

Comparison of 2014,2015 and 2016 KS2 Reading papers**The texts**

All have three texts, a combination of fiction and non fiction. The length of texts are broadly similar.

	Fiction	Non fiction	Total pages of reading
2014	1	2	8
2015	1	2	6
2016	2	1	7

In comparison to previous papers the main differences in the 2016 papers appear to be:

1. **Complexity of sentence types** – some sentences are extremely long with multiple clauses. In previous papers there are 3 clauses maximum in sentences and these are usually sandwiched amongst more simple sentences. In 2016, the Dodo and Wild Ride text have a number of extremely long and complex sentences with up to four or more clauses.
2. **Complexity of language** – there has always been a large amount of descriptive language in the fiction texts and technical language in the non fiction. This mirrors the expectations in writing. For example ‘vitamin C’ ‘carbohydrate’ ‘visually impaired’ in the 2015 texts. In previous papers it appears that brackets are used more frequently to explain more complex technical language. In the 2016 texts there are lots of complex synonyms used. Particularly in the wild ride and dodo text where the following words/phrases are used:
 - a. Casting spun gold threads (with reference to the sun)
 - b. Unseated
 - c. Nocturnal adventures
 - d. Defied
 - e. Sedately
 - f. Arthritic pony
 - g. Nasal squeal
 - h. Pranced skittishly
 - i. Milled around
 - j. Spindly
 - k. Reduce her limbs to bloody ribbons
 - l. Rehabilitate
 - m. Much-ridiculed
3. A number of these cannot be decoded using context.
4. **Phrases which require complex inference** - there are a number of examples where children have to make a challenging inference to understanding the meaning of a phrase used. In previous texts the inference has mainly been guided by questions, whereas in this year’s paper, some is needed to purely understand the story / text and could result in complete misunderstanding of the text if not understood. For example:
 - a. ‘hollywood movie star lashes’ (relating to Warthogs being not as nice as they look)
 - b. The animals of Mauritius offered themselves up for slaughter (referring to when humans arrived on Mauritius)
5. **Density of text** – the above factors mean that the texts are quite dense and take some time to not only decode but synthesise. The texts in 2016 were purely prose – even the non fiction. There were no subheadings or other organising features as in previous years.

The sentence below is taken from the fiction text ‘Wild Ride’ – it is given a Grade 26 by the Flesch Reading age test – which would correspond to the US Grade system. Children aged 11 are grade 5! This one sentence has 64 words. This type of sentence is repeated several times in the text and the following text ‘The Way of

Nikki Charlesworth 2016

the Dodo' is similar. The only comparable text in terms of difficulty seems to be 'White Fang' from 2014, which is an excerpt from the classic novel.

'For a long time Martine had only ever ridden Jemmy at night and in secret, but when her grandmother had found out about their nocturnal adventures she'd promptly banned them, on the grounds that the game reserve's deadly animals were all in search of dinner after dark and there was nothing they'd like more than to feast on a giraffe-riding eleven year old.'

Key actions to consider:

Children need to read a range of more challenging texts in guided reading, including more classic fiction. They need time to talk about the texts as a whole – synthesising the information.

- They need to encounter more complex sentences and have the time to discuss the structure in the context of reading, not just writing. This may include pulling apart the clauses to see how they are linked and how to read and comprehend lengthy sentences.
- Pupil's vocabulary needs to be continually developed so they understand a wider range of synonyms for everyday words.
- Pupil's need to develop a deeper understanding of more complex phrases and colloquialisms – for example being able to explain the shades of meaning in 'hollywood eye lashes' beyond the literal and what 'image' means in the sense of projecting an image.

The Questions

The below table indicates the number of marks available for each type of question.

	<u>Direct retrieval</u>		<u>Inference</u>		<u>Language understanding</u>		<u>Text structure understanding</u>	
<u>2016</u>	2	4%	28	56%	18	36%	2	4%
<u>2015</u>	10	20%	20	40%	10	20%	10	20%
<u>2014</u>	12	24%	24	48%	8	16%	6	12%

Inference has made up the majority of questions in most years. However there is a significant difference in the number of direct retrieval & text structure questions. These marks appear to have gone to more language understanding questions in 2016.

Inferences

When comparing the inference questions, the difficulty of language in the text means that evidence in the 2016 papers is more complex than in previous.

For example, in 2014 a question asked pupils about what an octopus 'eats', whereas in the text it referred to diet. Most of the inferences were of this type – inferring by locating a word or phrase within a sentence and understanding that meaning.

In 2016 the language understanding needed in order to infer is much more complex in general:

Examples:

The word sedately gives the clue that the giraffe is being ridden slowly. (Q12b)

Nikki Charlesworth 2016

Children have to understand that '*used its momentum to hook her legs round its neck*' means that the speed of the giraffes neck moving upwards allowed child to be swung up onto the back of the giraffe. They have to be able to explain this in their own words to get 1 mark.

In addition there are further complexities in terms of the inference expectations.

1. There are is an increased expectation to infer across paragraphs and the whole text. In the second text, the first set of questions (12a-d) refer across the text, whereas in the past, these would refer to the start of the text only.
2. In the final question relating to the first text (q11) the correct inference requirements combing two pieces of information from the start and end of the text.

Wording of questions

Some of the language in the questions required quite complex understanding from pupils in order to know what they had to do.

2 consecutive questions used the phrase ' what impression does this give you?' If a child does not understand the meaning of the word impression – they could have lost 4 marks.

The use of the word 'image' to describe the way something is perceived is used twice in questions to. Again, if pupils' were to take this literally as an 'image' (picture) , another 2 marks would be lost.

In the past phrases like 'what does the word show you...' are more frequently used.

Organisation of questions

In the 2014/2015 papers the order of questions seems to follow a similar sequence, restarting for each new text:

1. Direct retrieval (generally easier)
2. Inference / Language questions (in order of the content in the text)
3. Text features
4. Whole text questions (either to do with organisation or content).

In each paper there is only 1 three mark question which requires children to refer in detail to the text to back up their responses. This is at the end of both paper.

In the 2016 paper there appears to be no ordering of questions and no 'easy' start to each new text.

The questions also seem to jump around in the text, for example a question about the whole text is on page one of the paper, which then goes back to the start on the next page of questions.

The paper has 2 consecutive three mark questions which are the middle of the paper and refer to the most challenging of the three texts. This likely caused children to really slow down, hence why many did not complete the paper.

Key actions to consider

Questioning used in guided reading/shared reading needs to be more focused on language comprehension and inference. A number of children were unable to access some of the more complex question types, so need more experience of this.

Nikki Charlesworth 2016

1. The language of questions needs to be shared with the children, such as understanding what is meant by the word 'impression' . Using a range of synonyms when asking questions during guided reading would support this.
2. Ensure that children can refer to evidence from across a text, including making links between the start and end.
3. Improving skim/scan skills so that children can locate the relevant sections when the questions are not in text order. Practise answering questions about texts which do not follow the order will help.
4. Focus teaching on the skills of inference. Ensure children are confident in inference strategies.
5. Develop wide bases of language from a young age so that children are aware of the complex meanings of different words and can make language based inferences.
6. Develop ability to explain the meaning of words in the context of a text – including some challenging examples.
7. Children need to work on detailed answer questions at pace to enable them to move on.

Comparison to old Level 6

- The organisation and language in the questions from the level 6 paper seems to be quite similar to that seen in the 2016 paper , although there are more detailed answer (3 mark questions).
- Some of the question types have been almost exactly replicated, for example an inference question where children have to identify which picture is being referred to.
- There is a significantly higher level of vocabulary in the questions in the level 6 paper than the level 3-5. The 2016 paper seems to fit somewhere in between.
- The texts have a similar density in the level 6 to the 2016 paper although the level 6 are slightly longer. Like the 2016, they are not split up using other text features such as tables, charts.
- The 'Treasure Island' text, in the level 6 paper is more challenging than those in the 2016, although the level of descriptive language and hidden meaning is quite similar. Both texts are not 'easy' to understand what is happening and require significant language comprehension skills.
- Overall the length of the texts and depth of detail required in answers make the level 6 more challenging, but in many respects the 2016 is similar to it, particularly the emphasis on complex language comprehension in both the texts and questions.