Year Six Reading Activities

Week Beginning 25th May 2020
It finally feels like the adventure has begun. We set sail over a fortnight ago but, until now, I didn't dare assume we would get far. We were due to leave under the summer sun of September, but this blasted ship took longer than anticipated to complete. Gales and the like delayed us further and the captain was far too merry over Christmas. You can forgive me for thinking this voyage was cursed in some way.

Our first stop was at Madeira. We weren't allowed to disembark and we were soon on our way again. In Tenerife, we had received word of a cholera outbreak back home in England and were quarantined off shore. What I would have given at that point to set foot on land that didn't rock with every movement. Alas, that wasn't to be.

Bereft of anything else to do, I turned my hand to creating a net to trail behind the ship. It was easy enough work, and we soon had it in the water. The wonder of the creature that we caught, even so far out to sea, is something that I shall remember forever. It created a feeling of wonder that so much beauty should be apparently created for such little purpose.

Much to my relief, today we finally set foot on land. We landed at Praia on the island of Santiago. How I yearned for the rolling hills of Her Majesty's own land, but instead we were faced with nothing but endless volcanic rock. I've never felt such discomfort underfoot.

Nevertheless, first impressions can be deceiving. I took myself away from the crew and ventured inland to the town. What glory lay before me - tropical vegetation towering above us all and the glorious colours and sounds of a thousand creatures.

Fitzroy set out to Quail to conduct his own experiments into the islands' locations. I joined him, of course, but I am far too entranced by the overwhelming novelty of the sights and sounds to be of much use.

On the beach, I noticed the oddest thing. Squashed between the layers of black lava rock, there is a line of white, most probably created by crushed coral and shells. A similar
phenomenon occurs on the island of St Jago, only much further above sea level. At some point in time, these were probably aligned. I shall have to pass these findings on to my good friend Charles Lyell, who suggested that the Earth’s crust rises and falls like the tide. He will be most interested.

With that, I must return to my duties. FitzRoy possess one of the shortest tempers I know; he will not suffer be being late for supper.

Charles Darwin
Task One: Monday

Read the text and use your text-marking skills to get the gist of it. Remember to use a dictionary to look up the meanings of any unfamiliar vocabulary.

Answer these questions:

1. What does the word “alas” mean?
2. What happened after they arrived in Tenerife?
3. Find and write a definition for the word “bereft”
4. How do you know that this text is from a different period of time?
5. Where was the first stop for the boat?
Task Two: Tuesday

Re-read the Diary from the Beagle text

Answer these inference questions. Remember to make your point and choose some evidence from the text to support your answer

1. When they arrived in Tenerife, how was Darwin feeling? What tells you this?

2. How did Darwin feel when they landed in Praia? What tells you this?

3. What impression of Praia do you get when Darwin ventured forth onto the island?

4. What do we know about Darwin’s state of mind when he first went to Quail Island?
Text Two - Worst Jobs for Kids

Ever moaned about having to do your homework? What about cleaning your bedroom or hoovering the floor? Count yourself lucky you weren’t a child during Queen Victoria’s reign. You were lucky if you were sent to school back then; most children were sent out to work in some of the most horrific conditions you can imagine. You’ve probably heard about chimney sweeps and flower sellers, but there were much worse jobs out there if you were desperate.

Do you love rolling round in the mud? How about finding scraping through the dirt to find any coins or lost bits of jewellery? If that sounds good, then a job as a tosher might have been right up your street. It wasn’t just the mud and filth of the streets though, you spent most of your time down in the sewers rummaging around for anything that the rich folk up above might have dropped into the drains.

Tiny children have tiny hands and they were perfect for fixing fiddly little mechanisms on the enormous looms that factories used to weave fabric. The sound of shuttles flying backwards and forwards would have caused quite a din; however, they couldn’t stop working just to fix a machine. Instead, children would scuttle around underneath the vast wooden machines and try to time their movements perfectly. Quite often, they would get it wrong. The lucky ones only lost a finger. The unlucky ones? Well, I’m sure you can guess.

It wasn’t just fixing the looms that children’s dainty digits were perfect for. The rise of the steam train meant that lots of children were need to scrape out the cinders and clean the undercarriage of the engine. Not only did this involve a lot of choking dust and ash but the cinders were often still red-hot and many children suffered horrific burns.

Most houses were lit by candles back then, and so matches were needed by thousands. Dipping the sticks in the toxic phosphorus was another job saved for the cursed children. The horrible chemical would rot their teeth and often lead to fatal lung disease. Not sure it was worth it for a penny a day.

Dick Whittington said that the streets of London were paved with gold. More accurately they were often paved with filth, particularly dog droppings. Luckily for the children of the time, they could earn
money by scraping it up and selling it to the tanners - people who turned the hide of a cow into leather. If they really wanted to earn some money, they could help the tanners by stamping the poo into an odorous mix of chemicals (barefoot, of course) and using it to soak the skins. Unfortunately, many poor children didn’t have access to a bath afterwards.

So, there you have it. There were some pretty vile jobs for luckless lads and lasses in Victorian times and we haven’t even mentioned leech collectors, coal miners, rat catches, navvies (canal diggers) and grave robbers. No wonder so many children were desperate to go to school!
Read the text and use your text-marking skills to get the gist of it. Remember to use a dictionary to look up the meanings of any unfamiliar vocabulary.

Answer these questions:

1. What word tells the reader how loud a noise was?

2. What did Dick Whittington mean when he said “The streets of London were paved with gold”?

3. How do you think the author felt about Victorian children? What tells you this?

4. What ingredients did tanner use?

5. If you still had to do these jobs, do you think you would moan about school? Give your reasons.
Task Four: Thursday

Re-read the Worst Jobs for Kids text

Answer these inference questions. Remember to make your point and choose some evidence from the text to support your answer

1. What were most children lucky to do?

2. Which features of children made them perfect for many jobs?

3. What did all of the jobs have in common in terms of children's health?

4. What happened that meant more children were needed in railway stations?

5. Put the jobs in the text in order from worst to best. Give your reasons for your choices
Task Five: Friday

Choose either of the texts you have worked with this week and write a series of comprehension questions for somebody else to answer.

Remember to include the different question types we have learnt about:

- Vocabulary
- Text retrieval
- Inference
- Summary