and the Sea Devil was lost in the darkness.
12. The girl threw the glass bead behind her and the Sea Devil was _____ inside a great glass mountain.
13. The girl and the prince _____ to the palace, where the king and queen embraced their son and wept tears of joy.
14. I was there, and I heard the _____ from the girl herself.
15. That is how I got to _____ it to you!

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FIVE Ws AND HOW



Answer the questions below. Look back at *The Sea Devil* to find the correct answers.

1. What had the king and the queen been mourning?

   _____
2. Who wore black?

   _____
3. Who came to the kingdom seeking adventure?

   _____
4. What did the girl rescue from the fence?

   _____
5. How many pieces do things struck by the magical sword burst into?

   _____
6. Where did the girl strap the magical sword?

   _____
7. Who begged the girl to live with them forever?

   _____
8. Where did the villagers say the wise woman lived?

   _____
9. Where did the wise woman say the missing prince lived?

   _____
10. Who took the prince?

    _____
11. When the girl swam to the bottom of the sea, what did she see?

    _____
12. What colour were the Sea Devil's bulging eyes?

    _____
13. What did the girl first throw down to slow down the creature?

    _____
14. Where was the Sea Devil trapped, after the girl threw the glass bead?

    _____
15. How long did the king and queen's celebration last?

    _____

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HEIGHTS

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10

AOIFE MANNIX

POETRY

It's New Year, 1979, at Funderland in the RDS in Dublin.
In the cold calculation of the January air, a young girl tries to talk
her father into coming on the roller coaster with her.
It isn't that she's mocking his fear, far from it,
the reason she asks is for the sheer thrill of hearing the story
of why her father is so utterly petrified of heights.
He closes his eyes and goes that little bit paler just at the thought of it.
She asks, 'What happened, Dad?'
'I don't like to talk about it.'
'But what happened, Dad?'

Well it was several hundred years ago,
back when he was a small boy,
and his father, her grandfather, took him to Funderland,
which was a lot smaller then with no bumper cars.
But there was this one huge monstrosity of a spider with eight legs
and at the end of each leg there was a kind of bucket
where they strapped you in. Then the spider would swish
his legs at a faster and faster speed
and the buckets would toss and turn and spin you
completely upside down, but it was just about okay
because of the straps.

But this one time, just as her father and her grandfather
were hanging upside down at the highest possible point,
the spider gave a terrible groan and froze.
The entire machine shuddered to a complete stop,
and her father was trapped, suspended upside down
for several eternities while somebody ran to get an engineer.

Her father swears he can still hear that spider breathing
and how the world was completely inverted
until they got a ladder and helped him down.
He says, 'I know you must think I'm an awful coward.'
She reassures him, 'No, Dad, if that happened to me
I wouldn't want to get on a roller coaster either.'
And it's good to know he has at least one fear
he's prepared to admit to.



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THE WOLF WILDER

KATHERINE RUNDELL

Feo and her mother, Marina, are 'wolf wilders': they find wolves that were once pets and teach them how to be wild again.

Feo found it hard to act normally around strangers. She would be too silent, or rough when she'd hoped to be funny. For weeks and months later, some of the things she had said would come back to her and she would have to bury her head in the snow to cool down her cheeks. Adults, in Feo's experience, often backed away when they met her. Her mother said it might – possibly – be because she stared at them. But the wolves stared too, and nobody reprimanded *them*.

And the wolves were enough. They were better than enough. And two of the wolves, as Feo pointed out whenever her mother became anxious about her possible loneliness, were technically girls of about her own age. 'I know they don't speak Russian,' said Feo, 'but that doesn't mean we don't understand each other.'

White was the acknowledged beauty of the pack, and when Feo buried her face in the wolf's neck the fur was so soft it felt almost wet. She was young and, the male wolves who passed through seemed to agree, glamorous. Her snout was narrow enough to fit inside Feo's ear. Most wolves are born with blue eyes which turn yellow or gold at three months; White's had remained blue.

And there was Grey. Grey was a few months older than Feo, and Marina had fought a wolf hunter for her when she was a newborn pup cut from the stomach of her mother, a fight that ended in a broken nose for Marina and a week in hospital for the hunter. Perhaps because her first day on earth had been so stressful, Grey's temper was large and unwieldy. The flick of her ears suggested she was invincible. Feo was not afraid of Grey because Feo refused, on principle, to be afraid of any animal – but if she'd had to be, it would definitely have been Grey she would have chosen. 'It's hard to be absolutely sure,' Feo told Black, 'that she's not going to bite off some part of me I'd rather keep.'

Black had been sold for four thousand roubles because of the beauty of his coat, and until he found Feo he had loved nobody. When he first came to the cabin in the woods, he had been fat, with a bottom large enough to block a doorway. Now, though, he was awe-inspiring, and the best friend anybody could dream of. On his hind legs, Black was tall enough to make two Feos, and – she knew from experience – his paws were as big as Feo's face. But Black was lightning quick.

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To see a wolf run, Feo reckoned, is to see something extraordinary – because, she told Tenderfoot, 'a real wolf runs in the way that a thunderstorm would run if it had legs. That's what you're aiming for, all right?'

Feo straightened up and rubbed Tenderfoot's ears. The wolf flinched and whined.

'*Lapushka*, you look like you wouldn't know where to find your own teeth.'

Many of the wolves who came to them, captured at birth and kept on chains, had never run further than the length of a drawing room.

'We're going to do some running now,' said Feo. 'Do you know running? It's like walking, only more of it.'

Tenderfoot stepped into a dip in the ground, found the snow was suddenly up to her stomach and collapsed in a panicked heap, her head tucked down to her stomach. Feo reached into the snow, found the wolf's belly and pulled her to her feet. She weighed as much as Feo herself.

'Wolves,' she said, 'are supposed to be bold, and gallant, and fierce.' She rubbed Tenderfoot's ears. 'You might need to work on that.' Feo tightened the leather straps of her skis, wiped the icy mist off her hair before it could turn solid, and tucked it down her back inside her shirt. 'Follow me, now!'

She pushed forward and dropped off the edge of the hill. The sound of the wind in the trees made it difficult to tell if the wolf was following, but usually they came stumbling after her instinctively. Feo turned. The wolf sat at the top of the hill peering down, a dinner party expression on her face.

Feo bit away the solid snot icing on her lip, spat it out and stamped, criss-crossing with her skis, back up the hill.



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MISS FLOTSAM

JOSEPH COELHO

Miss Flotsam was my reception teacher.
She had travelled the world.
Brown hair turned golden
under distant suns,
clothes carrying colours
from countless corners of continents.



When my mother's face spilled
a gush of adolescent tears
at the school gates,
Miss Flotsam soaked up the drops
in Peruvian alpaca,
caught splashes
in Himalayan singing bowls,
let sobs fall on Indonesian Gamelans.



Miss Flotsam had flown
through air pockets in jumbo jets,
sailed the seven seas
in opposite directions,
cycled through cyclones
with dengue fever,
soothed mothers
when their hearts heaved.

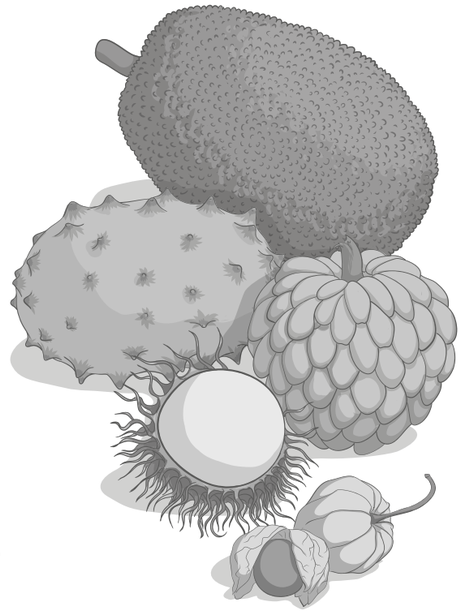
When the bully punched me
for being too brown,
Miss Flotsam glared at him
with an eye that could turn fists
into begging bowls.



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When my mother was late,
the chairs upturned on the desks,
Miss Flotsam read to me
stories of imperfect families
and unexpected heroes.

When I dozed in class
Miss Flotsam let me sleep
through maths,
through lunch,
through the tuk-tuk traffic,
through the home-time bell.



When I was naughty
Miss Flotsam told me off,
asked of the disasters
destroying my home
and placed sandbags around my lies.

Miss Flotsam had climbed peaks
circled by vultures,
waded rivers with unseen bottoms,
bought ugly fruits
in dusty languages
in foreign markets,
spoke to parents
in dialects they could understand,
sang to pupils
in rhythms they could bear.

