

***Zlata's Diary* – written comprehension questions**

During classwork on different diary writing, **T** completed some written comprehension questions based on *Zlata's Diary* in which the young author (Zlata Filipovic), recounts her daily life in war-torn Sarajevo in the early 1990s.

Q1. How does Zlata feel about the war? What words tell you this?

T's response:

Zlata wishes it would stop, and that her mommy and daddy were happy again. It says they used to be cheerful. It also says that life is disappearing because the children are not like children.

Q2. What is the popular term for politicians and why do you think they are called this?

T's response:

The popular term is kids because they can never agree with each other like children do. They never agree so the war goes on.

Q3. Does Zlata feel really safe in her flat? How do you know?

T's response:

She feels safe when she's in the corner of a room but she says that she does not like to go near the windows maybe this is because of guns and for safety. People are shooting from the hills. If there is shooting they have to go to the cellar, it is the only place.

Q4. What words tell you that Zlata is optimistic that the war will end and things will go back to normal?

T's response:

She says that the guns are dieing down so that means that it must be getting calmer if there is less shooting. She also says that when it all stops they might go back to the usual things.

This group of comprehension questions mainly requires the selection of information from different parts of the text and T shows that he can do this without difficulty. He gives relevant answers, in clear, summary form. While not directly quoting from the text, his responses indicate sound understanding of its key themes. Where the task presents opportunities for exploring other aspects of reading, T shows some inferential abilities also.

Evidence from guided reading sessions

The teacher used several guided reading sessions to make brief notes of what T said. The group read and discussed an information text: *How things happen in the Natural World: Icebergs*, compared persuasive advertisements about dog food, and explored the ways characters were portrayed in 2 novels by Roald Dahl, *The Magic Finger* and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. In each session, the teacher guided the discussion to elicit evidence of one or two relevant AFs.

How things happen in the Natural World: Icebergs

Teacher: How does the writer present information about icebergs in ways that help the reader?

T's comments:

"I think the information about icebergs is really interesting. It was split into short bits with headings which made it fun to read and easy to find things. I will use these ideas in my book. I liked the way the animals were put on the map. The instructions to make icebergs were set out very clearly – step by step and in a list and numbers to show what to do."

Let Me Persuade You...

Teacher: Which of the adverts is more successful?

T's comments:

"When you look at the Full of Beans advert, it makes you think the dog food is good for you. The Best Friend advert kind of makes you think that the dog will be your best friend, but food won't do that. Bit it is still better laid out to read and attracts your attention. The Full of Beans advert is not so interesting".

The Magic Finger

Teacher: How do you think Mr and Mrs Greggs were feeling at this point in the story?

T's comments:

"Mrs Greggs would be really frightened but she would try to be calm because you can tell that Mr. Gregg is not one bit calm because of the way he keeps acting. Mr. Gregg has to save her children, not like Mr Gregg, you can tell he's shaking because he's got exclamation marks."

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

Teacher: How does Roald Dahl describe Willy Wonka?

T's comments:

"In the story, you can tell what Willy Wonka is wearing because it tells you in lots of detail. Roald Dahl uses the word marvellously when he is talking about his eyes and the way he looks. Mind you, he does seem a bit strange – not many people dress like him"

In the course of these 4 guided reading session, T shows a number of strengths. The context of rapid oral discussion perhaps works against quotation of the actual words of the text, but T's comments clearly link to the substance of what he is reading, and show some engagement with the writer's purpose and use of language. However, the evidence for attainment in close reading of texts is a little patchy.