

**FICTION & POETRY**



**ANDREW JENNINGS  
WITH ADAM BUSHNELL**



# COMPREHENSION NINJA

MASTERING COMPREHENSION: Photocopiable Activities to Improve Reading

**FOR AGES 8–9**



BLOOMSBURY

**COMPREHENSION**  
**NINJA**

**FOR AGES 8–9:  
FICTION & POETRY**

**ANDREW JENNINGS  
WITH ADAM BUSHNELL**

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# CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION

5

## PART 1

8

- |  |                             |     |
|--|-----------------------------|-----|
| 1. An extract from <i>Coming to England</i> by Floella Benjamin  | Fiction: Extract            | 8   |
| 2. <i>Another World</i> by Adam Bushnell   | Fiction: Sci-fi             | 18  |
| 3. <i>Fright at the Museum</i> by Adam Bushnell  | Fiction: Contemporary       | 28  |
| 4. <i>Legends of the Colosseum</i> by Adam Bushnell  | Fiction: Historical         | 38  |
| 5. <i>S.O.S... Rescue</i> by Adam Bushnell   | Fiction: Adventure          | 48  |
| 6. <i>The Rabbit in the Moon</i> by Adam Bushnell  | Fiction: Traditional tale   | 58  |
| 7. <i>Loch Ness Monster Spotted</i> by Chris Hole  | Fictional newspaper article | 68  |
| 8. <i>Animals in the Rainforest</i> by Andrew Jennings<br>in collaboration with Mollie and Summer, Year 6 pupils | Fiction: Adventure          | 78  |
| 9. <i>Larks with Sharks</i> by David Orme  | Poetry                      | 88  |
| 10. An extract from <i>Space Detectives</i> by Mark Powers   | Fiction: Extract            | 98  |
| 11. An extract from <i>I Swapped My Brother On The Internet!</i><br>by Jo Simmons                                | Fiction: Extract            | 108 |
| 12. <i>Maggie and the Dinosaur</i> by Dave Ward  | Poetry                      | 118 |

## PART 2

128

- |  |                           |     |
|--|---------------------------|-----|
| 13. An extract from <i>Finding Fizz</i> by Jenny Alexander     | Fiction: Extract          | 128 |
| 14. <i>A Dangerous Crossing</i> by Adam Bushnell               | Fiction: Dilemma          | 132 |
| 15. <i>In Real Life</i> by Adam Bushnell                       | Fiction: Mystery          | 136 |
| 16. <i>Jack and the Beanstalk</i> by Adam Bushnell             | Fiction: Traditional tale | 140 |
| 17. <i>The Wandering Samurai</i> by Adam Bushnell              | Fiction: Dialogue         | 144 |
| 18. <i>The Witch and the Girl</i> by Adam Bushnell             | Fiction: Fantasy          | 148 |
| 19. <i>How the Leaves Came Down</i> by Susan Coolidge          | Poetry                    | 152 |
| 20. An extract from <i>Twelve Wild Geese</i> by Kieran Fanning | Fiction: Extract          | 156 |
| 21. An extract from <i>The Secret Lake</i> by Karen Inglis     | Fiction: Extract          | 160 |
| 22. An extract from <i>Dragonchasers</i> by Jonas Lane         | Fiction: Extract          | 164 |
| 23. <i>Night Train to Transylvania</i> by Brian Moses          | Poetry                    | 168 |
| 24. An extract from <i>Lottie's Run</i> by David Waugh         | Fiction: Extract          | 172 |

## ANSWERS

176

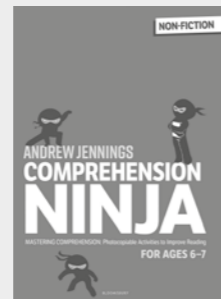
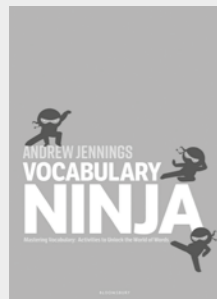
## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

184



# OTHER NINJA RESOURCES

## FOR TEACHERS



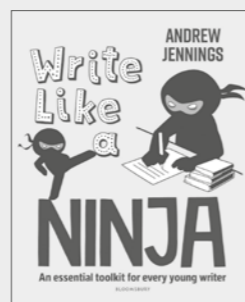
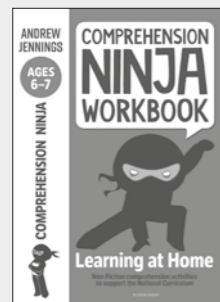
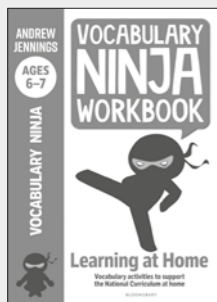
### VOCABULARY NINJA

A practical guide containing strategies and photocopiable activities to help transform pupils into vocabulary ninjas. Featuring theory and teaching approaches, as well as key topic vocabulary, etymology and phrases, this book will bring the primary curriculum to life.

### COMPREHENSION NINJA NON-FICTION

A set of six books for ages 5–11 that provide strategies and photocopiable resources to teach comprehension. Each book presents 24 high-quality non-fiction texts and photocopiable activities with strong links to the National Curriculum.

## FOR CHILDREN



### NINJA WORKBOOKS

Vocabulary and comprehension workbooks to support learning at home. Each workbook contains bespoke non-fiction texts and hundreds of questions that are linked to the National Curriculum. Perfect for developing literacy skills and boosting children's confidence in literacy and reading comprehension.

### WRITE LIKE A NINJA

A pocket-sized book full of all the grammar, vocabulary and sentence structures that children need in order to improve and develop their writing skills. Fully aligned to the Key Stage 2 National Curriculum, this book is designed to be used independently by pupils both in the classroom and at home.

## FURTHER RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLS, TEACHERS AND CHILDREN ONLINE

Head to [www.vocabularyninja.co.uk](http://www.vocabularyninja.co.uk) and follow @VocabularyNinja on Twitter for more teaching and learning resources to support the teaching of vocabulary, reading, writing and the wider primary school curriculum.



# INTRODUCTION

## THE COMPREHENSION NINJA: FICTION & POETRY SERIES

The Comprehension Ninja: Fiction & Poetry series has been designed to be an essential resource for teaching reading comprehension skills and building pupil confidence. The books focus on information retrieval, using core comprehension skills that underpin the reading domains set out by the National Curriculum.

Each of the six books in the series contains 24 awesome fiction and poetry texts, followed by comprehension activities. The texts have been curated to feature a range of authors, genres and text types from the world of children's literature and poetry.

Quite often, comprehension activities can bombard pupils with a range of question types that they have not yet had time to master – meaning they quickly encounter questions that they find extremely challenging. This series places the emphasis on teachers being able to teach and model each skill, while pupils develop their understanding of each question type individually.

### PROGRESSION AND DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS

The books in the Comprehension Ninja: Fiction & Poetry series grow in difficulty via the complexity and length of the texts. The vocabulary in the book for ages 7–8 is more challenging than the vocabulary in the book for ages 5–6, for example. The length of the reading texts falls in line with statutory assessments at Year 2 and Year 6, growing in increments each year, thus increasing the demands on pupils to accurately retrieve information from larger and more complex texts.

#### Approximate text length\* in the Comprehension Ninja: Fiction & Poetry series:

<b>Ages 5-6:</b>	100-150 words
<b>Ages 6-7:</b>	200-250 words
<b>Ages 7-8:</b>	300-450 words
<b>Ages 8-9:</b>	500-600 words
<b>Ages 9-10:</b>	650-700 words
<b>Ages 10-11:</b>	700-800 words

\*Within each age range, the poetry texts can vary from the word count ranges shown above. In these instances, the reduced word count is complemented by more complex vocabulary and sentence structures.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book contains 24 fiction and poetry texts for you to use in your classroom. Part 1 includes 12 texts that have eight subsequent pages of questions built around different comprehension skills. These texts and questions have been developed so that you can specifically target and teach each individual skill, and then have a plethora

of questions for pupils to work on. In maths, you wouldn't jump from division one day into 3D shapes the next. The same must apply to reading – we should teach each skill and give pupils the opportunity to practise and master the skills before we move on. You now have in your hands 12 texts with associated questions to teach each skill – that's a minimum of 96 lessons from Part 1 of the book.

Part 2 includes texts 13 to 24 and these look more like traditional tests. Each text has a corresponding set of questions. Each set of questions requires pupils to use the comprehension skills mastered in Part 1. You could choose to use these texts formatively across the year to inform which skills require further attention, but here lies a fantastic opportunity for pupils to apply their new skills to each question type independently and with confidence.

It is important to note that this resource hasn't been designed to be a testing tool but rather a teaching and learning tool. A tool whereby teachers support pupils to access texts and to master core comprehension skills. However, because of the nature of testing in schools, it is important that children see and experience test-type texts and questions – as they will from Part 2.

This is a versatile resource: it's up to you how it is used. As pupils grow in confidence and skill level, they will relish completing these activities.

### PRE-READING AND KEY INFORMATION TO IDENTIFY IN THE TEXT

Before they answer questions, teach pupils to pre-read a text and identify key information using a pencil or a highlighter.

Here are some examples of the key information pupils could be encouraged to look out for when they read fiction or poetry.

**Who or which?** Characters, people, animals, events, and so on.

**When?** Time periods, including times of the day, days, months, years, and so on.

**Where?** Locations or changes in location.

**What or how?** Actions that characters perform, linked to verb phrases.

**Vocabulary:** Key vocabulary that is relevant to understanding and words that pupils are unfamiliar with.

**Dialogue:** Conversations between characters.

We want to train pupils to underline or highlight pieces of key information as they read through the text. A good guideline is to underline or highlight three-to-six pieces per paragraph. Key information should be single words, or small groups of words, not full sentences. Model this skill to pupils and discuss why you have underlined certain information. As well as physically marking the text, model your thought processes too, showing pupils how you make mental notes about locations, characters, actions, and so on.

## KEYWORDS IN THE QUESTION

Once pupils have read the text and underlined key information, they can begin to answer questions about it. We now need to teach pupils to spot keywords or key phrases in a question. These are words or phrases that signpost where to look in the text to find the answer. Take a look at this question:

*Why was the dinosaur near to tears?*

Pupils should be taught to underline 'near to tears'. They would then need to skim through the text to find the section where the phrase 'near to tears' can be found, then scan that section to find the exact phrase. After this, pupils should be taught to read the sentences or lines before and after the one that contains the key phrase. This will help them find the answer. Pupils might understand that the word 'dinosaur' is not necessarily a helpful keyword, as it is likely to be repeated many times in the text.

Pupils might not understand what the keywords in the question mean. However, they can still answer the question by finding the keyword or key phrase and reading around it.

## THE QUESTION TYPES

### FILL IN THE GAP

Pupils are given sentences with missing words. They will need to locate the sentences in the text and identify the missing words. Refer pupils back to their pre-reading and marking of the text, which should increase their retrieval speed.

**Practise this skill by giving pupils a page of their reading book and the same page with multiple words blanked out. Can they fill in the blanks? Prompt pupils to spot keywords in the rest of the sentence in order to locate the full sentences in the original text.**

### FIVE Ws AND HOW

These are classic reading comprehension question stems: what, where, who, which, when and how. All of these require pupils to retrieve information from the text to demonstrate their understanding.

**Constantly refer back to the pre-reading process and model this skill to pupils, demonstrating how, as a reader, you are constantly identifying the five Ws as you read. Say your thoughts as you read the text aloud, demonstrating how you make mental notes of the question words as you read. Model to pupils how you can begin to predict what the questions are likely to be.**

### MULTIPLE CHOICE

These questions require pupils to choose an answer from a selection of four possible answers. Prompt pupils to locate the required information by spotting keywords in the question and locating them in the text, then reading around this information to find the correct answer.

**Teach pupils to discount illogical answers using what they already know from their pre-read of the text. Also ensure that pupils don't answer questions using their own prior knowledge. Prompt pupils to 'prove it' by finding the exact information in the text.**

### TRUE OR FALSE

Pupils are given a statement and asked if it is true or false. Younger year groups will begin to learn this skill by answering yes or no, before progressing to true or false.

**Ensure pupils are not guessing. Train pupils to spot the keywords in the questions and locate this information in the text. By reading around this information and pre-marking the text, pupils will be able to discover whether the statements are true or false.**

### SUMMARISE

Summary questions require pupils to understand the main idea or main piece of action in a section of text. For some questions, pupils will have to select the correct summary statement from multiple options, while for other questions they will need to write a short summary.

**Refer to the concept of summarising as 'What is the main idea of this section of text?'. Try to find opportunities for pupils to summarise information during reading sessions and in other subjects such as history or science.**

### DRAW AND LABEL

**Draw and label** requires pupils to draw an image based on the information they have read and then to add their own labels.

**Increase the difficulty of labelling by asking pupils to label more complex images. Alternatively, use draw and label as part of your literacy lessons.**

### 123 SEQUENCING

These questions require pupils to sequence information in the order it occurs in the text, from first to last.

**Teach pupils to allocate each word or statement (usually no more than five) a symbol – for example, a square, a triangle, a rectangle, a star or a cross. Pupils should then find these statements in the text and mark the corresponding symbol on the text. Once pupils have done this, it is easy to look at the text and see which symbol comes first, second, third and so on. This is a very effective strategy to help pupils sequence information.**

### FIND AND COPY

These questions require pupils to identify a word when provided with a contextual description rather than a contextless definition. Pupils will need to use keywords to locate the correct area of the text and then find and copy the correct word. For older pupils, questions may direct pupils to a certain part of the text at the beginning of the question, for example, *Look at the verse beginning 'Maggie just froze...'*

**This skill is much more challenging than its name suggests. Teach pupils to follow the instructional part of the question to locate the correct area of the text efficiently. Although counterintuitive, teaching pupils to apply a 'best guess' approach if they are struggling to find the correct word is still a worthwhile strategy and more often than not will produce a correct answer.**

### CIRCLE A WORD

This skill requires pupils to locate words based on an explicit definition of the word. Pupils may be required to circle words from a single sentence or from a paragraph of the text.

**Regularly discuss definitions via Vocabulary Ninja's Word of the Day. Ensure that you explore definitions, play matching games where pupils match words and definitions, and apply the 'best guess' strategy where pupils answer with their own logic without necessarily knowing the answer for certain.**

## READING AND EXPLOITING FICTION AND POETRY TEXTS WITH YOUR PUPILS

The Comprehension Ninja: Fiction & Poetry series offers so much more than information retrieval. The series offers an unrivalled and unique collection of texts and poetry from a range of poets and authors.

So, how else could you use this treasure trove of texts in your classroom or school?

- Use the high-quality texts to develop lessons focusing on other reading domains such as inference, prediction, comparison and explanation.
- Use the texts and question sets to complement your writing units based on the same text. If children have done lots of comprehension activities related to a text, they will have a better overall understanding of the characters, settings and events depicted in the text.
- Use the extracts as ways to hook children into reading new books and genres. If you're using a text that is an extract from a book, have a physical copy of the book available to give to children once they are hooked.
- Rather than reading a whole book, develop writing units based on the short extracts of books or poems so that children gain a greater understanding of a far smaller extract. This is great for interventions or time-sensitive writing opportunities.



# COMING TO ENGLAND

FLOELLA BENJAMIN

FICTION: EXTRACT

There were usually two kinds of weather on our tropical island, which was not far from the Equator: hot or rainy. When it was hot, from October to June, it was very hot. In the mornings we would wake to brilliant blue cloudless skies with a bright yellow sun beating down on us. The only relief was the occasional cool breeze that drifted in from the sea. You couldn't move fast in the heat, so everything was done at a slow pace. You could feel the heat coming through the soles of your feet as you walked along. People would often stop and stand idly on street corners chatting while they wiped away the sweat.

The ground was dry and dusty and the tarmac roads sometimes used to melt. The smell of the tar was overpowering as the traffic drove over the black, gooey mixture leaving their tyre marks in it. By midday the heat haze shimmered high off the hot ground, the sun baking everything in sight, forcing people to look for some shade away from the furnace-like heat. Mercifully at round about five o'clock it began to grow cooler. Then a sudden darkness would fall as the sun dropped out of sight below the horizon where it would slumber until the next morning. The darkness came so quickly after the light, it was like someone turning off a switch. But you could always be certain the sun would rise gloriously again and again during the hot season.

I loved the sun because the heat warmed my inner soul and gave me a free, happy, relaxed feeling. I also got a good feeling when it rained – and when it rained, it really rained. The heavens would open and torrents of rain would lash down. We would dance and splash in the warm, tropical scented water. It didn't matter if we got wet because, after the downpour, the water would evaporate in no time, drying our clothes in an instant.

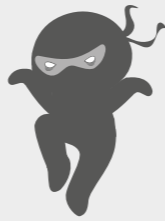
It rained most heavily in the mountainous, tropical rainforest area where the land crabs, toucans, exotic parrots, huge toads and snakes lived, and where fragrant lilies, orchids and other vibrantly coloured flowers grew. Here the trees were immensely tall, exceptionally green and lush with thick vines entwining themselves around the trunks. The sun rarely got through to the dense undergrowth but the rain did.

Some of my cousins lived up there and near their house was a waterfall. We carefully used to make our way to it from their back yard, across the boulders and stones, pushing aside the branches and vines which hung down. We could hear the rushing water tumbling over the rocks and would shriek with delight as we stood under the cool water which felt like silk on our skin.

One day I remember experiencing weather like I had never seen before. One minute there was brilliant sunshine, the next a great darkness enveloped the island. At the same time the ground trembled, causing cracks to appear under my feet. A water pipe erupted, flooding the main street. I really thought the world was going to end and I screamed for my mother in terror. She told me it was freak weather, an eclipse and a slight earthquake happening, amazingly, at the same time. She held me tight and told me that it wouldn't last long. I was only seven years old and I didn't fully understand at the time what was happening. All I knew was that my little world looked and felt different. Then an almighty downpour of rain started to fall and for once I didn't dance in it.



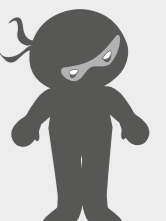
**FILL IN THE GAP**



Read the sentences and choose the correct word to fill in each gap.

- 1 There were usually two kinds of \_\_\_\_\_ on our tropical island, which was not far from the Equator: hot or rainy.
- 2 The only relief was the occasional cool \_\_\_\_\_ that drifted in from the sea.
- 3 People would often stop and stand idly on street corners \_\_\_\_\_ while they wiped away the sweat.
- 4 The smell of the tar was \_\_\_\_\_ as the traffic drove over the black, gooey mixture leaving their tyre marks in it.
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_ at round about five o'clock it began to grow cooler.
- 6 Then a sudden darkness would fall as the sun dropped out of sight below the \_\_\_\_\_ where it would slumber until the next morning.
- 7 It rained most heavily in the \_\_\_\_\_, tropical rainforest area where the land crabs, toucans, exotic parrots, huge toads and snakes lived, and where fragrant lilies, orchids and other vibrantly coloured flowers grew.
- 8 Here the trees were immensely tall, exceptionally green and lush with thick vines \_\_\_\_\_ themselves around the trunks.
- 9 Some of my cousins lived up there and near their house was a \_\_\_\_\_.
- 10 We could hear the rushing water tumbling over the rocks and would \_\_\_\_\_ with delight as we stood under the cool water which felt like silk on our skin.
- 11 One minute there was brilliant \_\_\_\_\_, the next a great darkness enveloped the island.
- 12 She told me it was freak weather, an eclipse and a slight \_\_\_\_\_ happening, amazingly, at the same time.

**? FIVE WS AND HOW**



Answer the questions below. Look back at *Coming to England* to find the correct answers.

- 1 How many kinds of weather were there on the island?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2 Where was the tropical island not far from?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3 When was it very hot on the island?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 4 What provided an occasional relief from the heat?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 5 Where would people stand chatting?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 6 What would sometimes melt in the heat?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 7 What time of day would it start to grow cooler?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 8 What would drop below the horizon and slumber until the morning?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 9 What would people do in the warm, tropical scented water when it rained?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 10 What happened to the main street when the water pipe erupted?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 11 What happened at the same time as the eclipse?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 12 Who said that the freak weather wouldn't last long?  
\_\_\_\_\_


**MULTIPLE CHOICE**


Circle the correct answer to the following questions.

1 How many types of weather were there on the tropical island?

one	two	three	four
-----	-----	-------	------

2 How were the cloudless skies described?

bright blue	brilliant blue	big and blue	cool blue
-------------	----------------	--------------	-----------

3 Where would the occasional cool breeze come from?

the mountains	the rainforest	the rain	the sea
---------------	----------------	----------	---------

4 What would the tarmac roads sometimes do?

melt	haze	shimmer	rise
------	------	---------	------

5 What would happen to the weather around five o'clock?

get colder	get hotter	get cooler	get wetter
------------	------------	------------	------------

6 Where were the fragrant lilies, orchids and other vibrantly coloured flowers?

the water	the rainforest	the roads	the beach
-----------	----------------	-----------	-----------

7 What did the cool water feel like?

sun	freezing	silk	cloth
-----	----------	------	-------

8 What appeared when the ground trembled during the extreme weather?

cracks	holes	spots	puddles
--------	-------	-------	---------


**TRUE OR FALSE**


Read the sentences. Put a tick in the correct box to show which sentences are true and which are false.

1 It was hot from October to June. True  False

2 Cool breezes from the sea provided relief from the heat. True  False

3 You can move fast in the heat. True  False

4 The tarmac roads would sometimes melt. True  False

5 Tyre marks were left in the soft tarmac. True  False

6 People looked for shade because the heat on the island was furnace-like. True  False

7 It began to grow cooler around six o'clock. True  False

8 When it rained, it didn't rain very much. True  False

9 When it rained, people would dance and splash in the water. True  False

10 It took hours to dry everyone's clothes after the downpour. True  False

11 It rained most heavily by the coast. True  False

12 The water in the waterfall felt like silk on the main character's skin. True  False

13 A water pipe erupted, causing a flood. True  False

14 An eclipse and an earthquake happened at the same time. True  False

15 The main character was only eight years old when the eclipse happened. True  False



**SUMMARISE DRAW AND LABEL**



**SUMMARISE**

1 Look at the last paragraph of the text. Tick the statement which best summarises this paragraph.

- The girl describes the different types of weather.
- The mother describes the extreme weather.
- There was extreme weather, and the main character was scared and confused.
- The girl describes what it was like when it rained heavily.

2 Look at the paragraph beginning 'Some of my cousins...'. Write one sentence to summarise what's happening in this paragraph.

---



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**DRAW AND LABEL**

Draw the statements in the boxes. Add your own labels to your drawings.

some of the animals described in the text	happy children by the waterfall

**123 SEQUENCING**



1 Look at the sentence below. Write the numbers 1 to 4 to show the order the words occur in the sentence.

It didn't matter if we got wet because, after the downpour, the water would evaporate in no time, drying our clothes in an instant.

evaporate	instant	downpour	drying

2 Look at the first paragraph in *Coming to England*. Number the sentences from 1 to 5 to show the order they occur in the text.

- There were usually two kinds of weather on our tropical island, which was not far from the Equator: hot or rainy.
- When it was hot, from October to June, it was very hot.
- The only relief was the occasional cool breeze that drifted in from the sea.
- People would often stop and stand idly on street corners chatting while they wiped away the sweat.
- In the mornings we would wake to brilliant blue cloudless skies with a bright yellow sun beating down on us.

3 Look at *Coming to England*. Number the sentences from 1 to 5 to show the order they occur in the whole text. Look at the first line of each paragraph to help you.

- The ground was dry and dusty and the tarmac roads sometimes used to melt.
- I loved the sun because the heat warmed my inner soul and gave me a free, happy, relaxed feeling.
- One day I remember experiencing weather like I had never seen before.
- There were usually two kinds of weather on our tropical island, which was not far from the Equator: hot or rainy.
- Some of my cousins lived up there and near their house was a waterfall.

 **FIND AND COPY**


These questions are about *Coming to England*.

- 1 Look at the first paragraph. Find and copy a word that means a piece of land surrounded by water.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2 Look at the paragraph beginning 'I loved the sun...'. Find and copy a word that describes a large amount of rain.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3 Look at the paragraph beginning 'It rained most heavily...'. Find and copy a word that tells us that the plants had a beautiful smell.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 4 Look at the paragraph beginning 'Some of my cousins...'. Find and copy a word that means huge rocks.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 5 Look at the last paragraph. Find and copy a word that tells us that darkness completely covered the whole island.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 6 Look at the last paragraph. Find and copy a word that tells us that the weather was unusual and unexpected.  
\_\_\_\_\_

 **CIRCLE A WORD**


Read the paragraph below and then follow the instructions.

The ground was dry and dusty and the tarmac roads sometimes used to melt. The smell of the tar was overpowering as the traffic drove over the black, gooey mixture leaving their tyre marks in it. By midday the heat haze shimmered high off the hot ground, the sun baking everything in sight, forcing people to look for some shade away from the furnace-like heat. Mercifully at round about five o'clock it began to grow cooler. Then a sudden darkness would fall as the sun dropped out of sight below the horizon where it would slumber until the next morning. The darkness came so quickly after the light, it was like someone turning off a switch. But you could always be certain the sun would rise gloriously again and again during the hot season.

- 1 Circle a word that means extremely strong or intense.
- 2 Circle a word that means that the heat haze had a soft, wavering light.
- 3 Circle a word that means darkness and coolness.
- 4 Circle a word that means thankfully.
- 5 Circle a word that means the line at which the sky and ground appear to meet.
- 6 Circle a word that means a fixed period of a year, when the weather behaves a certain way.