Five Senses Skill Builders No. 56

Comprehension nine

SAMPLE

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CONTENTS

How to do Multiple Choice Responses	4
How to do Short Answer Questions	5
How to do Extended Responses	7
Comprehension 1: Fiction	9
Comprehension 2: Street Map	16
Comprehension 3: Advertisement	20
Comprehension 4: Report	24
Comprehension 5: Description	28
Comprehension 6: Recipe	34
Comprehension 7: Fable	38
Comprehension 8: Fiction	48
Comprehension 9: Persuasive	54
Comprehension 10: Cartoon	60
Comprehension 11: Review	64
Comprehension 12: Map	70
Comprehension 13: Urban Legend	74
Comprehension 14: Advertisement	80
Comprehension 15: Poem	84
Comprehension 16: Fiction	92
Comprehension 17: Biography	98
Comprehension 18: Description	104
Comprehension 19: Photo-essay	108
Comprehension 20: Information	114
Comprehension 21: Letter	120
Comprehension 22: Instructional Diagram	124
Comprehension 23: Short Story	128
Comprehension 24: Brochure	138
Comprehension 25: Opinion	143
Answers	148

SAMPLE

Comprehension One: Fiction

The Prize of Wilson's Map

Declan Fotheringham massaged his aching body as he rode slowly across the fertile veldt. His large retinue of investors, native bearers and other dilettantes snailed behind him; they were making a dusty clamour as they marched. This hugely ambitious project was the direct result of the map that rested gently in the largish pocket of his now travel stained and dirt encrusted coat. It was a long way from the shadowy, gas lit halls of Cambridge where he had inadvertently come across Wilson's Map, as it had become known. The map was drawn into a cartographic manual he was investigating as part of a research project and it had changed his life.

Wilson's Map suggested in its scrawled text promises of a great elixir, riches beyond dreams and other unknown treasures. The map had changed Fotheringham's life and the legend and myth it generated changed him too. Caught up in the mystery and excitement that such a map generated he had been offered the opportunity to speak at The Adventurer's Club in London and at private lectures all over the country. A subscription offer to fund the search was oversubscribed and Fotheringham found himself thrust into the leadership of a large entourage of men that he had no skills or training to lead. In fact he had never been out of England before and was ill-prepared for the journey and the difficult conditions he encountered in Africa, even at the Cape which was quite civilised.

He had burned quickly through most of his money in outfitting the group, none of whom had any experience either and were all gentleman adventurers or the worst kind of hanger-on, men of bullying talk but no action. He found himself through sheer necessity relying more and more on the natives, few of whom spoke the King's language with any reliability. The map showed the treasure to be far inland from the Cape Colony, past the unmarked lands that would become Rhodesia and onto the far mountains that pocked a large patch on the map. Fotheringham regretted a lack of detail, detail he hadn't thought important back in England but now was imperative.

Three to four months of supplies looked lean against the distances they faced and travel was slow, especially with the wagons and bearers. The hunting was poor as the great party scattered herds of gazelle and wildebeest before them. Some of the gentlemen were already complaining about conditions and like children in a carriage they asked how much longer the journey might be. Fotheringham was clueless as to when and what they might find and the grand adventure was beginning to go sour as it had just begun. He looked across the endless grasslands and his eyes followed the trail which was like a thin snake.

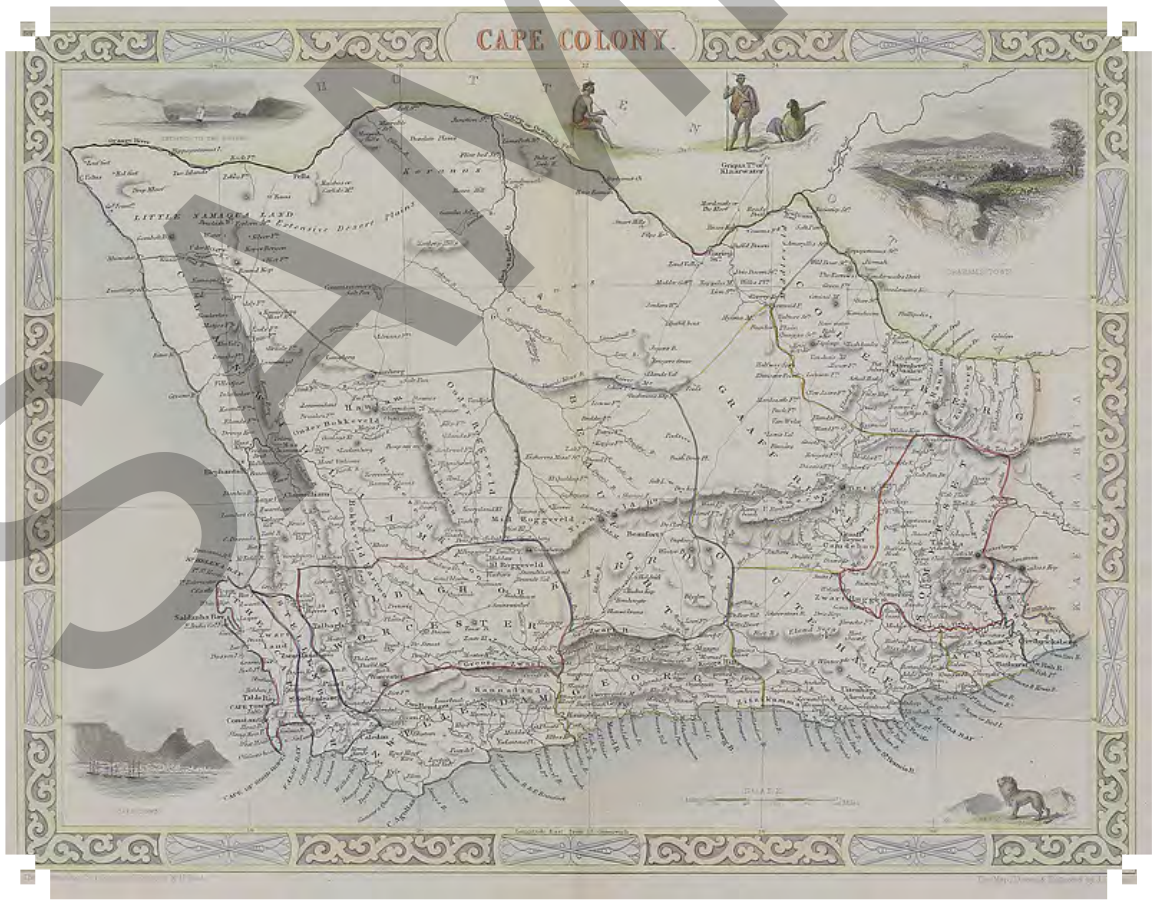
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Three weeks later the view was similar but Fotheringham gazed upon it with a jaundiced eye that had lost much of the hopeful glimmer of youthful adventure. His retinue had also thinned considerably; the 'gentlemen' had all left bar one, Gerard Grimsby, and had taken some of the wagons, supplies and bearers. The group of other travellers had gone with them to sponge their way back to the Cape, in search of better pickings. At times Fotheringham wondered why he kept going but his hand automatically went back to the map, like a talisman he was drawn to it.

Grimsby rode up beside him with ease that came from a month in the saddle.

'We have about three hours before dark, should we begin to look for a campsite, Declan? Perhaps I'll go off and shoot something for dinner. What do you think?'

Declan shrugged and nodded. He and Gerard had grown close through necessity and had developed an understanding that only tribulation can forge. He watched Grimsby ride off unslinging the ever-present rifle he kept strapped to his saddlebags. He could hear the natives chatter at the expectation of fresh meat and knew they would be looking to set camp soon. The mountains were now within sight and he knew three or four more days and he would be on the threshold of the last leg of the journey. This was the only thing keeping him motivated as supplies of food and water were getting low and if the food ran out so would the natives.



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Three days turned to five as they crawled into the foothills. Wilson's map showed there would be a trail into the mountains, marked by carved arrows but none could be found. After three days the natives began to disappear into the vast plain they had crossed. The plains dwellers were suspicious of the mountains and sitting here only increased their fears. The two men stared at the map for hours hoping for some clue or inspiration but nothing came and only Grimsby's hunting kept them alive. Soon they would need proper supplies and water but they were a long way from any help.

After a week only the two men remained and only because they had nowhere else to go. They scurried around the base of where Wilson's Map indicated the path up and eventually decided to just to head up, following what looked like an old watercourse that edged up between the enormous granite boulders that lay strewn about. It was a hard climb and the way seemed blocked many times but perseverance overcame adversity. Fotheringham eventually discovered one of the marks they had given up on. Faded, overgrown with moss and barely visible he only discovered it by toppling over and nearly colliding with it. Still it provided hope, a commodity that was in short supply.

As they rose higher, that small hope faded. The water was gone, the food had been eaten a day before that. Both men gave each other off-handed stares to replace the thoughts they couldn't express. The hot, humid hill became an insurmountable mountain, a foe that could not be vanquished. Weakened by lack of food and water the two men struggled on through the afternoon and soon the sun crept over the back of the earth. In the twilight they reached the summit and Fotheringham knew he'd found Wilson's treasure. It was pure gold to him, a lake of pure, deep blue water. Wilson's treasure was life, a chance.

After soaking in the cooling water and drinking their fill, Fotheringham and Grimsby knew they know had a base from which to explore. They knew Wilson had made more marks on the map, further on, just a little further. They had to follow; they had come too far to return.

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Multiple Choice

1. The genre of his text would be?

(A) Western

(B) Science Fiction

(C) Fantasy

(D) Adventure

2. The text is set in?

(A) Asia

(B) Africa

(C) Australia

(D) America

3. How many months' supplies did the party have when they began the journey?

(A) two to three

(B) three to four

(C) four to five

(D) five to six

4. "The word *talisman* in paragraph five can also mean?

(A) necklace

(B) rabbit's foot

(C) lucky charm

(D) map bag

5. The word *insurmountable* in paragraph eleven can also mean?

(A) never-ending

(B) troublesome

(C) impossible

(D) decadent.

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6. What object is associated with Grimsby?

(A) map

(B) rifle

(C) carved arrows

(D) carts

7. When do the natives leave?

(A) when the water runs out

(B) when the food runs out

(C) when they are stuck at the foothills

(D) when they had meat for supper

8. The phrase hot, humid hill is an example of ?

(A) simile

(B) alliteration

(C) metaphor

(D) generalisation

9. '*insurmountable mountain, a foe that could not be vanquished*' (p10) is an example of ?

(A) personification

(B) allegory

(C) onomatopoeia

(D) rhetorical question

10. The tone of the final paragraph is?

(A) negative

(B) undecided

(C) positive

(D) neutral

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Short Answer

1. What type of character is Declan Fotheringham?

2. *the way seemed blocked many times but perseverance overcame adversity* is an example of a cliché.

a. Why is it effective?

b. Find two examples of language in the text that shows the story is set in the past?

3. What impact does the final paragraph have on the reader?

4. Identify ONE other language feature the text uses**.** Explain how the language feature is used to make the text more effective.

Feature

Explanation

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Extended response to show understanding

Imagine you are Declan Fotheringham and write TWO diary entries from different parts of the journey.

Try to develop ideas that may originate from the text. Try to maintain the character's identity.

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Answers

These answers have been abbreviated for space reasons. All responses should be full sentences where required.

1. Fiction – The Prize of Wilson's Map

Multiple Choice:

1. D
2. B
3. B
4. C
5. C
6. B
7. C
8. B
9. A
10. C

Short Answers:

1. Declan Fotheringham is a man who is thrust into a situation beyond his control. He finds the map and is seemingly transported to another continent outside his experience. He learns much about himself and others during the journey and he may yet succeed. He seems determined and focused.
2. (a) The cliché is easily recognisable and is effective because it conveys a message.
   (b) The use of natives as bearers, the use of horses, treasure maps, Cape, Rhodesia, clubs, lectures etc..
3. The final paragraph leaves the conclusion up in the air, creates an intensified sense of tension/suspense and offers the reader the opportunity to use their imagination as to what might happen to the two characters with the map.
4. A student answer may include such language techniques such as description, dialogue, narrative voice etc. All responses must give an explanation of the effect of hat technique and give a specific example.

Extended response to show understanding:
Teacher to assess

2. Map – Outline of Plan of Rome

Multiple Choice:

1. D
2. B
3. A
4. C
5. B

Short Answers:

1. The river is clearly marked and we can also see the bridges that cross the river at several points.
2. The four buildings are student choice but should clearly be in the appropriate area.
3. The map is slightly dated and the instructions are not clear. Another issue is the language and clarity of the map. Students should give examples.
4. The map could be enlarged and more modern cartography employed. The street and place names could be translated into English and the points of interest highlighted.

Extended response to show understanding:
Teacher to assess

3. Instructions – Permanent Homes, Always Beautiful

Choose the correct response:

1. bricks
2. six
3. American Face Brick Association
4. gradually
5. one dollar
6. working drawings, masonry quantities and specifications
7. The Home of Beauty
8. slogan
9. token
10. never-ending satisfaction

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