



Reading and asking questions

Vlad and the Great Fire of London

The most important thing when reading with your child, is to make it feel like fun rather than a test. The first time you share a book, focus on reading it all the way through to find out what happens, and don't worry about asking questions. There is one exception to this:

What do you think will happen next?

Obviously this only works as a prediction if they don't already know the answer. So if there is a cliff-hanger or moment of suspense, it is good to use this one on the first read through.

After you have read the story once, read it again and think about the events and characters. Asking a question is a way into the discussion, and helps understand any facts or messages.

Here are some suggestions of questions you could ask. Don't ask them all at once, but use them each time you look at the book, and feel free to mix them up, alter them, or reverse roles and let your child ask the questions.

? How did the fire start?

The fire in the oven hadn't been put out properly and sparks set fire to objects in the room

? What did Vlad and Boxton feel when they saw the fire?

They were frightened / scared / terrified

? What did Samuel Pepys bury in his garden? Why did he do that?!

Parmesan cheese and bottles of wine. He wanted to protect them from the fire

? What did they use to put out the fire?

Buckets of water, fire hooks, water pumps – look at the illustrations to find them

? Where do you think they got the water?

The River Thames – most houses did not have running water/taps

? Why does Vlad shout encouragement and Boxton do the running?

Vlad is small and also a bit lazy; Boxton is quicker and bigger

? What kind of things did they rescue from their homes?

Clothes, furniture, books, food, jewellery, money, blankets – use the pictures to find ideas

? How did they stop the fire spreading?

The buckets and pumps were not enough so the gunpowder was used to make firebreaks

? What do you think happened to the people in the fields at the end?

They had to camp there until the houses were rebuilt

There is another history sheet outlining the general history - you can use it as an opportunity to find out more together as a follow up activity.

Finally, a good way to find out if your child has understood the story is to ask them to tell you the story in their own words. This often reveals any misunderstandings and is also good practise for shaping a story and helps them create their own writing.

Check the Reading Riddle website and YouTube channel for further advice on reading.