

COMPREHENSION NINJA

INFERENCE AND BEYOND LOWER KS2 FOR AGES 7–9

ANDREW JENNINGS



BLOOMSBURY EDUCATION
LONDON OXFORD NEW YORK NEW DELHI SYDNEY

BLOOMSBURY EDUCATION
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3DP, UK
Bloomsbury Publishing Ireland Limited
29 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, D02 AY28, Ireland

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First published in Great Britain, 2025 by Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

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

ISBN: PB: 978-1-8019-9570-2; ePDF: 978-1-8019-9569-6

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1

Text design by Marcus Duck Design

Printed and bound in India by Thomson Press (India) Ltd.



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OTHER NINJA RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS



COMPREHENSION NINJA NON-FICTION

A set of six books for ages five to 11 that provide carefully curated resources to teach the key reading comprehension skills. With strong links to the National Curriculum, each book presents 24 high-quality non-fiction texts and photocopiable activities that help embed reading skills and improve comprehension, using strategies and question types such as true or false, labelling, matching, highlighting, filling in the gap, sequencing and multiple choice.



COMPREHENSION NINJA FICTION AND POETRY

Each book in this six-book set contains 24 immersive fiction extracts and poetry texts by acclaimed writers, including Roald Dahl, Michael Morpurgo, Patrice Lawrence, Katherine Rundell, David Almond, Zanib Mian, Joseph Coelho and Polly Ho-Yen. Every text is accompanied by photocopiable comprehension activities to boost reading retrieval skills in Key Stages 1 and 2.

NINJA MATHS RESOURCES



TIMES TABLES NINJA

SARAH FARRELL WITH ANDREW JENNINGS

The activities in these photocopiable books give Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils all the tools they need to gain fluency in multiplication and division. The KS1 book focuses on the 2, 3, 4, 5 and 10 times tables, while the KS2 book covers the 2 to 12 times tables in detail, ready for the Year 4 multiplication tables check.



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ANDREW JENNINGS WITH SARAH FARRELL AND PAUL TUCKER

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

INTRODUCTION

COMPREHENSION NINJA: INFERENCE AND BEYOND

Inference is a natural skill that we use every day without really thinking about it. As we see, hear, experience things and interact with others we form opinions and make assumptions to draw logical conclusions. We might make inferences about how people are feeling, or why they did something based on small clues and behavioural indications that we have observed.

Inference is very similar in reading comprehension. The only difference is that we make assumptions and draw conclusions based on the descriptive words and language that we read, rather than through real life experiences. This is why everyday inference practice is so important. Speaking to people, playing and being around others help us to hone our skills and become more effective at making accurate inferences without even realising it. The good news is, that we can use our real-world inference skills to help us with inference in reading!

First, we need to understand the different comprehension inference question types and exactly what the questions are asking us to do. Then we can learn strategies for how to answer the questions to get those all-important marks. Comprehension Ninja Inference and Beyond will help to build confidence as pupils practice reading between the lines and searching for clues in the text. It contains a wealth of brilliant text extracts and thousands of questions to guide your pupils and embed inference learning.

- Simple questions
- Sentence inference
- This suggests
- Evidence
- Summarise
- Sequence
- Prediction

HOW INFERENCE LINKS TO SATS EXAM PRACTICE

At the end of Key Stage Two, children in Year 6 will complete a reading comprehension paper. This paper is made up of around 38-40 questions with 50 marks available. It's important to understand the format of these questions and the vital role that inference skills play in completing the test successfully. On average 40% of the marks available in the reading test are retrieval-style questions, which involves finding and presenting information from the text. Very straightforward and nearly half the marks in the test. The next 30-35% of the available marks are dedicated to inference-style questions, which are slightly more complex as they refer to information that isn't explicitly stated, but instead implied. If we can master both retrieval and inference, on average we have 75% of the SATs test questions tackled! So how do we start the journey of inference mastery?

Comprehension Ninja: Inference and Beyond is carefully structured and designed to mimic the appearance of inference questions in the Key Stage 2 SATs reading paper. This provides teachers, parents and pupils with the most comprehensive and realistic library of inference style questions, that will enable pupils to experience and improve their inference skills like never before.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is extremely versatile and can be used in many ways. Here's a few ideas on ways you could use the texts and questions across KS2 to master inference and beyond.

BOOK BREAKDOWN

The book is split into two halves. The first 8 texts are for in depth inference practice. The extracts are followed by multiple pages of different question types, great for practicing specific skills. For example, you might wish to focus specifically on 3-mark impression questions over the course of a week or fortnight with the aim of improving that skill. You could look at a different text each day, alongside the corresponding 3-mark questions. Then the next week or fortnight you might focus on a different skill, such as 'summarising'. The children would encounter a familiar text, but the sets of questions would approach the text from different angles and strengthen different comprehension skills. This is a great way to embed inference into your daily, weekly or fortnightly reading routine.

The second half of the book has 12 texts, with shorter, double page sets of questions, that cover all the different question types. These texts and questions are better suited for interventions and ongoing assessments (both formative and summative). They are great for exposing children to all of the question types. You can set a time limit of 15-20 minutes to read and complete the questions to help pupils build the stamina and tempo needed for reading comprehension.

Whole Class Teaching: Use texts and specific question sets to model specific skills within your whole class or guided reading sessions.

Small Group Intervention: Use the front eight or back twelve texts to deliver small group interventions to dive into specific skills, or to assess how competent pupils are with specific question types.

Ongoing Assessment: The back twelve texts can be used to identify gaps in inference, as all inference style questions are covered, allowing for future follow-up lessons that focus on one particular inference skill.

Homework: Simple and easy to photocopy and provide pupils with regular homework activities.

Teacher or Teaching Assistant: The comprehensive nature of the books allows for all members of staff to dip in, access a high-quality text and thousands of questions. Perfect for saving time, while improving pupil performance outcomes.

THE TEXT EXTRACTS

Comprehension Ninja Inference and Beyond contains several different text types that children come across in Key Stage 2 literacy:

Non-Fiction: These informative texts focus on areas across the National Curriculum, but they also introduce historical figures or events that might not have been studied before. This is often the case in KS2 SATs, where non-fiction texts cover both curriculum topics and other more random subjects.

Historical Fiction: We have created some unique texts that blend curriculum subjects but are delivered from different perspectives. Using real world events such as the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, we have presented fictional characters or perspectives to explore the subject area. These texts are highly engaging fiction and are good springboards for classroom discussion surrounding non-fiction subject areas!

Fiction: We have curated a number of texts with provoking characters, diverse environments and stimulating situations written by well-known children's authors. The aim is to provide texts that are similar in complexity and style to the types of fiction in the KS2 SATs papers.

Poetry: We have included a blend of light-hearted poetry as well as more serious, reflective poems to both entertain pupils and encourage them to 'read between the lines'. Our poets and their extracts are some of the most well-known and celebrated in the literary world.

THE QUESTION TYPES

SIMPLE QUESTIONS

Super straightforward 'how' and 'why' questions direct pupils to specific parts of the text and guide them to make inferences and explain the reasoning behind their answers. Pupils might be asked: 'How do you know?' or 'Why did this happen…?'. These questions offer one mark.

These questions relate to the actions or emotions of the characters in the text. Sometimes these questions only require one word or a short phrase to answer.

SENTENCE INFERENCE

Sentence inference questions provide an opportunity for pupils to zone in on a specific sentence or word in the text to draw a conclusion. These questions are presented in a variety of styles with pupils asked to either tick boxes or write down their inference in a short sentence. These questions offer one mark.

When it comes to 'tick the box' questions, ensure that pupils are not just guessing. It's important for pupils to read the questions and make a logical inference based on the information provided. Pupils should focus on the actions and emotions and try to draw on their own experiences to imagine how characters in the text might feel, act or think.

THIS SUGGESTS

This suggests questions are presented in a multiple-choice format. A sentence or short extract is provided, with an inference that needs to be drawn and a few suggested answers. Pupils need to decide on and tick the most logical option. These questions offer one mark.

These questions often refer to the imagery and language that authors use to create an atmosphere, such as simile, metaphor and personification describing the actions or emotions of a character. Check that pupils understand that 'this suggests' simply means 'this shows that' or 'this means'.

EVIDENCE: TWO MARKS – TWO INFERENCES

These questions direct pupils to specific parts of the text, where they will need to re-read sentences or even a paragraph. The pupil then needs to answer a question and give two ways that something is inferred or presumed. Pupils need to look for clues in the text and provide two pieces of evidence that show or support what the question is asking. Each piece of evidence is worth one mark, with two marks available in total.

These questions require pupils to look for evidence that supports an inference. The question might ask: 'How can you tell the child was upset? Give two ways'. Pupils need to reflect on their own understanding of what an upset child looks like and then look for clues that suggest this in the text. For example, there may be inferences such as 'they were crying' and 'they couldn't catch their breath'. Both these inferences are worth one mark each. Pupils don't need to write expansive answers that are complete sentences; they just need to provide the evidence.

EVIDENCE: THREE MARKS – THREE INFERENCES

Three-mark evidence questions are very common and straightforward too. Much like the two-mark questions, these questions require pupils to provide three pieces of evidence that support an inference, or to provide three inferences. These questions normally have two lines available for each piece of evidence to be written. These questions often refer to the whole text, meaning the answers can be drawn from anywhere across the whole text, not just a specific paragraph.

NINJA NOTES

Teach pupils to read the question carefully and the instructions that are provided. If the question references the 'whole text' then pupils must know that the inferences or the evidence could be found anywhere across the text. Alternatively, if they are directed to a specific part of the text, they will need to focus in on that area of the text.

EVIDENCE: THREE MARKS – IMPRESSION AND EVIDENCE

Impression and evidence questions require pupils to do multiple tasks for three marks. The question is laid out so that pupils need to provide inferences or impressions and look for supporting evidence. Pupils might be directed to specific areas of the text or to the whole text. An 'impression' is essentially the reader's opinion or what they think, so the answers should be written in the pupil's own words.

NINJA NOTES

Expose pupils to these questions early on. They are actually fairly simple and should not be feared. Teach pupils to provide a simple impression or opinion. Quite often, the impression box will be a one-word description, such as happy, anxious, excited, old, etc. In the evidence box, pupils just need to provide evidence from the text to support their impression. For example, if their impression was 'it's old' the evidence in the text might be, 'the walls were crumbling.' That's it. No need for complete, explanatory sentences. What impression is really asking is, what do you think or how does this make you feel?

SUMMARISE QUESTIONS

Summarise questions are multiple choice and give an opportunity for pupils to demonstrate that they understand the main idea of the text. Pupils are presented with a selection of statements and are required to select the one that best matches or reflects the events, feelings and atmosphere presented in the text. These questions offer one mark.

NINJA NOTES

Summarise questions not only focus on the events that happened in the text, but they also summarise character and narrator attitudes, feelings, emotions and thoughts. This involves reflecting carefully on the general emotions, thoughts, actions or tone of the characters or narrators and selecting the statement that matches. In lessons, prompt pupils to explain and discuss why they chose a particular option, to avoid pupils just randomly choosing an answer.

SEQUENCE QUESTIONS

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

PREDICTION QUESTIONS

Prediction questions ask the pupil to think beyond the text and choose the statement that best matches what could happen next. These require pupils to think about what has been implied in the text already to then make a logical prediction or guess about the future. These are multiple choice style questions, offering one mark.

NINJA NOTES

Prediction questions encourage pupils to reflect on details stated in the text, but they also rely on our understanding of the world and our previous experiences to help us make logical or sensible predictions.



From *Bella's Den* by Berlie Doherty © Berlie Doherty, 1997, published by Barrington Stoke, reproduced by kind permission of David Higham Associates.

BELLA'S DEN

BERLIE DOHERTY

The Middle of the World

Bella has a secret – one that she is very good at keeping. That secret is a den hidden on a little muddy hill, wild amid the trees and nestled beside some foxes with a den of their own.

We must have been in the den for almost an hour. There wasn't room for both of us to lie down, so we sat crouched together with Bella's sleeping bag pulled across us both.

We were both staring out into the night. It was so dark that it was like a black curtain, just too far away to reach out and touch.

Then the moon slid away from the clouds and shone over the grass that covered the den. All of a sudden it was as bright as day. And I think I was the first to see it.

I was looking at the big mound below the den. I was thinking how the moon made it look like a stage with the lights on, and how deep and black those holes were, when I saw something move.

I touched Bella's arm and she let out a little breath of, yes, I've seen it too.

It was a fox.

He grew out of the darkness of the hole, and then took shape as the moon lit him. He stood as if he had been turned to stone, and he was looking right at our den, right past the grassy strands, right at me.



It was as if he was locked into me, reading my mind. I didn't dare move or breathe. I didn't dare do anything but look back at him, till my eyes blurred. I was holding myself so still that I thought I would pass out. My skin was ice cold, frozen cold with fear.

From *Bella's Den* by Berlie Doherty © Berlie Doherty, 1997, published by Barrington Stoke, reproduced by kind permission of David Higham Associates.

Then all of a sudden, the fox seemed to relax. He turned his head just a little, and, as if it was a signal, out came another fox and three little cubs. Four shapes loomed out of the hole, each one faster than the one before. They were jumping out like little kids in a school playground, tumbling red and brown and silvery white.



The dog fox slunk off into the shadows.

The other big fox, his vixen, sat just where he had been, at the front of the hole. She pricked up her ears and her head turned from time to time as she listened out for all kinds of sounds in the hills.

But the three cubs had come out to play. They biffed each other and fell over and rolled about. They jumped on each other, jumped on the vixen, hid from each other and played roly-poly right down to the river.

I could hear them breathing, and scuffling with their paws. I could hear the little puffs of sound they made when they biffed each other.

It felt as if this little patch of ground where the foxes were playing was the middle of the world. It felt as if nothing else that was happening anywhere was as important as this.

I've no idea what the signal was but, quick as a flash, the vixen turned her head, sharp. The cubs scrambled up the bank and one by one slid back into the hole. The vixen waited a moment, lifted her head then melted down into the hole after them. She slid into it like water.

It went dark again, as if the moon had been put out.

I'm not sure if I really saw it or not, but then I think I saw another shape, like a dark flutter where the hole was, and a dull white glow like the tip of a tail vanishing into it.

SIMPLE QUESTIONS

Look at the paragraph beginning...

1 'We must have been in the den for almost an hour.'
How can you tell that the den is small?

_____

2 'Then the moon slid away from the clouds.'
Why do you think the moonlight surprised them?

_____

3 'I was looking at the big mound below the den.'
How can you tell that the hole looked mysterious?

_____

4 'He grew out of the darkness of the hole...'
Why do you think the fox stood still?

_____

5 'It was as if he was locked into me...'
How can you tell the narrator was frightened?

_____

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6 ‘Then all of a sudden the fox seemed to relax.’
Why do you think the other foxes appeared after the first fox relaxed?

_____

7 ‘But the three cubs had come out to play.’
How can you tell that the cubs were playful?

_____

8 ‘It felt as if this little patch of ground...’
Why do you think the narrator felt the foxes were in the ‘middle of the world’?

_____

9 ‘I’ve no idea what the signal was but...’
How can you tell the vixen was alert to danger?

_____

10 ‘I’m not sure if I really saw it or not...’
Why do you think the narrator felt unsure about what they saw at the end?

_____

SENTENCE INFERENCE



1 'I touched Bella's arm and she let out a little breath of, yes, I've seen it too.'
How can you tell that the narrator and Bella are trying to be quiet?

---

2 'It felt as if this little patch of ground where the foxes were playing was the middle of the world.' What are Bella and the narrator feeling in this moment?
A sense of… Tick **one**.

- happiness ☐
- wonder ☐
- tiredness ☐
- excited ☐

3 'The cubs scrambled up the bank and one by one slid back into the hole.'
What does the word **'scrambled'** tell you about how the cubs moved?

---

4 'He stood as if he had been turned to stone, and he was looking right at our den, right past the grassy strands, right at me.'
How would you describe the fox's state of mind at this point? Tick **one**.

- curious ☐
- tired ☐
- wary ☐
- sad ☐

5 'I could hear them breathing, and scuffling with their paws. I could hear the little puffs of sound they made when they biffed each other.'
What do you think is happening when the narrator says **'they biffed each other'**?

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THIS SUGGESTS...



1 'It was as if he was locked into me, reading my mind. I didn't dare move or breathe.'
What does this suggest about how the narrator feels when the fox looks at them?

- The narrator feels calm. ☐
- The narrator feels scared. ☐
- The narrator feels happy. ☐

2 'Then all of a sudden the fox seemed to relax. He turned his head just a little, and, as if it was a signal, out came another fox and three little cubs.'
What does this suggest about the fox's behaviour?

- The fox feels playful. ☐
- The fox feels aggressive. ☐
- The fox feels safe. ☐

3 'It felt as if this little patch of ground where the foxes were playing was the middle of the world.'
What does this suggest about how the narrator views the foxes' playtime?

- It feels magical and special. ☐
- It feels boring. ☐
- It feels scary. ☐

4 'She slid into it like water.'
What does this suggest about how the vixen enters the den?

- She moves quickly and smoothly. ☐
- She moves clumsily. ☐
- She moves very slowly. ☐

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EVIDENCE – TWO MARKS



Look at the paragraph beginning...

1 'It was as if he was locked into me, reading my mind.' How can you tell that the narrator feels frightened when the fox looks at them? Give **two** ways.

1 _____

_____

2 _____

_____

2 'Then all of a sudden...' How can you tell that the fox feels safe when the cubs come out to play? Give **two** ways.

1 _____

_____

2 _____

_____

3 'They biffed each other and fell over and rolled about.' How can you tell that the cubs are enjoying themselves? Give **two** ways.

1 _____

_____

2 _____

_____

4 'It went dark again, as if the moon had been put out.' How can you tell that the narrator feels unsure about what they saw at the end? Give **two** ways.

1 _____

_____

2 _____

_____

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EVIDENCE – THREE MARKS



1 Look at the whole text. How can you tell that the narrator feels amazed by the foxes' behaviour? Give **three** ways.

1 _____

_____

_____

2 _____

_____

_____

3 _____

_____

_____



EVIDENCE – THREE MARKS



2 What impression do you get of the narrator's feelings about the night? Give **two** impressions, using evidence from the text to support your answer.

Impression	Evidence

3 What impression do you get of the fox cubs? Give **two** impressions, using evidence from the text to support your answer.

Impression	Evidence

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SUMMARY AND PREDICTION



SUMMARISE

1 What statement best describes Bella's attitude toward the den? Tick **one**.

- Bella sees it as a secret and special place. ☐
- Bella doesn't care much about the den. ☐
- Bella finds the den uncomfortable and scary. ☐

2 What statement best describes the narrator's feelings after seeing the vixen and cubs vanish? Tick **one**.

- The narrator feels confused about what they saw. ☐
- The narrator feels awe at the magical moment. ☐
- The narrator feels frightened by the darkness. ☐

SEQUENCE

3 Number the following sentences from 1–4 to show the order they happen in the text. The first one has been done for you.

- Awe and wonder at the magical moment. ☐
- Excitement at seeing something move. 1
- Fear as the fox stares directly at the narrator. ☐
- Confusion as the den returns to darkness. ☐

PREDICTION

4 What do you think might happen next after the foxes disappear into the den?

- The narrator will try to explore the foxes' den. ☐
- Bella and the narrator will decide to visit the den again another night. ☐
- They will never see the foxes again. ☐

THE SCOTS AND THE PICTS

ANDREW JENNINGS

The Middle of the World

Long ago, Scotland was home to ancient tribes with rich cultures. Two of the most famous were the Scots and the Picts, who shaped the history of Scotland with their battles, migrations and alliances.

The Scots: Warriors from Ireland

The Scots didn't originally come from Scotland – they came from Ireland. In the early centuries, a tribe called the Scotti sailed across the sea to western Scotland and settled in a region on the coast known as Dal Riata. These skilled warriors and sailors brought their language, Gaelic, and a rich culture with them.

The Scots quickly became powerful, establishing kingdoms and making alliances with other tribes. Over time, they expanded their influence, mingling with local peoples and leaving a lasting mark on Scotland's history.

The Picts: The Painted People

The Picts lived in Scotland long before the Scots arrived. Known as the 'painted ones' because they tattooed or painted their bodies with intricate designs, they were fierce warriors who lived in northern and eastern Scotland.

The Picts built strong hillforts to defend their land from invaders like the Romans, who found them difficult to conquer. While the Picts didn't leave behind many written records, their artwork, especially the Pictish stones – decorated with symbols of animals and people – remain a testament to their culture.

Clashing and Uniting

The Scots and the Picts were often in conflict, battling for land and power. The Picts were determined to defend their territories, while the Scots sought to expand. However, both groups faced a greater threat – the Vikings, who began raiding Scotland's coasts.

To face the Viking menace, the Scots and Picts eventually united. In the 9th century, Kenneth MacAlpin, a king of the Scots, is believed to have become king of the Picts as well. This union marked the beginning of the Kingdom of Scotland, combining the strengths of both tribes.