

**NON-FICTION**



**ANDREW JENNINGS**



# COMPREHENSION NINJA

MASTERING COMPREHENSION: Photocopiable Activities to Improve Reading

**FOR AGES 8–9**



BLOOMSBURY

**COMPREHENSION**  
**NINJA**  
**FOR AGES 8–9**

**ANDREW JENNINGS**

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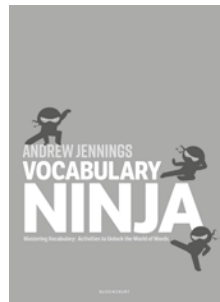
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# INTRODUCTION

*Comprehension Ninja* is designed to be a core part of your arsenal for teaching reading comprehension skills. *Comprehension Ninja* specifically focuses on the retrieval of information, using eight core comprehension skills that underpin the reading domains set out by the National Curriculum. This book contains 24 non-fiction texts that align themselves to the primary National Curriculum, the corresponding foundation subjects and subsequent topics taught within them. As the new curriculum develops, a greater focus has been placed on how pupils retain the knowledge they have learned within all lessons. *Comprehension Ninja* will allow schools to further embed reading opportunities across the curriculum while reinforcing the retention of pupil knowledge via the eight skills found below.

High-quality retrieval skills are the foundation of reading comprehension. If pupils can effectively and efficiently locate and retrieve information, then from there, inference, sequencing and explanation-type questions can be accessed. Without being able to retrieve information, none of this is possible. Many years ago, before SATs, these skills were known as comprehension skills! Now, sadly, they are known as question types. But the key principles still apply – and the eight skills below need to be taught, practised and mastered.

-  **Labelling**
-  **Matching**
-  **Fill in the gap**
-  **Multiple choice**
-  **True or false**
-  **Find and copy**
-  **123 Sequencing**
-  **Underline or highlight**

Most comprehension texts bombard pupils with a range of question types that they have not yet had time to master – meaning they quickly encounter questions they cannot answer. *Comprehension Ninja* places the emphasis on teachers to teach and model each skill, while pupils develop their understanding of each question type individually.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book contains 24 non-fiction texts for you to use in your classroom. Texts 1 to 12 have eight subsequent pages of questions built around each comprehension skill. These texts and questions have been created so that you can specifically target and teach each individual skill, and then have a plethora of questions for pupils to work on and answer. 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 opportunities to practise and master these skills before we move on. You now have in your hands 12 texts and associated questions to teach each skill – that's a minimum of 96 lessons from the first 12 texts.

Texts 13 to 24 look more like a traditional test. Each text has a corresponding set of questions. Each set of questions requires the pupil to use the comprehension skills mastered

from texts 1 to 12. 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. Don't allow pupils to flounder: if they require support, give it – teach!

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 where teachers support pupils to access texts and to master the eight 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 texts 13 through 24. Because of the versatility of this resource, it really is up to you how it is used. Plus, as pupils grow in confidence and skill level, they will relish completing these activities.

## PROGRESSION AND DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS

Normally, teachers and leadership teams love to see a polished skill development matrix that shows how each skill becomes more complex as the pupil learns and grows. The way that *Comprehension Ninja* grows in difficulty is 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. Some texts will include statutory words from the National Curriculum, plus a range of technical vocabulary related to each different subject. The length of texts that pupils are exposed to falls in line with statutory assessments at Year 2 and Year 6, growing in increments each year, thus increasing the demands on the pupil to retrieve information with accuracy and speed from larger and more complex texts.

### Approximate text length progression in the *Comprehension Ninja* series:

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

## PRE-READING AND KEY INFORMATION TO IDENTIFY IN THE TEXT

Ideally, before answering questions, we want to teach pupils to pre-read a text and identify key information in the text.

Pupils need to adopt a positive reading position, sit up straight and ready to read. Prompt children to read with their pencil, so they move it across the page underneath each line as they read it. This means that when it comes to underlining a key piece of information, their pencil is already in the correct location – it's efficient. If pupils need to look away from the text to pick up the pencil, they will need to relocate the key information and time will be lost in every instance they perform this inefficient action.



We often ask pupils to underline key information as they read, but what is this key information?

**Names** of people, places, companies, events, teams, etc.

**Dates** including days, months, years, times and periods of time from beginning to end.

**Statistics and numbers** including percentages, fractions, amounts, figures, etc.

**Unknown vocabulary** – words pupils don't understand. Identifying them may still help pupils answer a question.

**Headings, subheadings and images** help direct readers to the correct area of the text when answering a question.

As pupils read through the text with their pencils, we want to train them to underline these pieces of key information. A good guideline as to how much to underline is 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 this information, referring back to the information above.

## KEYWORDS IN THE QUESTION

Once we have read the text and underlined key information, we can begin to answer questions about it. We now need to teach pupils to spot the keyword or phrase in a question. This is a word or phrase that signposts where to look in the text to find the answer. In the example question below, the keyword or phrase is **Morse code**.

*How did soldiers effectively use **Morse code** during World War II?*

If pupils have pre-read the text effectively, Morse code should be underlined, or they may even remember where it is mentioned. Pupils would skim (see below) the text to find the paragraph in which Morse code is mentioned, then scan that section for the exact word or phrase. Once located, pupils should be trained to read the sentence that comes before and the sentence after the one that contains the keyword or phrase. Doing this will give pupils a much greater chance of answering successfully.

In the example question, 'soldiers' or 'World War II' are not the keyword or phrase as it is likely that they would be mentioned numerous times throughout the text and would not help the reader locate the answer.

This is another instance where underlining unknown vocabulary could be effective. Pupils may not understand what Morse code is. However, they can see that it is a proper noun and should underline it when pre-reading as it is a name and unknown vocabulary. They can still answer the question correctly and receive a mark by efficiently locating the information and reading around the keyword, even though they may have no understanding of what Morse code actually is.

## SKIMMING AND SCANNING

To be a good retriever of information, pupils must be able to locate information quickly. By skimming and scanning a text efficiently and methodically, pupils will have a much higher chance of locating the information they require.

It's crucial to agree a shared language amongst staff as to what skimming and scanning is. We don't want to use the phrase 'skimming and scanning' without everyone, including pupils, being very clear on what this means.

**Skimming** is a whole text process. Pupils skim across the text to locate a specific paragraph or area where the required information is likely to be. Skimming is like looking at the chapters of a DVD and choosing which one to start from. We won't necessarily find the answer when skimming, but we hope to locate the correct area of the text.

When asking pupils to skim the text to find the correct area, try asking them to remember first whether the information was in the beginning, the middle or the end of the text. Is there an image or a subheading that can help them skim the text? These strategies can help signpost pupils to the correct area of the text, thus increasing their chances of being successful in answering the question.

**Scanning** is then looking at that specific section with a greater level of scrutiny, possibly looking for a keyword or phrase. Following the film example, this is like watching a specific film chapter to locate the required information.

**Introduce skimming and scanning with images, timetables, TV schedules, poems, lists, visual instructions, hidden word pictures. Ask pupils to locate specific items, objects and information – add a time limit to increase the fun factor.**

## LABEL / DRAW AND LABEL

**Labelling** asks pupils to look at an image and label parts of the image with a word from a word bank. As the skill develops, pupils will be asked to label statements with information retrieved from across a whole text. Identifying keywords in the statement or question is essential here.

**Draw and label** requires pupils to draw an image based on the information they have read and then to label it. The quality of the drawing here isn't necessarily important, focus on the accuracy of the retrieved labels.

**Increase the difficulty of labelling by asking pupils to label more complex images without a word bank, but a short paragraph of text. Alternatively, use draw and label as part of your literacy lessons – read and share small yet detailed parts of the book you are using as part of your unit of work. For a task, ask pupils to draw what the text describes, then add labels. Share and discuss the differences in pupils' work and examples of effective labelling.**

## MATCHING

Matching is a simple skill where pupils are required to match together pieces of information that are in a jumbled state. Pupils must match the information together by drawing lines to the associated pieces of information. The activity becomes more challenging as pupils have a greater number of possible statements to match and larger texts to refer to in order to confirm the match.

**Ask pupils to identify the keyword in each statement and then locate this in the text by skimming and scanning. Matching pair games are a great way of introducing this skill to younger pupils. Older pupils might benefit from this skill as part of a starter in foundation subject lessons. They could match information associated with the topic on cut up pieces of paper, thus embedding reading skills and providing an opportunity for pupils to demonstrate foundation subject knowledge.**

## FILL IN THE GAP

Pupils are given a sentence with a missing word. Pupils will need to locate this sentence in the text and identify the missing word. This skill becomes progressively more difficult as the amount of text increases and as the pupils are given fewer options to choose from.

**Practise this skill regularly by giving pupils a page of their reading book and the same page with multiple words blanked out. Prompt pupils to spot keywords in each sentence to locate the specific sentences efficiently.**

## MULTIPLE CHOICE

These questions require pupils to choose an answer from a selection of three or 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.

**Train pupils via discussion to discount illogical answers using what they already know from the pre-read of the text. Also ensure that pupils don't answer questions using their own knowledge of the subject. Prompt pupils to 'prove it' by showing where the exact information is found in the text. This type of question could also be played in the style of a 'Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?' or 'Million Pound Drop' game, where pupils have multiple answers to choose from based on a text of your own choice.**

## TRUE OR FALSE

Pupils will be 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 keyword in the question and locate this information in the text. By reading around this information, pupils will be able to discover whether the statement is true or false.**

## 123 SEQUENCING

These questions require pupils to sequence information in the order it occurs in the text, from first to last. Younger pupils order the words in single sentences, progressing to pupils ordering information from across a whole text.

**Teach pupils to allocate each word or statement (usually no more than five) a symbol – a square, a triangle, a rectangle, a star and 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. A very effective strategy to help pupils effectively sequence information.**

## FIND AND COPY

These word-level 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. In answering these questions, pupils may need to use a small amount of inference. Pupils may be directed to a certain part of the text at the beginning of the question, e.g. *Look at the paragraph beginning 'These word-level questions...'*

*Example:* Look at the paragraph beginning 'The voyage aboard'. Find and copy a word that suggests that the animals Darwin collected had been dead for millions of years. Answer: fossil.

**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 will more often than not produce a correct answer.**

## UNDERLINE OR HIGHLIGHT

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

**Regularly discuss 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. Teach Vocabulary Ninja's Word of the Day every day and be sure to explore definitions. Give pupils increasingly difficult words and ask them to create a definition of the word without using the word itself. You can also encourage them to start the definition with 'If someone is...' or 'If something is...'**

# 1 PHARAOHS AND MUMMIES

The leaders of the ancient Egyptians were called pharaohs. Each pharaoh was believed to be half human and half god, so no one could question their right to rule. Pharaohs led the government and were the high priests of every temple. Many pharaohs, such as Tutankhamun and Cleopatra, are still remembered widely today – often because of the way they were buried. Even in death, they were given royal treatment. Their deaths were better than most Egyptians' lives!

Before being buried, pharaohs were mummified: their bodies were prepared so they wouldn't rot. This process is called 'embalming' – and it's one of the grossest things in history! Embalming was usually done by priests, in a special tent in the desert. The smell was so awful that they would have to leave the tents often so they wouldn't be sick!

Firstly, the brain would be removed. The priest used a long, thin hook, which he pushed up through the nose to scrape and tug out the brain. If you thought nose-picking was a disgusting habit, be grateful it only picks out snot! The brain was probably thrown away because the ancient Egyptians thought it was worthless – unlike other organs.

Next, the priests removed the parts of the body they thought were important. They took out the lungs, the liver, the stomach and the intestines and then washed the inside of the pharaoh's body with wine, spices and scented oils. After they dried, each of the organs was placed in a sacred jar protected by a god. The heart was also removed – but the pharaoh couldn't enter the afterlife without it. After being washed and dried, it was put back into the body.

To keep the pharaoh looking his best, the priests packed out the empty body with straw or fabric. This would help to dry the body, as well as filling it up. To dry the body completely, the priests covered it with salt and left it to dry for 40 days.

Finally, the dried body was painstakingly wrapped in strips of fine, clean linen. Hundreds of metres of linen were used, as even fingers and toes were wrapped separately. Charms were placed between the layers, to bring good luck and protection in the afterlife and then the mummy was placed into a coffin covered in gold and jewels.

The funeral procession, when the coffin was walked to its final resting place, had to be impressive. As well as the pharaoh's wealth, the gods had to be shown the Egyptian people's sorrow. To prove how loved he was, they were paid to cry!

This would be the last journey that body would make, but pharaohs' power over people didn't end when they were buried. When they were sealed into their tombs, there was one final symbol of their rule.

As well as their treasure, pets, servants and even their wives would be buried with them – often alive! Perhaps that's the grossest bit of all. What do you think?



**FILL IN THE GAP**



Read the sentences and choose the correct word to fill the gap. Look back at *Pharaohs and mummies* to find the correct answer.

Before being buried, pharaohs were \_\_\_\_\_: their bodies were prepared so they wouldn't rot.

Pharaohs led the \_\_\_\_\_ and were the high priests of every temple.

The priest used a long, thin \_\_\_\_\_, which he pushed up through the nose to scrape and tug out the brain.

Many \_\_\_\_\_, such as Tutankhamun and Cleopatra, are still remembered widely today – often because of the way they were buried.

Next, the priests removed the parts of the body they thought were \_\_\_\_\_.

They took out the lungs, the liver, the stomach and the \_\_\_\_\_ and then washed the inside of the pharaoh's body with wine, spices and scented oils.

To dry the body completely, the priests covered it with \_\_\_\_\_ and left it to dry for 40 days.

Hundreds of metres of \_\_\_\_\_ were used, as even fingers and toes were wrapped separately.

The funeral \_\_\_\_\_, when the coffin was walked to its final resting place, had to be impressive.

This would be the last \_\_\_\_\_ that body would make, but pharaohs' power over people didn't end when they were buried.

When they were sealed into their \_\_\_\_\_, there was one final symbol of their rule.

After they dried, each of the \_\_\_\_\_ was placed in a sacred jar protected by a god.

**MATCHING**



Draw a line with a ruler to match the information.

leaders of the ancient Egyptians	embalming
half human	pharaohs
mummified	in the desert
special tent	half god

Draw a line with a ruler to match the information.

brain	protected by a god
heart	worthless
empty body	put back into the body
sacred jar	straw or fabric

Draw a line with a ruler to match the information.

salt	40 days
charms	linen
fine, clean	gold and jewels
coffin	good luck and protection



**LABEL**



**Label the information with the correct items.**

Tug out the brain	
Dry and fill the body	
Wash the inside of the body	
Body painstakingly wrapped in	
Bring good luck and protection in the afterlife	
Cover the body and leave to dry	

**Label the information with the correct body part.**

Worthless	
The pharaoh can't enter the afterlife without it	
Wrapped with linen separately	
Parts of the body the priests thought were important	
Tugged out through the nose	
Put back into the body	

**Draw the statement in the boxes. Add your own labels to your drawing.**

pharaoh's coffin	Egyptian people crying during the funeral procession
the inside of a pharaoh's tomb	a mummy

**TRUE OR FALSE**



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

Cleopatra is still remembered widely today. True  False

A short, thick hook was used to remove the brain. True  False

The lungs were thought of as worthless. True  False

The heart was removed first. True  False

Before being buried, pharaohs were mummified. True  False

Salt was used to dry out the body. True  False

Bodies were left for 30 days to dry out. True  False

Pharaohs were buried in an empty tomb. True  False

Hundreds of metres of linen were used. True  False

Fingers and toes were wrapped separately. True  False

Organs were placed in a sacred jar protected by a god. True  False

Embalming was usually done by priests in a special tent. True  False

Empty bodies were filled with straw to pack them out. True  False

People were paid to cry at the funeral procession. True  False

Pharaohs were buried with their treasure. True  False



# MULTIPLE CHOICE



Circle the correct answer to the following questions.

Who carried out the embalming?

soldiers	priests	pharaohs	gods
----------	---------	----------	------

Which body part was placed in a sacred jar?

brain	heart	liver	nose
-------	-------	-------	------

What did ancient Egyptians think about the brain?

it was worthless	it brought good luck	it was important	it was sacred
------------------	----------------------	------------------	---------------

What would priests cover the pharaoh's body in to dry it out?

charms	linen	pepper	salt
--------	-------	--------	------

How many days was the pharaoh's body left to dry?

10	20	30	40
----	----	----	----

What was the pharaoh's body wrapped in?

fabric	paper	linen	papyrus
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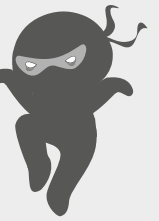
What were Egyptian people paid to do during the funeral procession?

cry	sing	dance	watch
-----	------	-------	-------

What were pharaohs buried with?

games	books	servants	food
-------	-------	----------	------

# 123 SEQUENCING



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

Charms were placed between the layers, to bring good luck and protection in the afterlife and then the mummy was placed into a coffin covered in gold and jewels.

afterlife	layers	gold	coffin

Look at *Pharaohs and mummies*. Number the statements from 1 to 5 to show the order they occur in the text.

Pharaohs led the government and were the high priests of every temple

Their deaths were better than most Egyptians' lives!

The leaders of the ancient Egyptians were called pharaohs.

Even in death, they were given royal treatment.

The smell was so awful that they would have to leave the tents often so they wouldn't be sick!

Look at *Pharaohs and mummies*. Number the statements from 1 to 5 to show the order they occur in the text. Look at the first line of each paragraph to help you.

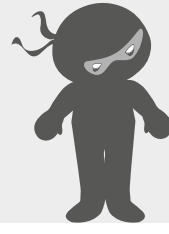
After they dried, each of the organs was placed in a sacred jar protected by a god.

Firstly, the brain would be removed.

If you thought nose-picking was a disgusting habit, be grateful it only picks out snot!

Perhaps that's the grossest bit of all.

To prove how loved he was, they were paid to cry!

 **FIND AND COPY**


Look at paragraph one. Find and copy a word that suggests that Tutankhamun and Cleopatra are still thought of widely today.

\_\_\_\_\_

Look at the paragraph beginning 'Firstly, the brain would...'. Find and copy a word that suggests that the brain was removed from a pharaoh's body.

\_\_\_\_\_

Look at the paragraph beginning 'Next, the priests removed...'. Find and copy a word that suggests that the organs were stored in sacred jars.

\_\_\_\_\_

Look at the paragraph beginning 'This would be the last...'. Find and copy a word that suggests that the pharaoh's tomb was tightly closed.

\_\_\_\_\_

 **UNDERLINE OR HIGHLIGHT**


**Read the paragraphs below and then follow the instructions.**

Next, the priests removed the parts of the body they thought were important. They took out the lungs, the liver, the stomach and the intestines and then washed the inside of the pharaoh's body with wine, spices and scented oils. After they dried, each of the organs was placed in a sacred jar protected by a god. The heart was also removed – but the pharaoh couldn't enter the afterlife without it. After being washed and dried, it was put back into the body.

To keep the pharaoh looking his best, the priests packed out the empty body with straw or fabric. This would help to dry the body, as well as filling it up. To dry the body completely, the priests covered it with salt and left it to dry for 40 days.

Underline or highlight a word that means to take something out.

Underline or highlight a word that means great significance or value.

Underline or highlight a word that means parts of the body.

Underline or highlight a word that means to fill something up.

Underline or highlight a word that means a person who performs religious ceremonies and duties.