**15. READING COMPREHENSION**

**What is the meaning of reading comprehension?**

Reading comprehension is **the ability to read text, process it and understand its meaning**. It relies on two, interconnected abilities: word reading (being able to decode the symbols on the page) and language comprehension (being able to understand the meaning of the words and sentences).

**The Different Levels of Comprehension**

Reading Comprehension is the ability to read the text easily and efficiently for meaning. It is the last step of the reading process taught to children after they have learned phonics, fluency, and vocabulary. **Five levels of reading comprehension can be taught to children.**

1. **Lexical Comprehension**
2. **Literal Comprehension**
3. **Interpretive Comprehension**
4. **Applied Comprehension**
5. **Affective Comprehension**

To really understand these different levels, let us take a familiar text and see how different types of questions probe different understandings of the same story. The fairy tale Cinderella tells the story of a young girl, whose evil stepmother will not let her go to the ball. Cinderella’s fairy godmother, however, magically whisks her off for the night and Cinderella eventually marries her Prince Charming.

**1. LEXICAL COMPREHENSION**  
**Characteristics:**

* It deals with the understanding of the words in a text.
* The reader must be equipped with the knowledge of unlocking the meaning of the terms in a text.

**Questions that start with the following are usually lexical:**

* *What does ‘enchanted’ mean?*
* What words are most like ‘enchanted’: Magical or funny? Scary or special?

**2. LITERAL COMPREHENSION**  
**Characteristics:**

* Identify the main ideas of the paragraph.
* Recall details to support the main idea.
* Organize the sequence of main events that occurred.**​**

**Example Questions**

* *Who was the girl who lost the glass slipper?*
* *Where did Cinderella go to live at the end of the story?*
* What happened…?
* How many…?
* How did…?
* Who…?
* What is/are…?
* Which…?

**3. INTERPRETIVE COMPREHENSION  
Characteristics:**

* Reading between the lines.
* Predict endings and anticipate consequences.
* State reasons for events.
* Make generalisations.
* Understand the facts that are explicitly stated in the text.

**Example Questions**

* How did the pumpkin turn into a carriage?
* What would have happened to Cinderella if she hasn’t lost her slippers?
* Why did…?
* What was…?
* What do you think about…?
* Can you explain…?
* How was this similar to…?

**4. APPLIED COMPREHENSION**  
**Characteristics:**

* Reading beyond the lines.
* Reader links between the text and his own experience and knowledge to develop an answer.
* A reader asks open-ended questions to promote deeper understanding.
* Readers support their answer with a logical reason.
* Readers do the following:  
  1. Make generalisations.  
  2. Make comparisons.  
  3. Make judgments.  
  4. Make recommendations and suggestions.  
  5. Make decisions.  
  6. Create alternative endings.

**Example Questions**

* Do you think Cinderella was wrong for going to the ball when her stepmother said she could not go?
* How would you…?
* Do you agree…?
* What would have happened if…?
* How might…?
* What effect does…?
* If you were… what would you…?

**5. AFFECTIVE COMPREHENSION**  
**Characteristics:**

* Previews social scripts to ensure understanding of plot development.
* Connects motive to plot and character development.

**Example Questions**

* What do you do when you’re disappointed because you cannot do anything fun? Is that how Cinderella reacted.
* Do you think what … has done is appropriate?