

YEAR 6 - Comprehension

Fiction, Non-Fiction and Poetry Texts in Themes

Introduction

Year 6 Comprehension is a collection of fiction, non-fiction and poetry texts grouped in themes suitable for the age group. These exercises can be used to prepare children for SAT style tests or matched to themes the class may be studying at the time. The question pages are split into three sections. Section A gives an overview of the text with missing words or phrases to find, Section B contains open-ended questions and Section C is a relevant written challenge for more able pupils or those who work quickly. All the pages have been printed 'Landscape' to make maximum use of the space on Interactive Whiteboards. Black and white images are used in the paper book; full colour images have been used in the e.book and download.

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THE CIRCUS



The story is set in Victorian Times. The Gradgrind children have been brought up very strictly. Their father believes they should spend their time learning facts. He believes there is no time to waste enjoying life or having fun. One day the children decide to make a secret visit to the circus. Unfortunately, their father catches them watching the circus acts. This is how the story continues...

Dumb with amazement, Mr Gradgrind crossed to the spot where his family was thus disgraced, laid his hand upon each erring child, and said:

"Louisa! Thomas!"

Both rose, red and disconcerted. But, Louisa looked at her father with more boldness than Thomas did. Indeed, Thomas did not look at him, but gave himself up to be taken home like a machine.

"In the name of wonder, idleness and folly!" said Mr Gradgrind, leading each away by a hand; "what do you do here?"

"Wanted to see what it was like," returned Louisa shortly.

"What it was like?"

"Yes father."

"Thomas, though I have the fact before me, I find it difficult to believe that you, with your education and resources, should have brought your sister to a scene like this."

"I brought him, father," said Louisa, quickly. "I asked him to come."

"I am sorry to hear it. I am very sorry indeed to hear it. It makes Thomas no better, and it makes you worse, Louisa."

She looked at her father again, but no tear fell down her cheek.

"You Thomas and you, to whom the circle of the sciences is open, Thomas and you, who may be said to be replete with facts; Thomas and you, who have been trained to mathematical exactness;

Thomas and you here!" cried Mr. Gradgrind. "In this degraded position! I am amazed."

The children return home in disgrace, and are met by their father's friend Mr. Bounderby, an equally strict Victorian gentleman.

"Well!" blustered Mr Bounderby, "what's the matter? What is young Thomas in the dumps about?"

He spoke of young Thomas, but he looked at Louisa.

"We were peeping at the circus," muttered Louisa haughtily, without lifting up her eyes, "and father caught us."

"And Mrs Gradgrind," said her husband in a lofty manner, "I should as soon have expected to find my children reading poetry."

"Dear me," whimpered Mrs Gradgrind. "How can you, Louisa and Thomas! I wonder at you. I declare you're enough to make one regret ever having had a family at all. I have a great mind to say I wish I hadn't. Then what would you have done, I should like to know."

Mr Gradgrind did not seem favourably impressed by these cogent remarks. He frowned impatiently. "As if, with my head in its present throbbing state, you couldn't go and look at the shells and minerals and things provided for you, instead of circuses!" said Mrs Gradgrind.



Section A

Choose the best word or group of words to fit the passage and put a ring around your choice.

The Gradgrind children, Louisa and Thomas, are caught watching the circus without permission. Father asked, “What do you do

1 **next?”** **now?”** **here?”** **then?”**

“Wanted to see what it was like,” returned

2 **Thomas.** **Louisa.** **Mrs Gradgrind.** **Mr Bounderby.**

Father said he found it difficult to believe that

3 **Thomas** **Louisa** **Mrs Gradgrind** **Mr Bounderby**

had brought

4 **Thomas** **Louisa** **Mrs Gradgrind** **Mr Bounderby**

to a scene like this . “Thomas and you here!” cried Mr Gradgrind. “In this

5 **difficult** **uncomfortable** **unnecessary** **degraded**

position! I am amazed.”

On their way home they met

6 **a clown** **Mr Gradgrind** **a policeman** **Mr Bounderby**

an equally strict Victorian gentleman. “What’s the matter?” he said.

Section B

- 1 What does Mr Gradgrind believe his children should be doing?
- 2 Why do you think the children decided to make a secret visit to the circus?
- 3 What does the phrase ‘red and disconcerted’ imply?
- 4 What did Mr Gradgrind think that Thomas had done?
- 5 What reasons did Mr Gradgrind give for being ‘amazed’ at finding Thomas at the circus?
- 6 How did the children know Mr Bounderby?
- 7 “We were peeping at the circus,” muttered Louisa haughtily, without lifting her eyes, “and father caught us.” What does this sentence suggest about how Louisa was feeling?
- 8 Who regretted ‘ever having a family at all’?
- 9 What did Mrs Gradgrind think the children should have been doing instead of looking at circuses?

Section C

Imagine a circus has come to your town. Write a short story in which you are caught making a secret visit to the show.



Harriet's bedroom would be very simple, containing a wooden bed, straight-back wooden chair, dresser and basic washstand. She could expect to be paid ten pounds seven shillings a year.

Harriet Lister – Housemaid

My name is Harriet Lister and I am 19 years old, I work as a housemaid in a large house in London. My day begins at 6am when I make a cup of tea for Mrs Sawyer who is the Housekeeper. After the mistress, Mrs Sawyer is the most important person in the house so it's very important to keep on the right side of her unless you like being in trouble!

My first job of the day is to light the fires in the downstairs rooms, it's a dirty job and I'm always glad to wash my hands before taking hot water up to the family bedrooms for them to start getting ready for their day.

While they are busy we make a start on the laundry by putting the clothes to soak. There are six people in the family here and it's amazing how many outfits they wear each day.

While the family are at breakfast, I make the beds and clean the bedrooms before moving downstairs to dust, polish the brasses and sweep the floors. This has to be done before visitors start arriving.

Once the house is clean, it is then time to go and continue with the laundry. We are up to our elbows in soap suds as we scrub the clothes until they are clean and then we rinse and rinse and rinse again before wringing the water out of them and hanging them out to dry. My hands are often very sore, especially in winter.

During the day, I have to carry scuttles full of coal around the house to make sure the fires don't go out, it's heavy work. As soon the washing is dry we start on the ironing.

We never stop working from the moment we get up to the moment we drop into bed about half past ten at night. Still, I am very lucky because once a month I get to go home and see my mother and father for half a day and Mrs Sawyer sometimes lets me take some cakes and biscuits for them.

List of Rules Given to Harriet on her First Day

1. When spoken to, stand straight, keep your hands still and always look at the person speaking to you.
2. Never let your voice be heard by the ladies and gentlemen of the household unless they have spoken to you.
3. Never address the ladies and gentlemen unless you are delivering a message.
4. When you receive an order, always use the proper address, 'Sir', 'Ma'am' or 'Miss'.
5. Never offer your opinion to your employer.
6. Always give room when you encounter your betters in the house, that is to say make yourself as invisible as possible and avert your eyes.
7. If you are required to walk with a lady or gentleman in order to carry packages, always walk a few paces behind.
8. You may not receive any relative, visitor or friend into the house.
9. You may not receive any relative, visitor or friend into the Servant's Hall without the consent of the Housekeeper.
10. Any breakages or damages will be deducted from your wages.

Harriet Lister – Housemaid

Section A

Choose the best word or group of words to fit the passage and put a ring around your choice.

My name is Harriet Lister and I work as a housemaid. My day begins at

1 **5 am** **6am** **7am** **8am**

when I make a cup of tea for

2 **Harriet.** **the mistress.** **Mrs Sawyer.** **Lister.**

My first job of the day is to

3 **put on the light.** **make the tea.** **heat the water.** **light the fires.**

Next I take

4 **breakfast** **hot water** **clean clothes** **polished shoes**

up to the family bedrooms for them to start getting ready. During the day I have to carry

5 **wet washing** **ironing** **a sweeping brush** **scuttles full of coal**

around the house to make sure the fires do not go out. We drop into bed about

6 **half past nine** **ten o'clock** **half past ten** **eleven o'clock**

at night. I am lucky because once a month I get to go home and see my mother and father for half a day.

Section B

1 Who is the most important person in the house?

2 Why is it important to keep on the right side of Mrs Sawyer?

3 Why do you think the first job of the day is to light the fires?

4 Why is there so much laundry to do in this house?

5 'My hands are often very sore, especially in winter.' Why do you think this is the case?

6 What do you understand by the term 'scuttle full of coal'?

7 Give two reasons why Harriet thinks she is very lucky?

8 What does the rule 'Never address the ladies and gentlemen unless you are delivering a message,' mean?

9 Rule 7 states 'If you are required to walk with a lady or gentleman in order to carry packages, always walk a few paces behind.' Why do you think this rule was written?

Section C

Imagine you are a maid or servant in a large Victorian house. Write a timetable for your long day fitting in as many different jobs as you can.