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Extract 3

- Explain that groups of four will perform a dramatic reading of the extract. Set aside time to prepare, including who will read what. Encourage creativity – for example, around the italicised words.
- Let children annotate their copies to guide them. Explain that they should look out for ‘directions’ embedded in the text: dialogue and accompanying verbs such as ‘urged’, ‘hissed’, ‘whispered’; the short, slightly choppy sentences, emphasising the tension; the dashes marking pauses/breaks within sentences; and the paragraphs switching from thoughts to action and back. Above all, highlight the way ellipses are used. Ask: *What are ellipses used for?* (to show omission; to create a pause for effect; to mark an unfinished thought; and, in plays, to indicate trailing off into silence) *How is it used here?* (pause for effect – in this case helping the action appear in slow motion) Explain that dashes can also be used for this.
- Ask: *Why is there a large gap before ‘Moving Circles!’?* (to emphasise Slow-Time) *How long did it actually take between the monster springing and everything going black?* (seconds) Remind them that the three Skills mentioned were the ones the Elder Paw knew. Varjak has already learned the first two. Encourage them to predict the Skill to be learned in the next chapter.
- Finally, after practising, arrange for groups to do their readings to the class or to other groups, and then select groups to perform the reading for other classes to promote the book.

Extract 4

- Ask children to skim the extract. Ask: *What is the purpose of the extract?* (informative) *Is it fact or opinion based?* (fact) *Where would you expect to find this type of text?* (in an encyclopaedia or on an online reference site) Differentiate between fact and fiction. Ask: *How is this style of writing different from fiction?* (based on facts sourced from historical texts, artefacts and images; fiction is imaginative)
- Compare Mesopotamia here and in the book. Ask: *Was Mesopotamia a real place in history? What about in the story?* (Historically, it was real. In the story, it’s reality-based to be authentic.) Display the media resources ‘Images of ancient Mesopotamia’ and ‘Mesopotamia: then and now’ to add context.
- Ask children to re-read the extract, underlining unfamiliar words like ‘ziggurats’ and referring to a dictionary and the images for support. Ask: *What are ‘CE’ and ‘BCE’ abbreviations for?* (Common Era; Before Common Era)
- Review structure and layout. Together, note the use of paragraphs to organise topics, bullets for listing and columns. Ask: *What is the benefit of including a map?* (geographically and historically locates an unfamiliar place)
- Lastly, focus on comprehension questions requiring analysis of the whole content. Ask: *Why was Mesopotamia successful?* (primarily, growth of cities and invention of writing, and other important advances and inventions) *Why is Mesopotamia known as the ‘Cradle of Civilisation’?* (one of earliest documented empires, the development of cities) *Why did the author choose Mesopotamia for the Paws’ origin?* (probably because it was known for domesticating cats)

1. Explain the text

Objective

To understand what they read.

What you need

Copies of *Varjak Paw*, photocopiable page 47 'Read and understand', printable page 'Read and understand (answers)'.

What to do

- Explain that the children are going to complete a reading task to check their understanding of a text through different types of questions. Revise the different types and levels of questions: closed questions require simple 'yes' or 'no', right/wrong responses; open questions require detail, thinking and even opinion; multiple-choice questions require selection of an answer from ones provided. Explain that basic-level questions require an answer found directly from the text; middle-level questions require children to analyse information or classify; higher-level questions ask children to interpret and apply the information from the text. All these can include visual literacy elements.
- Remind them that, with a comprehension task, they should always: first, skim and scan the text for clues on what it is about (the context); second, read the text in detail; third, read through the questions; finally, read the text again. Once they have followed these steps, they will be ready to begin writing answers. You can write these steps on the board for them to follow.
- Hand out copies of photocopiable page 47 'Read and understand' with questions on Chapter 11. Read the chapter and questions together and then give a reasonable time limit to complete the exercise. Answers can be found on printable page 'Read and understand (answers)'.

Differentiation

Support: Read the questions with the children and check they understand them. Provide additional time to complete, if appropriate.

2. Let's talk

Objective

To select and use appropriate registers for effective communication.

What you need

Copies of *Varjak Paw*, printable page 'Dialogue matters'.

Cross-curricular link

Citizenship

What to do

- Ahead of the lesson, choose six children to prepare a reading of the following three dialogues: Chapter 7, from 'Welcome to the land of your ancestors...' to '... I will teach you'; Chapter 9, from 'What's your name?' to 'Just don't talk to me about dogs'; Chapter 26 from 'There was no escape now' to 'FRIENDS! FRIENDS!'.
- Introduce the lesson by asking these children to read their prepared dialogues to the class. Discuss the dialogues. Ask: *What is the context of each dialogue?* (Chapter 7, a dream; Chapter 9, a hut/shelter from the storm; Chapter 26, an alleyway.) *What common activity are the characters doing?* (introducing themselves) *How would you describe each dialogue – formal or informal?* (The dialogue with Jalal in Chapter 7 is formal but the other two are informal.) *How can you tell?* (Discuss the difference in vocabulary, tone and subject matter. Also, note who is involved: Jalal is an elder, whereas Holly and Cludge are Varjak's peers.)
- Organise children into pairs or groups of three. Invite them to choose a dialogue from the story to prepare and present to the class. Their expression and tone should match the dialogue. Refer to the printable page 'Dialogue matters' for assessment criteria.

Differentiation

Support: Allow children to prepare and read aloud one of the dialogues previously presented.
Extension: Invite children to write and present their own dialogue from anywhere in the story.

Read and understand

- Read Chapter 11 of *Varjak Paw* and answer the questions below.



1. Where were the cats having their conversation?

2. Is the dialogue formal or informal? Why?

3. Why did Holly call Varjak 'Poor Jack'?

4. Explain the expression 'Have a heart.'

5. Find a phrase in the text that means 'she's not as dangerous as she seems'.

6. Varjak used words that were unfamiliar to the other cats. Name two and explain why they were unfamiliar.

7. What do you think happened to Luka?

8. Identify the prefix and suffix in the word 'unapproachable'. What does 'unapproachable' mean?

9. How did Varjak feel when Holly and Tam laughed at him?

10. Why did Holly say 'friends are not worth having'?

