Comprehension - Waltzing Matilda

Many years ago, men who worked in the outback of Australia had to walk from one job to another. A man may have been shearing sheep for several weeks. After the shearing was finished, he would then go to another property and shear more sheep. He would camp each night on the way. He would have a billy-can to make tea. Food would be carried in a cloth bag - his tucker-bag. A blanket, for sleeping, and perhaps a pillow, was rolled up and carried on the man's back. This was called his swag. A man who carried a swag was a swagman and carrying a swag was known as 'waltzing matilda'.

A billabong is a large pool of water in the bed of a dried up-creek. It was a favourite spot for camping because there was water and usually firewood under the trees.

The Australian song, Waltzing Matilda is about a swagman. The jumbuck (a sheep) came to drink and the swagman grabbed the animal to eat. He put some of the meat into his tuckerbag. When three policemen came by the swagman jumped into the billabong to escape from them.

Look up the first verse of the song and then answer these questions.

1 What sort of work possibly done by a swagman is mentioned? ........... ...........
2 What would a swagman carry in his tucker-bag? ............................
3 What item would certainly be part of a swag? ..............................
4 In the song, Waltzing Matilda, the swagman is asking (circle the right answer):
   (a) if anyone will help him steal a sheep.
   (b) if anyone will come carrying a swag with him.
   (c) if anyone will come and have a dance with him.
5 In another verse, troopers are mentioned. What do you think a trooper is? ..................

Write a word from the passage that means the same as:

6 a pool that was once part of a stream  ..........................
7 a sheep ..........................
8 any area far away from large towns ..........................
9 a farm ..........................
10 run away from ..................................
11 sleeping outdoors ............................
Foreword

Excellence in English Year 4 is the fourth of a series aimed at primary children to help improve their English. There are many challenging exercises that will extend their vocabulary, grammar, reading and thinking skills. The systematic practice will give confidence to those who may later sit for entrance or scholarship examinations which test English and General Aptitude.

It is suggested that a child works through the book sequentially rather than jumping from one section to another. A dictionary should be consulted to avoid guesswork - especially when the meaning of a multiple-choice word is not known.

Answers are provided in the centre section for ease of removal. When using this book at home or school, it may be a temptation for a child to look at answers if they remain in the book.

Peter Howard
Comprehension - He Knew the World Was Round

Five hundred years ago, nearly everybody thought the world was flat. 'If you sail far away from land, you will fall off the edge of the earth,' they said. But one man, Christopher Columbus, thought differently. He told the King and Queen of Spain that he could reach India and China by sailing west across what is now the Atlantic Ocean.

Columbus was given three ships by the royal rulers of Spain. He set out in 1492, even though most of his sailors were afraid. The ships were very small - the largest was only 21 metres long. The wind blew from behind them all the way and the men said, 'We will never be able to sail back. This wind will blow us away from Spain forever. We are also in danger of falling off into the sky!'

After about seven weeks of sailing, there was still no land in sight. But soon they saw bits of wood floating in the sea. Birds flew overhead, and Columbus told his men that they were near land.

The next morning they did see land. Columbus said it must be India. The people had dark reddish skins so he called them Red Indians. He was mistaken, because this new land was not India but what is now America.

One of the ships sank on a reef, but the other two sailed back home. The King and Queen were very pleased.

1. From which country did Christopher Columbus sail? ....................................
2. Did most people in those days think the world was round or flat? ............................
3. Did the wind help Columbus cross what is now the Atlantic Ocean? ..........................
4. What two things told Columbus he was near land? ........................................
5. Did Columbus find white men in America? ........................................
6. How many ships were lost on the voyage? ........................................
7. Which word tells us that the Spanish rulers were happy that Columbus returned? .........................
8. Columbus called the people Red Indians because (circle the right answer):
   (a) They were dark but angry.  (b) They were Indians but had red skin.
   (c) He thought he was in India and the people had red skin.

Write a word from the passage that means:
9. side ................................................
10. frightened ............................................
11. pieces .............................................
12. wrong ....................................................
Comprehension - Cloze Passage

Write the missing word from each line on the right.

Coral

Coral is a k ...... of limestone that is found in the sea. 1

Some c ...... look like lace, some like small trees, and 2

others like I ...... mushrooms. Most are brown or green, 3

but a few are yellow or r ...... . 4

It is a small animal c ...... a polyp that makes coral. Many 5

polyps live together and when they d ...... , their 6

skeletons join together to f ...... a mass of coral rock. 7

Coral rock forms in a I ...... line which is called a reef. 8

Many islands in the Pacific have coral reefs a ...... 9

them. Coral will only form in warm, shallow w ...... . 10

There is a long coral reef along the c ...... of 11

Queensland which is the longest in the w ...... . It is 12

known as the Great Barrier Reef and m ...... people 13

go there for holidays. If you ride in a boat with a g ...... 14

bottom, you would be a ...... to see the coral clearly 15

and the many f ...... that live on the reef. 16

Captain Cook sailed along the coast of A ...... in 17

1770. His s ...... ran onto the Great Barrier Reef. 18

The coral ripped a large h ...... in the bottom of his ship 19

which had to be r ...... on a beach where Cooktown 20

stands today.
Vocabulary

A Word Instead of a Phrase 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>nightmare</th>
<th>regal</th>
<th>simplify</th>
<th>core</th>
<th>neglect</th>
<th>launch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fit for a queen</td>
<td>innermost part</td>
<td>to make easier</td>
<td>a bad dream</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leave uncared for</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to set afloat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

illegal manual relish testify gnarled tenant launder timber

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>coil</th>
<th>vast</th>
<th>aloft</th>
<th>flight</th>
<th>lanky</th>
<th>ajar</th>
<th>tepid</th>
<th>moult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a trip by plane</td>
<td>very large</td>
<td>slightly open</td>
<td>wind in rings</td>
<td>to shed feathers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

salvage hull daub spray charity wary frantic tattered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>on one’s guard</th>
<th>to save from loss</th>
<th>fine liquid in air</th>
<th>kindness of heart</th>
<th>wildly excited</th>
<th>torn and ragged</th>
<th>body of a ship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Reading and Thinking

Rhyming Words

Read each clue and write the rhyming word.

1 part of your hand that rhymes with sum
2 part of a tree that rhymes with ranch
3 part of your neck that rhymes with coat
4 something we do when we have a chest cold that rhymes with off
5 rivers do this when there has been much rain it rhymes with mud
6 a very important part of your body that rhymes with tart

Animals

Write the animal we use when we speak.

7 When people fool around we say they are acting the g
8 If you are hoarse you could say you have a f in your throat.
9 Pages that are bent in a book or magazine are described as eared.
10 To give a false alarm of danger is to cry w
11 To do two jobs at the same time is to kill two b with one stone.
12 Someone who has done something to be ashamed of is the black s of the family.

Order of Size

Write the words in order, smallest to the largest.

13 palace, house, shed
14 stool, sofa, armchair
15 sardine, shark, whale
16 chapter, book, sentence
17 quarter, fifth, half
18 spring, creek, river
### Reading and Thinking

#### Comprehension - Going for the Doctor

There was before us a long piece of level road by the riverside. John said to me, 'Now, Beauty, do your best,' and so I did. I needed neither whip nor spur, and for two miles I galloped as fast as I could lay my feet to the ground. I don't believe that my old grandfather who won the race at Newmarket could have gone faster. When we came to the bridge, John pulled me up a little and patted my neck. 'Well done, Beauty! good old fellow,' he said. He would have let me go slower, but my spirit was up, and I was off again as fast as before.

The air was frosty, the moon was bright and it was very pleasant. We came through a village, then through a dark wood, then uphill, then downhill, till after an eight miles' run we came to the town, through the streets and into the market-place. It was quite still except for the clatter of my feet on the stones - everybody was asleep.

The church clock struck three as we drew up at Dr White's door. John rang the bell twice, and then knocked on the door like thunder. A window was thrown up, and Doctor White, in his night cap, put his head out and said, 'What do you want?'

'Mrs Gordon is very ill, sir. Master wants you to go at once. He thinks she will die if you cannot get there - here is a note.'

(adapted from *Black Beauty* by Anna Sewell)

1. Who do you think is telling the story? (Circle the right answer.)
   - John
   - Mrs Gordon
   - Black Beauty

2. Who was riding the horse? ............................

3. What sort of horse was Beauty's grandfather. ..................................

4. Write the four words that tell us it was not daytime? ....................................

5. Which word tells us that it was probably winter time? ..............................

6. What object is mentioned, that had nothing to do with the horse, but is not used today, which tells us that this happened some years ago? ....................................

7. What time was the doctor awakened? ..............................................

8. John had to knock twice loudly because (circle the right answer):
   - (a) the doctor was deaf
   - (b) the doctor was expecting him ................
   - (c) the doctor was fast asleep
   - (d) the wind was making a noise ..........................

9. Write a word from the passage that means:
   - *rapped* ............................... 10  *flat* ..........................................

### Vocabulary

#### Similes

Similes are groups of words that compare two things.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>bee</th>
<th>rake</th>
<th>lightning</th>
<th>lead</th>
<th>post</th>
<th>berry</th>
<th>silk</th>
<th>eel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>as brown as a .........................</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>as soft as .........................</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>as quick as ............................</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>as deaf as a ......................</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>as slippery as an ....................</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>as thin as a .....................</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>as heavy as ...........................</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>as busy as a ....................</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>fiddle</th>
<th>feather</th>
<th>daisy</th>
<th>rain</th>
<th>putty</th>
<th>gold</th>
<th>bat</th>
<th>soot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>as soft as .............................</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>as good as ........................</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>as right as ............................</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>as fit as a ........................</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>as fresh as a ..........................</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>as light as a ........................</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>as black as ...........................</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>as blind as a ........................</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>cucumber</th>
<th>mustard</th>
<th>winking</th>
<th>velvet</th>
<th>mule</th>
<th>dog</th>
<th>leather</th>
<th>cricket</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>as lively as a ........................</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>as sick as a ........................</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>as cool as a ...........................</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>as smooth as ........................</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>as easy as ..............................</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>as obstinate as a ..................</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>as keen as ..............................</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>as tough as ........................</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Try to work out the answers which are animals.

| 25     | as greedy as a ........................ | 26  | as cunning as a ........................ |
| 27     | as hungry as a .......................... | 28  | as agile as a ........................ |
| 29     | as clumsy as an .......................... | 30  | as spineless as a ........................ |
Vocabulary

Where Would You Find?

stable  theatre  airport  kennel  library  garage  pantry  rink

1 planes taking off ..............................  2 a dog sleeping ..................
3 a play being performed ....................  4 many books ......................
5 a car being repaired .......................... 6 a racehorse ......................
7 people ice skating ............................. 8 food being stored ..............

wardrobe  gallery  nursery  barracks  atlas  calendar  dictionary  museum

9 seedlings growing .............................  10 a list of words ..................
11 maps of countries ..............................  12 pictures on display ............
13 clothes hanging up ..............................  14 old items on show ............
15 the day of your birthday .....................  16 soldiers living ..................

directory  hatchery  quarry  convent  encyclopedia  cage  reservoir  cemetery

17 a lion tamer .................................  18 water being stored ............
19 facts about space .............................  20 people’s graves ..............
21 girls training to be nuns .................  22 stone being cut ..............
23 fish being raised .............................  24 street maps ....................

This time you have to supply the answers without having clues.

25 convicts serving time ........................  26 grapes growing ..............
27 people exercising .............................  28 a king and queen living ....
29 bees living ................................  30 goods being made ............
31 visitors from overseas ........................  32 an artist working .............

Comprehension - Cloze Passage

Write the missing word from each line on the right.

Kangaroos

Have you seen a kangaroo hopping at f ...... speed?  1 ..............................
This animal's great I ...... seem like steel springs. As it 2 ..............................
hits the g ...... its legs bend. Then the legs push down, 3 ..............................
its body swings up, and away it j ...... again. Each hop 4 ..............................
is quite long - as much as three m ...... . The animal 5 ..............................
seems to be f ...... through the air. 6 ..............................
There are t ...... kinds of kangaroos. The grey ones that 7 ..............................
live near the coast of e ...... and south Australia. They 8 ..............................
have black tips on their t ...... . Then there are the red 9 ..............................
kangaroos that l ...... on the inland plains. These 10 ..............................
animals have red f ...... , with patches on their faces 11 ..............................
and tips on their tails.

The other k ...... is not really a kangaroo but a wallaroo. 12 ..............................
It lives in rocky hills and has s ...... , thick legs. The 13 ..............................
wallaroo cannot hop as far as the o ...... kangaroos. 14 ..............................
Kangaroos feed at night and r ...... in the daytime. 15 ..............................
They like grass and eat about h ...... as much as sheep. 16 ..............................
This makes f ...... in Australia angry, and the poor 17 ..............................
kangaroos are often s ...... by them. 18 ..............................
The front legs of kangaroos are often called a ...... . 19 ..............................
The male has very strong ones and can h ...... you 20 ..............................
whilst it uses the b ...... legs with claws for striking. 21 ..............................
6  **A Word Instead of a Phrase 1**

- regal
- core
- neglect
- simplify
- launch
- nightmare
- relish
- launder
- tenant
- gnarled
- timber
- flight
- lanky
- ajar
- vast
- coil
- tepid
- moult
- aloft
- 23 wary
- 24 salvage
- 25 spray
- 26 charity
- 27 tattered
- 29 hull
- daub
- berry
- silk
- lightning
- post
- eel
- rake
- lead
- bee
- putty
- gold
- rain
- fiddle
- daisy
- feather
- 15 soot
- 16 bat
- 17 cricket
- 18 dog
- 19 cucumber
- 20 velvet
- 21 winking
- 22 mule
- mustard
- leather
- pig
- 25 pig
- 26 fox
- 27 horse
- 28 monkey
- 29 ox
- 30 jellyfish

8  **Where Would You Find?**

- airport
- kennel
- theatre
- library
- garage
- stable
- rink
- pantry
- nursery
- dictionary
- atlas
- gallery
- wardrobe
- museum
- calendar
- barracks
- cage
- reservoir
- encyclopaedia
- cemetery
- quarry
- hatchery
- directory
- jail
- gaol
- vineyard
- gymnasium
- palace
- castle
- hive
- factory
- hotel
- studio

9  **Australian Slang**

- dinkum
- joey
- cocky
- esky
- bludge
- galah
- whinge
- snag
- lolly
- stubby
- nong
- 13 truckie
- 14 yakker
- 15 surfie
- 16 drack
- 18 trannie
- 10 ute
- 19 kelpie
- 21 gutser
- 22 barbie
- 23 uey
- 24 strides
- 25 scrub
- 26 dill
- 27 dunny
- 28 middy
- 29 sickie
- 30 blue

10  **Words that SoundAlike 1**

- son
- father
- nap
- peak
- blue
- grate
- manor
- 5 prey
- meal
- 6 bury
- flower
- 7 fowls
- yolks
- 8 piece
- 9 skull
- queue
- quay
- sold
- 11 brake
- 12 nail
- four
- 13 ewe
- stake
- 13 team
- size
- 14 grater
- 15 gate
- 16 vane
- 17 pole

11  **Thinking and Learning**

- search
- 2 choose
- 3 worry
- 4 problem
- 5 memory
- 6 knowledge
- 7 plan
- 8 study
- 9 solution
- 10 decide
- 11 outwit
- 12 investigate
- 13 imagine
- 14 rearrange
- 15 record
- 16 understand
- 17 check
- 18 judge
- 19 puzzle
- 20 predict
- 21 compare
- 22 discover

12  **Same Spelling Different Meaning 1**

- pen
- 2 boot
- 3 pen
- 4 top
- 5 boot
- 6 top
- 7 litter
- 8 crane
- 9 gum
- 10 litter
- 11 gum
- 12 crane
- 13 bill
- 14 fit
- 15 bill
- 16 rent
- 17 rent
- 18 fit
- 19 dear
- 20 charge
- 21 ring
- 22 charge
- 23 ring
- 24 dear
- 25 lean
- 26 rest
- 27 fair
- 28 till
- 29 rest
- 30 till
- 31 lean
- 32 fair
- 33 case
- 34 stick
- 35 stick
- 36 case

13  **Smelling, Tasting and Hearing**

- deafening
- 2 fragrant
- 3 uproar
- 4 stale
- 5 odour
- 6 tasty
- 7 sour
- 8 shrill
- 9 perfumed
- 10 volume
- 11 bitter
- 12 audible
- 13 putrid
- 14 savoury
- 15 spicy
- 16 aroma
- 17 tone
- 18 pungent
- 19 musty
- 20 luscious
- 21 tainted
- 22 digest

14  **Occupations**

- builder
- jeweller
- artist
- postman
- actor
- 6 clown
- 7 waiter
- 8 matron
- 9 hawker
- 10 pharmacist
- 11 chauffeur
- 12 saddler
- 13 cobbler
- 14 archer
- 15 veterinarian
- 16 tiler
- 17 stenographer
- 18 porter
- 19 nanny
- 20 solicitor
- 21 shearer
- 22 locksmith
- 23 janitor
- 24 editor
- 25 clerk
- 26 athlete
- 27 cashier
- 28 stagehand
- 29 barber
- 30 botanist

15  **Seeing and Touching**

- search
- 2 glance
- 3 view
- 4 clutch
- 5 stare
- 6 press
- 7 stroke
- 8 scratch
- 9 squeeze
- 10 glimpse
- 11 grasp
- 12 gaze
- 13 handle
- 14 squint
- 15 caress
- 16 manipulate
- 17 sleek
- 18 flabby
- 19 jagged
- 20 greasy
- 21 rough
- 22 crisp
- 23 spongy

16  **Words that SoundAlike 2**

- stairs
- peer
- 3 dew
- 4 border
- 5 worn
- 6 steal
- 7 paw
- 8 vain
- 9 mussel
- 10 mail
- 11 lapse
- 12 hoard
- 13 here
- 14 groan
- 15 flour
- 16 draught
- 17 bread
- 18 slay
- 19 flaw
- 20 carrot
- 21 plum
- 22 tow
- 23 weather
- 24 leek
- 25 horse
- 26 hall
- 27 fete
- 28 berth
- 29 belle
- 30 straight
- 31 greater
- 32 toad

17  **Health and Medicine**

- emergency
- 2 accident
- 3 measles
- 4 drug
- 5 ambulance
- 6 virus
- 7 infection
- 8 patient
- 9 prescription
- 10 surgery
- 11 stethoscope
- 12 syringe
- 13 ointment
- 14 bronchitis
- 15 thermometer
- 16 vaccination
- 17 operation

18  **Words that Look Alike**

- peasant
- woman
- 2 message
- diary
- 3 soldier
- weary
- 4 route
- valley
- 5 patient
- quiet
- 6 loathe
- clothes
- 7 hoping
- lesson
- 8 certain
- ballet
- 9 where
- secret
- 10 through
- colander
- 11 bandage
- bullet
- 12 serious
- 13 single
- forest
- 14 recipe
- noodles
- 15 miners
- trapped