COMPREHENSION NINJA FOR AGES 8–9: FICTION & POETRY

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WITH ADAM BUSHNELL

BLOOMSBURY EDUCATION
LONDON OXFORD NEW YORK NEW DELHI SYDNEY

BLOOMSBURY EDUCATION
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London, WC1 3DP, UK
29 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, Ireland

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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: PB: 978-1-4729-8987-1; ePDF: 978-1-4729-9123-2

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1

Text design by Marcus Duck Design

Printed and bound in the UK by Ashford Colour Press



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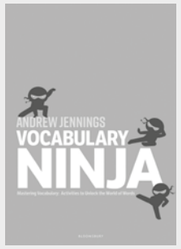
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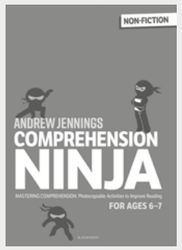
OTHER NINJA RESOURCES

FOR TEACHERS



VOCABULARY NINJA

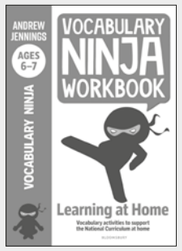
A practical guide containing strategies and photocopiable activities to help transform pupils into vocabulary ninjas. Featuring theory and teaching approaches, as well as key topic vocabulary, etymology and phrases, this book will bring the primary curriculum to life.

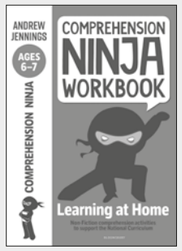


COMPREHENSION NINJA NON-FICTION

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.

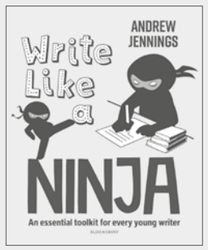
FOR CHILDREN





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.

DRAW AND LABEL

Draw and label requires pupils to draw an image based on the information they have read and then to add their own labels.

Increase the difficulty of labelling by asking pupils to label more complex images. Alternatively, use draw and label as part of your literacy lessons.

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.



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ANOTHER WORLD

2

ADAM BUSHNELL

FICTION: SCI-FI



The jungle was extraordinary. The trees were the largest I had ever seen. They towered above me, making me feel small and irrelevant. They were similar to those on Earth but much taller and the branches were more like tentacles; they curved and coiled around one another. The green leaves were more intensely coloured too.

I wore a robotic suit which was essential, not only so that I could breathe safely in the toxic atmosphere but also so that I could explore the whole jungle terrain. My jetpack could propel me to the dizzy heights of the jungle canopy, and the oxygen tanks allowed me to submerge myself in the depths of the river that ran the length of the jungle.

At no time did I feel in danger despite the teeming life that surrounded me. Huge insects buzzed and hummed around me but my armour plating would protect me from any stings. Not that they seemed aggressive anyway. They zipped past me curiously but harmlessly. Most were dragonflies with vibrant colours of pink, purple and blue.

There were a lot of creatures in the trees too. Lizard-like creatures with wings soared from branch to branch, trying to grab one of the insects that flew by. Smooth-skinned monkeys chattered all around, their camouflaged skin hiding them high in the trees.

Flowers grew from the forest floor. They were fascinating. They had orb eyes surrounded by brightly coloured petals. As I passed them the flowers turned to look at me. They watched my every move and I looked back at them in wonder. The flowers' pupils were black and deep. As I moved on, I glanced back at them and they strained their stems trying to watch me. I must have been a curious sight to them.

I smiled and moved on towards the river. The sound of it was getting louder as I approached. Leaves crunched under my heavy feet. I collected a few and put them in my sample bag to study in the lab later back at the base. They were long and shaped like daggers. As I touched them they glowed with a dim green light. It was fascinating. Even though they had fallen from the trees, they still glowed with a sort of bioluminescence.

Even in my suit, I could smell the change in the air as I got nearer the river. A rich, damp aroma was everywhere. The plants changed too. I left the tallest of the trees behind me, closer to the water the trees were smaller. They were still massive compared to trees on Earth but not as large as the ones that were on the outskirts of the jungle. These trees had roots above the ground as well as below. It was like the trees stood on enormous brown fingers. It looked like they might scuttle away at any moment. I took a sample of the bark with a scalpel and moved on.

At last, I reached the river bank. The river itself was wide and fast. The tentacle trees were reflected in the water but distorted by the fast current. I stepped off the bank and into the water. I set the jetpack to aquatic mode then I lurched forward and submerged myself utterly. The current was fast but the jetpack fought against it easily. Strange fish darted this way and that around me. Then they settled in the water to look at me. Their eyes were wide and staring. They had whiskers that bristled with an electrical current. This was the most extraordinary planet I had ever explored!

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FRIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

ADAM BUSHNELL

I was so excited. I hadn't been to London before. We were going to do everything: the zoo, the aquarium… But best of all would be the Natural History Museum. You can probably tell that I love animals. I've got six pets: a dog, two hamsters and three fish. Our pet dog, Belle, was staying at my grandma's house while I was in London. The hamsters and fish would be company for each other though. The hamsters are called Bubble and Squeak. The fish are called Huey, Dewey and Louie. We were only staying in London for two nights and I knew I'd miss my pets but this was an adventure I'd been longing for.

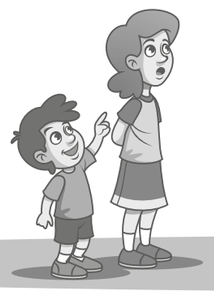
My mum had been saving up for ages and at last we could now afford to go. My little brother, Oliver, was excited too. He couldn't stop talking about London buses. He had a toy one clutched in his hand the moment we arrived. That was his pocket money gone in about twenty seconds! I was waiting for the gift shop at the museum though. There would be some amazing things there, I just knew it.

We dropped our bags off at the hotel then took the bus (of course) to South Kensington. We arrived at the museum and went up the escalator into the Earth Hall. It was amazing! In fact, the whole day was amazing, until it happened. The thing I'll never forget.

We explored the precious stones and volcano exhibitions then we made our way around the animal exhibitions. It was incredible! It was when we got to the main hall with the giant skeleton of Hope the blue whale that Mum bumped into a friend from school. They were chatting and chatting and chatting. Oliver and I had to stand and wait. Oliver was getting bored.

"Mum," I eventually said. "Why don't you two go for a coffee and I'll take Oliver around the dinosaur exhibition?"

"Yay!" Oliver said, jumping up and down.



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"Well, if you really don't mind, love," Mum said with a smile.

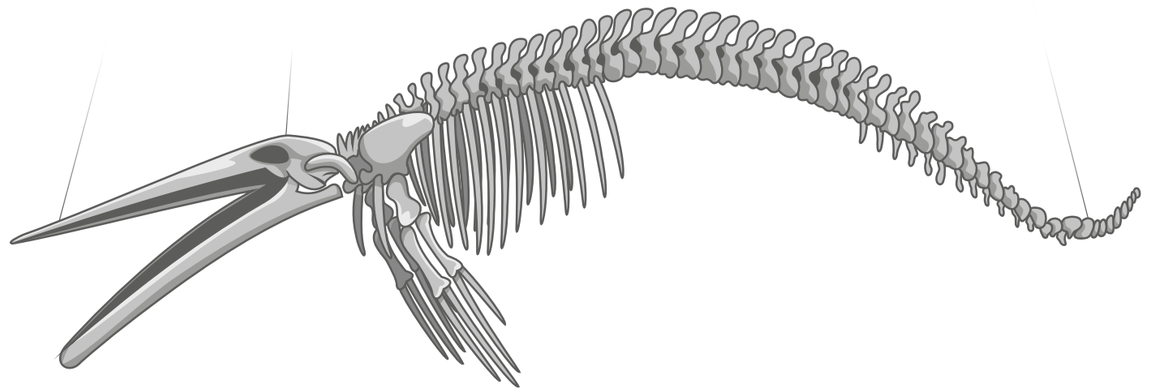
I took Oliver's hand and off we went.

"You have to keep hold of my hand though," I kept saying to Oliver. "If we get separated then we meet at the big blue whale. Got it?"

He didn't answer as we had arrived at the dinosaur exhibition. We walked in and saw the skeletons of dinosaurs but there were also moving dinosaur exhibits. It really was fantastic. I was reading about Velociraptors when I noticed that Oliver wasn't holding my hand anymore. I felt my heart stop and my eyes widen. I looked around but he wasn't there. He wasn't anywhere. It was so busy and he was just gone. He had been holding my hand and then he had disappeared. Where was he?

I ran forward, ducking between crowds of people. Then I ran back. He could have been anywhere!

Wait. Then I remembered. I hoped that he would remember too. I sprinted back to the main hall and standing there, right there under that big blue whale was my little brother. He was sucking his thumb and looking up at Hope. I took his hand and we walked to the café to tell Mum what had happened.



SUMMARISE DRAW AND LABEL

SUMMARISE

1 Look at the last paragraph of the text. Tick the statement which best summarises this paragraph.

Marcus prepared for the fight by training. ☐

Hilarus killed Marcus and the crowd roared. ☐

The crowd were waiting for the fight to begin. ☐

Marcus killed Hilarus and the crowd roared. ☐

2 Look at the first paragraph. Write one sentence to summarise what's happening in this paragraph.

_____

_____

DRAW AND LABEL

Draw the statements in the boxes. Add your own labels to your drawings.

Hilarus, an imperial gladiator	the gladiators in training, using wooden swords, lifting weights or wrestling

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123 SEQUENCING

1 Look at the sentence below. Write the numbers 1 to 4 to show the order the words occur in the sentence.

Gladiators were slaves that fought to the death but if you won enough battles then you were given your freedom.

freedom	gladiators	fought	battles

2 Look at the first paragraph in *Legends of the Colosseum*. Number the sentences from 1 to 5 to show the order they occur in the text.

He owed the money to some very bad people and he had to pay up. ☐

He stood outside the gladiator school and gulped. ☐

Marcus owed money. ☐

A lot of money. ☐

Marcus had always been good at fighting, with his fists and with swords. ☐

3 Look at *Legends of the Colosseum*. Number the sentences from 1 to 5 to show the order they occur in the whole text. Look at the first line of each paragraph to help you.

Marcus stepped towards the man. ☐

Marcus nodded. ☐

Finally, the day of the battle arrived. ☐

The guard unchained Marcus and handed him a sword. ☐

The following week consisted of training with the other gladiators. ☐

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THE RABBIT IN THE MOON

ADAM BUSHNELL

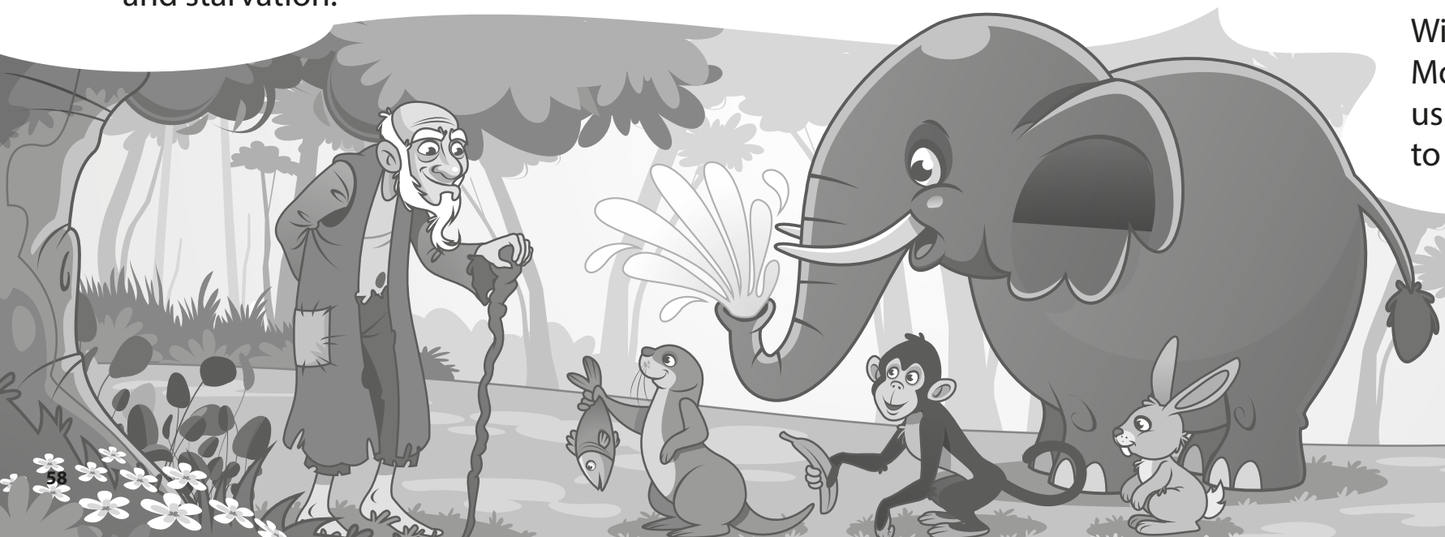
In a forest far from here there lived four friends: an otter, a monkey, an elephant and a rabbit. They loved telling each other stories.

One night, after the rabbit had told a story about helping others she said, "I've got an idea. We have everything that we need in our forest. Let's give some food and drink to the people that live in the village beyond. I've seen people begging there."

The four friends agreed that this was a most excellent idea. So the very next day the otter caught a great pile of fish. The monkey collected huge bunches of bananas. The elephant sucked up fresh spring water until his trunk was bursting. And the rabbit collected and wove together long, strong reeds from the river to make plates and cups. They then left the food and drink outside the village and hid among the trees. Some children were playing nearby and when they eventually spotted the food and drink they were delighted! Those children shared what they had found with everyone.

Each day the four friends would collect more food and drink, and each day they would leave the feast out for the people from the village.

One day, God came down to Earth to meet these four remarkable friends. God came disguised as an old beggar man and was walking through the forest groaning. He was pretending to be dying of thirst and starvation.



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Quick as a flash the otter leaped from the river and presented the fish to the old man. At once, the old man smiled and built a fire to cook the fish. He smacked his lips and patted the otter on the head. The monkey then came swinging through the trees and gave the old man a banana for his pudding. He licked his lips and patted the monkey on the head. Then the elephant came pounding through the forest and squirted some fresh water into the old man's mouth. He dried his lips and patted the elephant on the head.

Finally came the rabbit. But poor rabbit had nothing to offer the old man. "I have nothing to offer you . . . apart from myself. Take a knife and cut off my fur. You can use it to keep you warm."

"But you will die!" exclaimed the old man.

"So will you if you don't find warm clothes. The forest may be warm now but it gets very cold at night. Do it. Have my fur."

There was a blinding flash of light. The old man disappeared and all that could be seen was white light throughout the forest.

The four friends heard a loud voice inside their heads saying, "I have seen such kindness from you all. I thank you. I am so very proud of you. But you, rabbit . . . You are the kindest of all. You would have given up your own life to help another."

With that, God lifted up the rabbit into the sky and placed her on the Moon. Whenever the Moon is full the rabbit shines her light down upon us all to remind us how we should always treat others as we would want to be treated.

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LARKS WITH SHARKS

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DAVID ORME

I love to go swimming when a great shark's about,
I tease him by tickling his tail and his snout
With the ostrich's feather I'm never without
And when I start feeling those glinty teeth close
With a scrunchy snap snap on my ankles or toes
I swim off with a laugh (for everyone knows
An affectionate nip from young sharky just shows
How dearly he loves every bit of his friend)
And when I've no leg just a stumpy chewed end
I forgive him for he doesn't mean to offend;
When he nuzzles my head, he never intends
With his teeth so delightfully set out in rows
To go further than rip off an ear or a nose,

But when a shark's feeling playful, shy, anything goes!
With tears in his eyes he'll take hold of my arm
Then twist himself round with such grace and such charm
The bits slip down his throat – no need for alarm!
I've another arm left! He means me no harm!
He'll play stretch and snap with six yards of insides
The rest will wash up on the beach with the tides
What fun we've all had, what a day to remember –
Yes, a shark loves a pal he can slowly dismember.

