COMPREHENSION NINJA FOR AGES 9–10: 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, WC1B 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: 978-1-4729-8989-5; ePDF: 978-1-4729-9124-9

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

MIX
Paper from responsible sources
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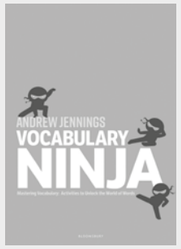
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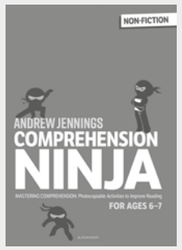
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VOCABULARY NINJA

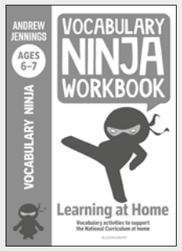
A practical guide containing strategies and photocopiable activities to help transform pupils into vocabulary ninjas. Featuring theory and teaching approaches, as well as key topic vocabulary, etymology and phrases, this book will bring the primary curriculum to life.

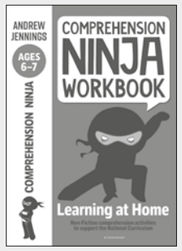


COMPREHENSION NINJA NON-FICTION

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.

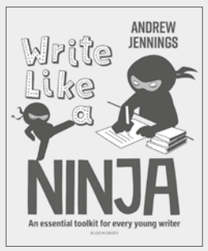
FOR CHILDREN





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

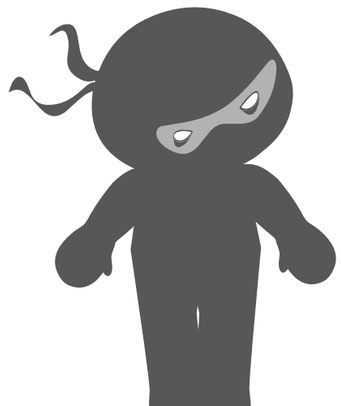
These questions require pupils to choose an answer from a selection of four possible answers. Prompt pupils to locate the required information by spotting keywords in the question and locating them in the text, then reading around this information to find the correct answer.

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.



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NICK THE KNIGHT

ADAM BUSHNELL

Once upon a time, there lived a terrible dragon in England. This dragon roared its terrible roar, gnashed its terrible teeth, ripped with terrible claws and breathed out fire! It went across the land burning down villages, towns and cities, leaving only piles of rubble and very unhappy people behind it.

In one of the villages, there was a man called Nick, whose house had been reduced to ashes. He stood there, looking at the blackened mess.

"It's not fair!" he announced. "Somebody should do something about that dragon! We need a knight!"

But there were no knights around, so the man decided that he should become one. He should be the one to slay the dragon!

The man searched the ruins of his house for something that he could use as a helmet. He couldn't find a helmet, but he did find a large saucepan. He put the saucepan on his head.

He couldn't find a suit of armour, but he did find a baking tray, so he stuck that to his body.

He couldn't find a sword, but he did find a very big wooden spoon.

So, with the saucepan on his head, the baking tray on his body and the spoon in his hand, Nick set off to find the dragon.



Following the path of burned-out houses, Nick found the dragon in no time. It was sleeping in a cave nearby. It was deep purple, with wide leathery wings and two long, curly horns. Holding the spoon nervously in his hand, Nick entered the cave. He creeped forward. He took a deep breath in. Then he whacked the dragon right over its nose.

The dragon opened one eye. Then two. Finally three.

"Ow!" it said. "Did you just hit me with that spoon?"

"Erm, yeah," Nick said with a smile. "I was trying to kill you, but it didn't work, did it?"

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"No, it didn't!" boomed the dragon. "And now I'm going to burn you to a crisp and then eat you up!"

Nick screamed, turned and ran away – but the dragon began to chase after him. Nick climbed up a tree as quickly as he could. The dragon let out a burst of flames, and the tree was on fire!

Nick held onto a branch for dear life but the branch began to creak, the branch began to crack and then the branch broke! With a BANG, Nick landed right on top of the dragon's head!

The dragon shook its head wildly, but Nick held on tightly to its horns. So the dragon spread its massive wings and took to the sky. Nick held on tighter still. He soon discovered that, if he pulled the dragon's horns to the left, the dragon went left. If he pulled the dragon's horns to the right, the dragon went right! If he pulled the horns back, the dragon went up! If he pushed the horns forward, the dragon went down!

"WHEEEEEE!" He was higher than the clouds!

"WHEEEEEE!" He was zooming across the land!

"WHEEEEEE!" He was flying a dragon!

"WHEEEEEE!" He was WHEEing all over the place!

After a while, he flew the dragon all the way to the king's palace. He pushed the horns as hard as he could and the dragon plummeted to the ground. With a SPLAT, it hit the ground and fell down dead!

The king came out of his palace, looking amazed.

"Did you just kill that the dragon?" he asked, in a very posh voice (he was the king, after all).

"Yes!" Nick said, beaming.

"Are you carrying a spoon?" he enquired.

"Erm, yeah," smiled Nick. "I was trying to kill the dragon with it!"

"You have saved our country and we are very grateful," announced the king. "You shall be rewarded with a golden helmet, a golden suit of armour and a golden sword. You shall be the new knight of England and protect us forever more!"

And that was exactly what happened! From that day forward, Nick became known as Nick the Knight and England remained dragon-free. Mostly!

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THE PLUNDERING OF LINDISFARNE

ADAM BUSHNELL

FICTION: HISTORICAL

Godwin wakes to bright sunshine. It is in stark contrast to the darkness of his dreams. He dreamed of immense whirlwinds and flashes of lightning. Terrible dragons circled the sky and spat fire down from above.

He shakes his head and puts on his robes. His garb is made from itchy wool, but he is used to it by now. He goes out to join the others in morning prayer.

The island is illuminated in stunning morning sunlight. Godwin loves the island. It is tidal so, when the tide is out, he and his fellow monks walk along the causeway to the mainland. There, they teach the Gospels to the good folk of Northumberland. But when the tide is in, which it is now, they stay on the island. This is Godwin's favourite time. The island is peaceful and beautiful. Seal song can be heard on the wind and the call of eider ducks echoes all around.

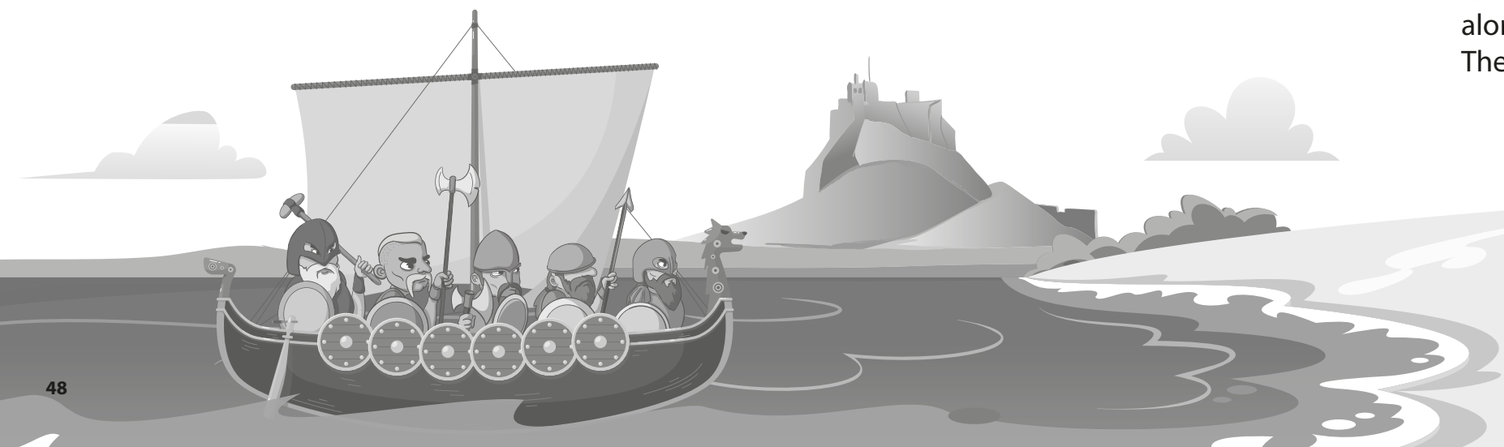
Godwin spends his days copying older manuscripts onto newer parchment made from animal skin. It seems right to him that he writes about the Lamb of God onto actual lambskin.

The weather changes swiftly, as it often does on the island. Godwin looks out from a window to see a thick fog curling over the sea. He sighs and lights a candle. The dim light of the monastery almost completely disappears when the sky darkens.

Godwin works for another hour or so, and then he hears an unfamiliar sound. It is a long, loud blast from a blowhorn.

He stands and joins the other monks outside. More blasts from the horns can be heard and they are getting louder. The monks look to one another in confusion and fear.

Then something emerges from the thick grey fog on the dark water. It is a dragon's head.



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A chill races up Godwin's spine and goosebumps prickle his flesh. He saw this. God warned him. He read in the Book of Revelation that the devil would come to Earth as a dragon. Now the devil is here. It is coming for them. There is nothing to do but pray to God.

The monks look on to see more dragons arrive. Their horns are sharp and their tongues are revealed. But, as the dragons near the island and emerge from the thick wall of fog, Godwin realises that these dragons are vessels. They are ships made of wood and lined with shields of bright colours. Red and white sails carry them forward and the blasts of the horns are made by men – but men unlike any that Godwin has seen before.

They have long hair tied in plaits and wear nasal helmets upon their heads. Some have plaited beards, too. They wear mail armour and brandish axes with curved blades. They shout and taunt the monks as they approach. It is clear that murder is in mind.

"The book!" cries one monk.

"The saint!" shouts another.

The book. The saint. Godwin's eyes widen. They have to protect their greatest treasures. The book is the Gospels, written and illuminated with rare inks on the finest lambskin, with a jewelled cover. It is the monks' finest object among the incredible treasures of the monastery. The saint is none other than Saint Cuthbert himself. His perfectly preserved body is kept in an oak coffin. The body has not rotted away in over one hundred years. He is the greatest treasure of all, and monks from other monasteries travel great distances to see the miracle saint in his preserved form.

Godwin runs. Some monks have gathered the Gospels and carry the saint, along with other treasures. They have to get to a boat. They have to escape. They have to save the treasures of the island of Lindisfarne.



MULTIPLE CHOICE



Circle the correct answer to the following questions.

1 What was another name for the Vampire Hunter?

the Krisnik	the Kresnik	the Kinnik	the Kressin

2 What did Ivan think about vampires?

they were real	they sat at home	they weren't real	they were scary

3 Where did Ivan and the farmer sit huddled?

in a house	at home	in a barn	beneath the moon

4 Why did the farmer think that a fox couldn't have killed the cows?

they're too small	they're too big	they're too fast	they're too loud

5 Who spotted the vampire first?

Ivan	the farmer	the cows	the Kresnik

6 What did the creature attack?

a cow	Ivan	a fox	the farmer

7 What colour was the creature's face?

grey	red	silver	white

8 What did Ivan try to use after the holy water?

matches	the candle	the mallet	the pistol

9 What was like a cave?

the farm	the vampire's cloak	Ivan's cloak	Ivan's hat

10 What wasn't loaded?

the pistol	the cloak	the weapon	the cart

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TRUE OR FALSE



Read the sentences. Put a tick in the correct box to show which sentences are true and which are false.

1	Ivan was a Vampire Hunter.	True ☐	False ☐
2	Ivan had done a mission before.	True ☐	False ☐
3	Ivan didn't think he would have to do any work.	True ☐	False ☐
4	The farmer telephoned Ivan to ask for his help.	True ☐	False ☐
5	Ivan thought the cows had probably been eaten by a wolf, not a vampire.	True ☐	False ☐
6	The cows had bite marks on their feet.	True ☐	False ☐
7	Ivan thought that a fox might have bitten the cows.	True ☐	False ☐
8	The creature emerged from some trees.	True ☐	False ☐
9	Ivan couldn't see the creature at first.	True ☐	False ☐
10	The creature approached the field at an impossible speed.	True ☐	False ☐
11	The creature walked on all fours and then on two feet.	True ☐	False ☐
12	Ivan only had holy water with him.	True ☐	False ☐
13	The creature had a ghostly white face.	True ☐	False ☐
14	The creature let out a scream when the water splashed its face.	True ☐	False ☐
15	The holy water worked well.	True ☐	False ☐
16	Ivan's cloak had lots of pockets.	True ☐	False ☐
17	Ivan's pistol had bullets in it.	True ☐	False ☐
18	Ivan had a posh voice.	True ☐	False ☐
19	The creature was annoyed that Ivan had got it wet.	True ☐	False ☐
20	The creature told Ivan he had a lot to learn.	True ☐	False ☐

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BEETLE BOY

M.G. LEONARD

Darkus looked down. The giant insect was sitting right at his feet, and before he could think about whether it was a good idea or not, he was reaching down to touch the tip of its horn. It *was* sharp.

'Whoa, you're cool!' he said, realizing his heart was thumping in his chest.

Mesmerized, Darkus watched the beetle scramble up from the road on to the pavement, its body glistening like wet oil. He found the way it crawled fascinating. He'd never thought about the way he walked – upright on two legs – and he wondered what it would be like to have six legs, and to move around so close to the ground. The beetle walked by lifting a tripod of three legs at a time – the front and rear legs of one side of its body together with the middle leg of the other.

When the insect reached his shoe, it started climbing, heading for his ankle – as if it was trying to get up his trouser leg too!

'Hey! Stop!' Darkus fell backwards, flicking out his foot and flinging the beetle away. It landed on the pavement and paused, like it was thinking. Darkus was astonished to see it lifting its hard outer wings, and unfolding a second semi-transparent, rust-coloured pair. It flew straight back to him. The giant beetle landed on his knee, clinging on to his trousers with its claws.

Darkus yelped and shook his leg again, rolling back on to his elbows, but the beetle wouldn't let go.

Beside the bin next to him was a cardboard box. Darkus grabbed it and, sitting up, knocked the beetle into the box with the back of his hand. Embarrassed, he looked around to see if anyone had seen him flailing on the floor, but everyone was crowded around the unconscious man on the other side of the road, discussing what they should do with him.

Peering into the box, Darkus saw the beetle on its back, legs thrashing about frantically as it tried to get back on its feet. He immediately felt bad for hitting it. He reached in and flipped the poor creature the right way up.

'I'm so sorry. I hope I didn't hurt you,' Darkus said softly. 'It's just you gave me a bit of a fright.'

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The beetle scrambled into the corner of the box, pulling at the walls of the temporary prison with its front legs.

'Calm down, little fella. I'm not going to hurt you.'

But the beetle kept tearing at the walls, so Darkus decided to set it free. Crouching down, he held the box on its side on the pavement. The beetle scurried out of the box, but instead of running away, it clambered on to Darkus's hand and stood still, looking up at him expectantly.

It took a second for Darkus to realize he was OK with the beetle being on him. The gentle scratch of its claws against his skin was almost pleasant. What surprised him was the weight of the insect – he'd assumed it would be light, but it felt solid and reassuring, like a pebble. He carefully lifted his hand. 'Hello there.'

Looking up from underneath, he could see the features of the beetle's face. He couldn't have said why but it looked somehow… friendly. Its bulbous eyes glistened like blackberries, and it was holding its mouth open as if it was trying to smile. Although the beetle appeared to be pitch black from above, underneath it had ginger hair sticking out of the gaps between its joints. It was almost cute. And then he realized: this was the creature from Uncle Max's window, the day he'd moved in. The six legs, the horn, the size – it all fitted.



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SIREN SONG

RACHEL PIERCEY

Sirens! The cry went round the ship
as swift as if they'd sighted home
and every sailor felt the grip

of fear and gathered in a throng,
for no man can resist the song
of sirens luring them to come,

and run their ships into the rocks
by chasing the enchanted tones.
Tie me! cried Odysseus,

Here are ropes, the mast is strong;
now bind me tight so I may hear
the rapture of the spells they cast

and yet be helpless to respond;
then plug this beeswax in your ears
and we'll be safe from siren song!

The ship sailed hesitantly past
the outcrop where the sirens lay,
and each one skimmed her voice across

the waves, and each voice crept and slid
and whispered to Odysseus:
Oh captain, turn your ship our way

and you will have your heart's desire,
for we know everything there is
of gods and men, of land and sky,

and every deed that's been and done
and every deed that is to come...
And if you join us, you will live!

Odysseus raged against his ties
and screamed at his unhearing men,
beseeched and threatened with his eyes

for them to cut him free to steer
the ship towards the sirens' cries –
for the sirens promised him the world





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and then he could go home again.
But the men obeyed his first command
and tied more ropes with shaking hands

and pulled the oars and prayed the wind
would fill the sail and move them clear
and soon they left the rocks behind.

Their captain calmed as they sailed on
and soon he signalled with a frown
that they should free him from the mast

and all the sailors cheered to think
theirs was the only ship to pass
the sirens and not break and sink!

Odysseus lent his voice to theirs
and told them how the sirens sang
and every sailor laughed and drank,

hailing the gods and giving thanks.
And in the hubbub no one saw
Odysseus growing pale and grieved,

or how he pressed his ringing ears,
or how he kept himself withdrawn,
his eyes fixed on the rills of foam

that flowed behind the merry boat,
as if he longed for what was gone.
Oh captain, turn your ship our way

and you will have your heart's desire,
for we know everything there is
of gods and men, of land and sky

and every deed that's been and done
and every deed that is to come...

No one is safe from siren song.



