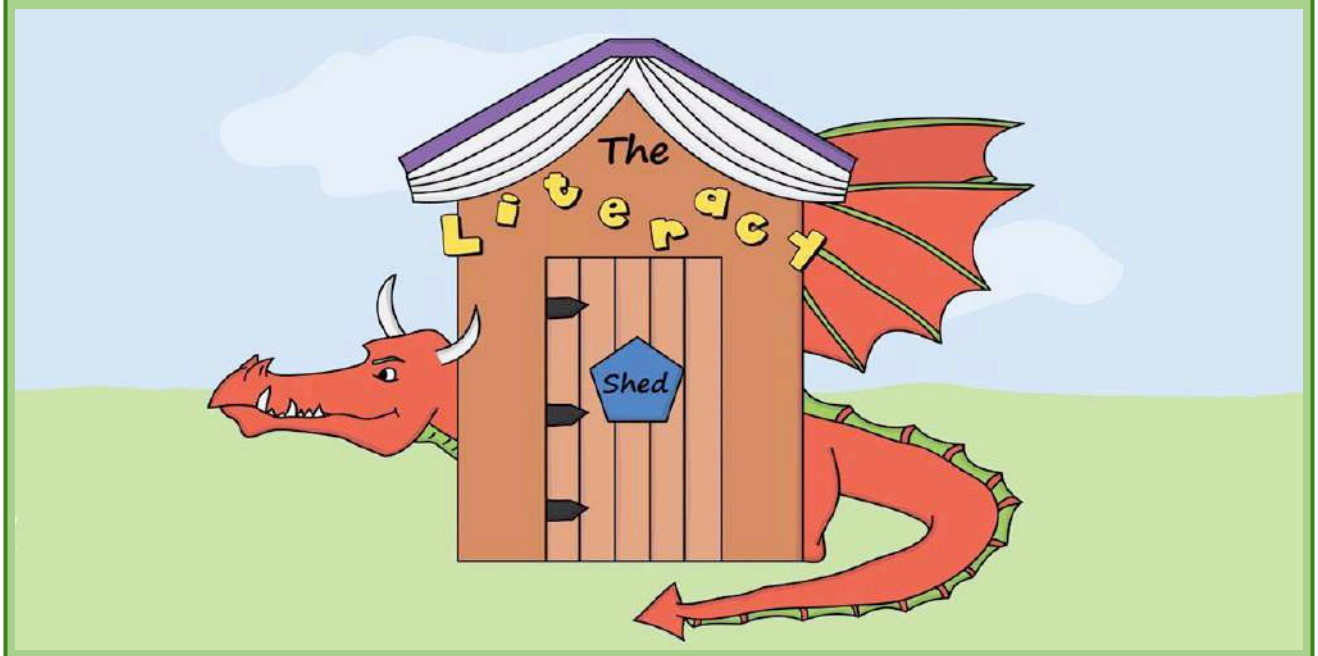
Comprehension Shed



Stage 4
Comprehension Pack

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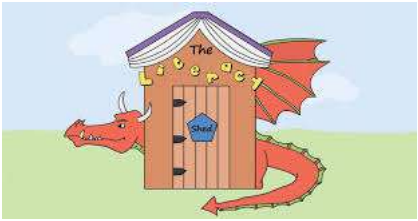


Stage 4
Comprehension Pack

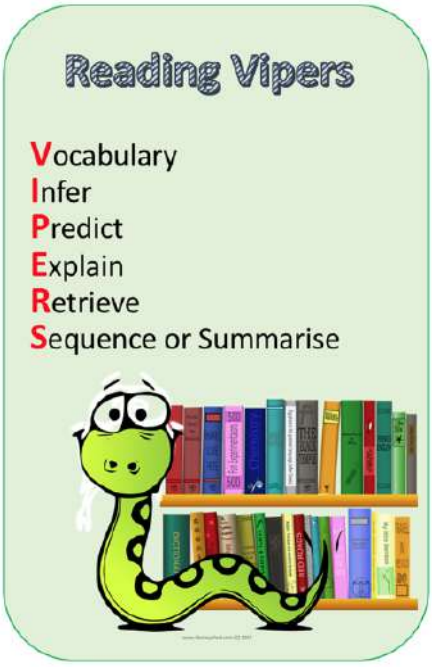
This free pack is aimed at those children working at the expected reading level for a child in Y4 in England. P5 in Scotland and Ireland. (Ages 8-9)
The texts have a Lexile level range between 720L and 900L.

<u>What do the letters mean?</u>

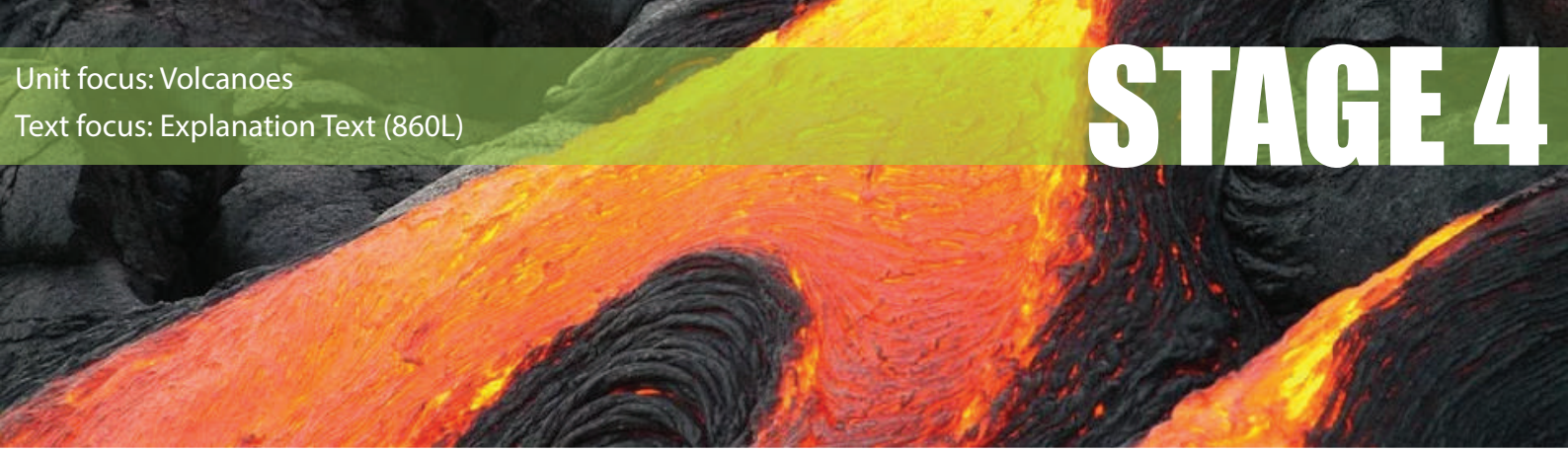
The questions in the comprehensions are not numbered but labelled with a letter from VIPERS. These letters correspond with key reading skills. Many schools use these codes in reading lessons so lots of children will be familiar with them.

If your child is not familiar with the letter codes, then do not worry – it is just highlighting the skill for them.

If you would like to read more about VIPERS then there is an explanation on our blog here: www.literacyshedblog.com/vipers



If you enjoy these comprehensions, then further comprehensions can be found in our membership area on www.literacyshedplus.com



Unit focus: Volcanoes
Text focus: Explanation Text (860L)

STAGE 4

Enormous Eruptions

Volcanoes have fascinated and terrified people across the globe for thousands of years. Most of the time, they don't pose a threat. However, every so often they erupt and wreak devastation across the land. When this happens, some are more devastating than others. These are the top 5 most deadly volcanic eruptions ever recorded (for historical eruptions such as Mount Vesuvius, it is impossible to know how many people died).

5

Unzen (Japan) in 1792

Mount Unzen erupted in a big way in 1792. The explosion triggered an earthquake which set off the landslide. It swept through the city of Shimabara before hitting the Ariake Sea. This set off a tsunami which killed even more people. There is still evidence of the landslide today. About 15,000 people died in total.

4

Nevado del Ruiz (Colombia) in 1985

The eruption of the Nevado del Ruiz volcano in 1985 destroyed the town of Armero. Two separate explosions caused a river of mud and ash to wash down the mountain and bury it. A further mudslide also tore through the town of Chinchiná. More than 25,000 people were killed altogether.

3

Mount Pelée (Martinique) in 1902

When a volcano is showing signs of erupting nowadays, scientists are often able to warn people in time. There were no such warning systems in 1902 when Mount Pelée exploded. A break in the crater wall allegedly caused insects and snakes to flee into the town of St. Pierre, but this has never been confirmed. A giant blast tore apart the mountain and buried the town within minutes.

Most of the 30,000 people living in St. Pierre at the time died. This number was even higher than it needed to be because many people fled from the countryside. They mistakenly thought they would be safer there after the volcano erupted.

2

Krakatau (Indonesia) in 1883

One of the biggest eruptions in recorded history blew ash so high into the atmosphere that it fell over 500 miles away in Singapore. There were several explosions in total, two of which were so loud they could be heard at several points around the world. It is believed that the eruption was the loudest sound ever heard on Earth. The explosions set off a series of giant waves which engulfed the shores of Indonesia and killed over 35,000 people.

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Enough dust was thrown into the atmosphere to block out the sun and lower the temperature of the Earth. Vivid red sunsets were seen as far away as New York. There is still an open vent on Krakatau that continually erupts; however, it is not considered dangerous.

1 Tambora (Indonesia) in 1815

Only 68 years before it would be devastated by Krakatau, Indonesia was rocked by the largest eruption ever recorded. So much ash, sulphur and other gases were thrown into the atmosphere that it blocked sunlight for months. It was nicknamed the "year without a summer". Crops failed everywhere due to the lack of light. Places as far away as Europe and North America experienced snow in the summer. Disease was rampant, and nearly 80,000 people died from starvation and illness.

RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. How many people were living in St. Pierre?
2. How long after the eruption at Tambora was the disaster at Krakatau?
3. What was significant about the explosions at Krakatau?
4. Which was the earliest eruption?
5. What killed most people after the eruption in Tambora?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

S Give two reasons why the number of people who died in the Mount Pelée disaster was so high.

I Why was 1815 nicknamed the "year without a summer"?

V Which word tells you that the vent at Krakatau never stops erupting?

V What mental image does the phrase "engulfed the shores" give you?

P Do you think there would be more or fewer deaths if a volcano erupted now? Why?

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Answers:

1. 30,000
2. 68 years
3. They were the loudest sounds ever heard
4. Unzen (1792)
5. Starvation and illness/disease

S: There were no warning systems in place and people had moved into the town thinking it was safer

I: There was so much ash in the sky that the sun couldn't shine through/it was dark all year

V: Continually

V: Waves consuming/eating/devouring/smothering etc the shore

P: Look for answers that reference us having better warning systems now/reference to crops failing not being so severe with global trade. For more deaths, look for answers that reference more densly populated cities and living closer to volcanoes

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Unit focus: Ancient Rome
Text focus: Narrative (740L)

STAGE 4

Gladiator

PUTT. PUTT.

Isalius looked down at the craters forming in the sand at his feet. Beads of sweat flowed along his bowed forehead and crashed to the ground. Underneath him, he felt the ground shake and dust fall from the ceiling.

The crowd were growing impatient.

An almighty roar erupted from the stands, followed by chants of “Iugula!” He knew what that meant. Poor old Verius had been bested. He was at the mercy of the Emperor now. Isalius ran a whetstone across the edge of his blade and waited to hear the decision.

Much like his weapon, it was a double-edged sword. If the Emperor sentenced his old friend to die, then he’d been losing one of the few people left in his life who he cared for. On the other hand, if he was allowed to live, the crowd would be even more desperate for blood when he stepped out on the sand.

Even though this was Isalius’s tenth fight in as many weeks, he was still terrified. His arms and legs were crisscrossed with scars and his left eye was permanently closed. He’d lost it fighting a bear in his first fight. The Emperor had tried to punish him quickly for his crime, but Isalius had overcome the beast. He’d taken great delight in the look of disgust on the Emperor’s face.

In the end, it hadn’t mattered. He’d been sentenced to fight in the arena until he died. There was a faint glimmer of hope that he might be freed if he showed himself to be a great warrior. He doubted the Emperor would allow that.

He thought back to the moment he’d been arrested. He’d been caught fighting a palace guard outside of an inn. He hadn’t known the man was a guard and it hadn’t been his fault that he’d humiliated him. The Emperor didn’t want to see his guards publicly shamed, though, and so he’d been arrested and sent to the arena.

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A groan of disappointment filtered down into the cave below the stands. Isalius knew his friend had been spared. “Well done, old friend,” he said to himself. He stood up and gripped his sword. He wiped the sweat from his eyes and flexed his bare feet on the sand.

When Versius stepped through the iron gate, Isalius gave him a brief hug. He noticed a deep cut in the back of his thigh. Maybe his friend might not be so lucky after all.

The guard shouted at him to hurry up. Isalius stepped forward and across the threshold. The cheers from the crowd drowned out all other noise. On the other side of the arena, he could just make out the smiling outline of his nemesis sat high in the sheltered box.

Isalius raised his sword and pumped his fists at the crowd. He knew they wanted blood. They didn’t care whose it was. In the distance, a second iron gate was being slowly opened. Isalius spread his feet and steadied himself. From out of the darkness, the low growl of a pair of tigers chilled him to the bone.

VOCABULARY FOCUS

1. Which word tells you that Isalius was looking down?
2. Find a word or phrase that tells you that Versus had been beaten.
3. What does the phrase “A faint glimmer of hope” mean?
4. Find a word or phrase that tells you Isalius had embarrassed the guard.
5. What is a nemesis?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

R For how many weeks had Isalius been fighting?

S What happened in the arena once Verius was beaten?

I What is Isalius going to have to fight?

R How did Isalius lose an eye?

E Explain how you know the Emperor doesn’t like Isalius. Use evidence from the text.

P Write the next paragraph in the narrative.

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Answers:

1. Bowed
2. Bested
3. There was a tiny bit of hope
4. Humiliated
5. An important enemy or rival

R: Ten

S: The Emperor decided whether he would live or die

I: A pair of tigers

R: Fighting a bear

E: Accept explanations that discuss the emperor wanting him to fight until he is dead, the look of disgust on his face when he kills the bear, the fact he is smiling when Isalius enters the arena.

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Unit focus: Modern Myths
Text focus: Narrative (860L)

STAGE 4

Perseus

In a far-off land, there lived a man named Perseus. To call him good-looking would be to waste the opportunity to use the word 'striking'. His muscles were as strong as stone. His face caused people to stop and turn in the street. But there was a problem. A crazy old man who lived in a van with a sign saying "psychic" on the side, had spoken to the managing director of a large company. He had said that a handsome boy would come along and take his job. When he heard about handsome Perseus, he took action.

At the same time as Perseus was growing into his muscles, a strange thing was happening elsewhere. Many of the inhabitants of a small city were discovering that their loved ones had been turned to stone. Obviously, this caused some concern. Being an important businessman, Mr Acrisius (the man who had visited the psychic) had heard of their problem and hatched a cunning plan. Realising that he could kill two birds with one stone-making monster, he arranged for Perseus to be sent to the city to defeat whatever he found. If he failed and was turned to granite, all the better.

The hero took to the skies and formed a plan. He would travel to Gorgonzola, the large cheese conglomerate where the monster was said to work. There, he would see what was going on. When he arrived, he didn't even wait for his suitcase before he set off. After all, you don't need clean underpants to battle a monster, though you may need them afterwards.

It was early evening by the time he arrived, but he caught a glimpse of the monster wandering through the corridors beyond the tall glass windows. He stood and watched for a while. From a distance, the beast looked more like a beautiful woman with long, thick curls. In other circumstances, he might have fallen in love with her. She was dressed in a sharp blue suit with thin pinstripes and a pair of sensible but stylish shoes. On her lapel, she wore a badge that read SALES MANAGER. As he watched, he saw her catch the eye of the night-guard (a kindly old man) wandering about his business. Immediately, he froze solid. It didn't take long for Perseus to realise

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that to look into the monster's eyes meant death. She had the cold, deadly stare of somebody who spent their day looking at slide-shows.

"How can I defeat a woman I can't even look at?" he pondered. Then, while staring at his reflection in the shiny glass windows, an idea popped into his pretty head. Thinking fast, he rattled the door handle before ducking behind a tall, manicured bush. The monster hurried to the door and sprinted out into the night to see what the trouble was. Picking his moment, Perseus slid through the door and into the foyer. Closing his eyes, he banged against the glass window.

After a few moments, he dared to open his eyes a crack. The monster stared back at him through the mirrored glass, only now her eyes were stone and her features frozen in eternal surprise. As a reward for his endeavour, Perseus was given a small hatchback car and a lifetime supply of soft cheese. The psychic's vision never came true.

RETRIEVAL

1. What word does the other think would be a better word to describe Perseus?
2. How strong were his muscles?
3. What was the name of the important business man?
4. What was the name of the large cheese conglomerate?
5. Where did the monster wear her badge?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

V What does the author mean by "growing into his muscles"?

V Find the definition of the word "circumstances".

P What do you think happened to the people who had been turned to stone?

E Explain how you know Perseus was in a rush to see the monster.

I How did Perseus feel about the monster's beauty?

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Answers:

1. Striking

2. As strong as stone

3. Mr Acrisius

4. Gorgonzola

5. Her lapel

V: Growing up and getting used to his strength

V: A fact or condition connected with an event

P: Any suitable prediction

E: He didn't stop to collect his suitcases

I: If she hadn't been a monster, he would have married her. He found her attractive.

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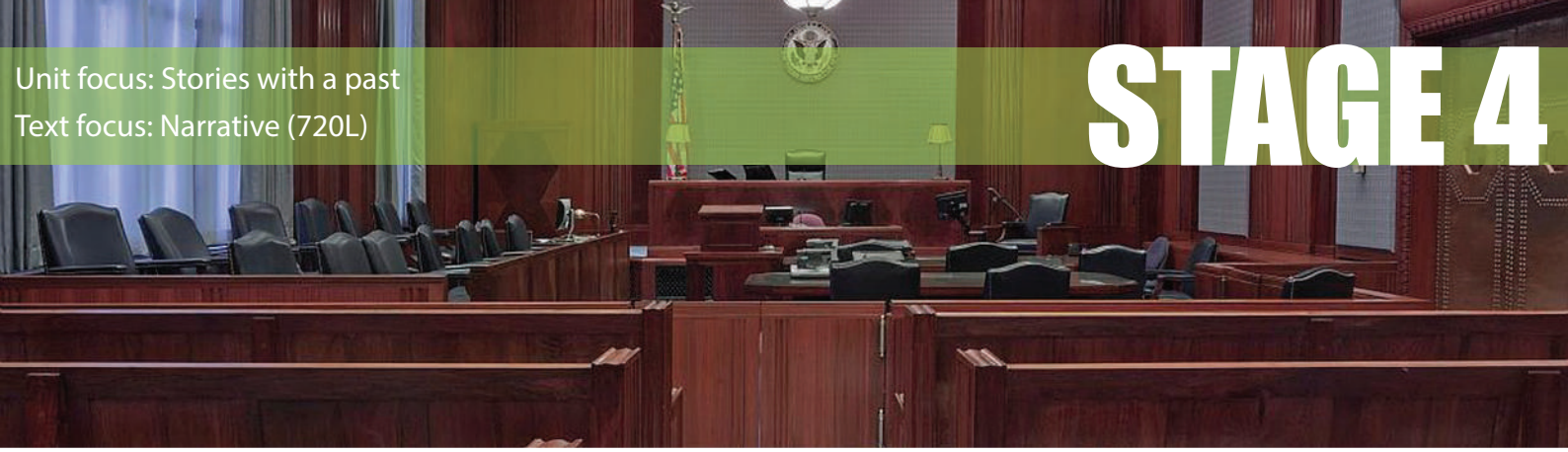

Unit focus: Stories with a past
Text focus: Narrative (720L)

STAGE 4

Three Little Pigs

A quiet buzz settled over the vast courtroom. The members of the jury were settled back into their seats after a long break, and the public galleries were a bustling hive of activity. On the stand, the accused was sworn in, and the prosecuting attorney took to her feet. She was wearing an expensive suit and wore a pained expression. She was also a fox. This wasn't too unusual; the accused was a pig, and the judge was a badger.

When the fox spoke, it was with a soft, friendly voice that didn't match her face. "To be clear, Mr Hamm, you have pleaded innocent to the murder of Mr Wulf?" The pig nodded but said nothing. "I am here today to prove to you that this pig is lying!" this was directed at the jurors. "First, can you describe your arrest?"

Mr Hamm coughed and said, "It was about six in the morning, I was just eating my breakfast. The officers barged into my house without so much as a by-your-leave and the next thing I know, I'm being dragged into the back of a cop car."

"Indeed. And why did they arrest you?"

"They said I killed Mr Wulf. I didn't though," Mr Hamm paused for a split second. "Well, I suppose I did kill him. But it was self-defence, I promise!"

At the pig's confession, the court erupted. Photographers snapped away, and journalists scribbled their notes. The judge banged his gavel and called for order. When everybody had been settled back down, he waved the fox to continue.

"So you admit to killing him? Maybe you had better tell us what led to such a violent attack," said the fox with a wry smile.

"He'd been trying to blow down my house. He'd stand there day and night, huffing and puffing. I feared for my life. He'd done it before as well. My two brothers both had their houses blown down by him. They had to come and live with me! Luckily, my house is made of bricks."

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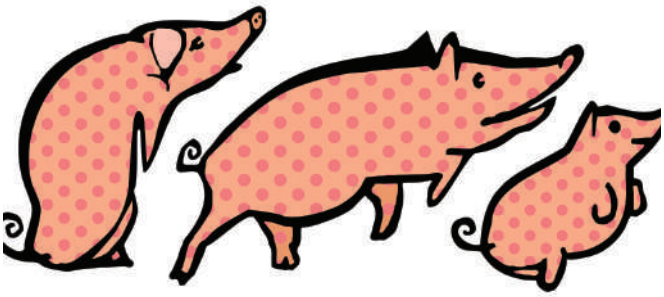
“You say that your brothers had their houses blown down, did you see it for yourself?”

“No,” the pig said nervously. “They told me.”

“Well, our doctors tell us that Mr Wulf suffered from chronic asthma. There’s no way he could blow out a candle, let alone a house.”

The pig tried to speak, but no words came out. The lawyer continued, “In fact, your brothers have both recently claimed substantial insurance pay-outs for their destroyed houses. We believe that Mr Wulf was simply suffering from an asthma attack and stumbled down your chimney, at which point you boiled him alive. What do you have to say for yourself?” the fox finished with a flourish.

Humbled, Mr Hamm looked at his trotters. A quiet hum rose again in the crowd as the judge ordered the jury out to make their decision. When they finally returned, a couple of hours later, the foreman (a squirrel) stood and proceeded to speak. “Your honour, the members of the jury find Mr Hamm…”



VOCABULARY

1. What does the word “vast” mean in the first sentence?
2. Find three synonyms for “bustling”.
3. Explain what a “wry smile” is.
4. Write the word “suffering” in the past tense.

VIPERS QUESTIONS

P How do you think the jury found Mr Hamm? Explain.

I When Mr Hamm confessed, how did the people of the court feel? Explain.

R What condition did the wolf suffer from?

E Explain what actually happened to the wolf on the night of the murder.

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Answers:

1. Large, big.

2. Any suitable synonyms

3. A smile that shows they find something amusing or interesting

4. Suffered

P: Any suitable prediction

I: The court erupted - surprised, angry, emotional etc

R: Asthma

E: He suffered from an asthma attack and stumbled down the chimney

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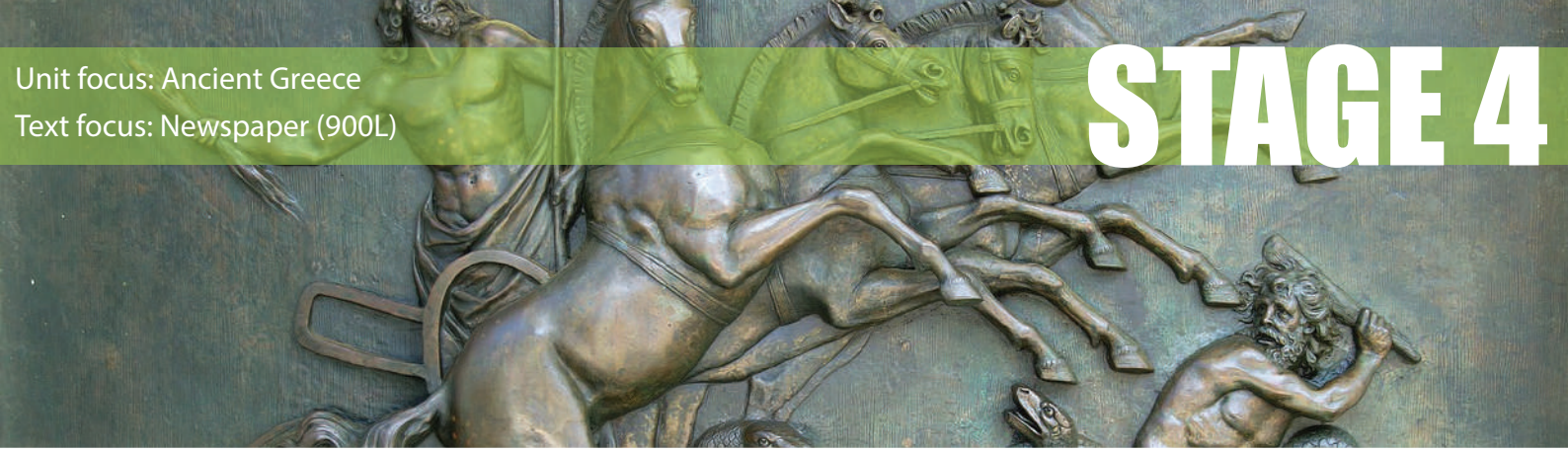


Unit focus: Ancient Greece
Text focus: Newspaper (900L)

STAGE 4

THE TROY PLOY

By War Correspondent **Ares**

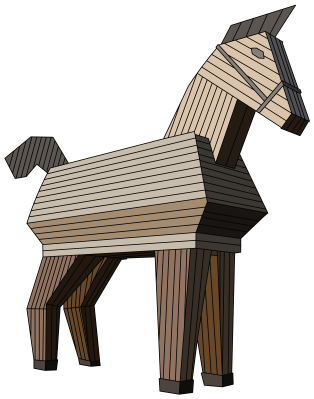
Yesterday, the brave Greek army finally gained entry into Troy in a daring act of subterfuge. An end to the war finally appears to be in sight after 10 years of endless fighting. A full-scale battle is currently being waged inside the walls of Troy, but our sources tell us that the Greek soldiers are on top.

Finding a way to breach the gates of Troy has been an aim for the Greek army for a long time. Unfortunately, the cowardly soldiers of Troy have hidden away behind their walls.

The leader of the Greek army is the mighty Agamemnon. He said last week, "Something needs to be done soon. Their scoundrel of a prince kidnapped my brother's wife, Helen. We've had to fight for nearly a decade to get her back. I want the people of Greece to know we have a cunning plan that I think will end this once and for all."

Keeping this plan a secret was a top priority for Agamemnon and his allies. There were concerns when the army retreated from Troy and sailed to Tenedos. Ultimately, this was all part of the scheme.

Once the citizens of Troy were convinced that the Greeks had retreated, a courageous Greek named Sinon delivered a giant wooden horse. The horse had been carved by the esteemed carpenter Epeius and was presented as a gift honouring Athena.



The horse was wheeled into the city just before dusk. It wasn't until later that the real plan revealed itself. A dozen Greek soldiers had been carefully hidden inside the horse's belly ready to escape.

While all this had been taking place, the Greek army had surreptitiously returned to Troy. The hidden soldiers then unlocked the city gates from the inside. The Greek army had finally gained entry into Troy.

Our reporters managed to catch up with some of the fleeing Trojans. One said that he was sorry for the trouble they'd caused. He added that the plan had been rather good. However, he'd have preferred not to be woken up in the middle of the night by a raging horde.

Helen was rescued just after midnight and returned safely to her husband. The happy couple has said that they will issue a statement at a later date.

We have reached out to the King of Troy for comment, but so far he hasn't responded. There are rumours that this is because he is dead. We will bring you news of any changes as soon as we get it.

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INFERENCE FOCUS

1. How does the reporter feel about the Greek army? How do you know this?
2. How does the reporter feel about the Trojan army? How do you know this?
3. Why were there concerns when the army retreated to Tenedos?
4. Why was Sinon “courageous”?
5. When the fleeing Trojan was interviewed, he said he was sorry for the trouble the caused. What did he mean?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

V What does the word “surreptitiously” tell you about how the Greeks returned?

S What happened after the horse had been wheeled into the town?

V Write a definition for “subterfuge”.

R What relation was Helen to Agamemnon?

R What was Epeius’s job?

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Answers:

1. The reporter thinks they are “brave”
2. The reporter thinks that the Trojans are “cowardly”
3. People would have thought the Greeks were leaving the battle and the Trojans had won
4. He had to deliver the horse to enemy alone. They might have killed him
5. He was sorry that they had kidnapped Helen and started the war

V: They did it secretly without anybody noticing

S: The soldiers left the horse and opened the gate for the army

V: To trick somebody or use a sneaky method (or similar)

R: His brother’s wife (or sister-in-law)

R: A carpenter

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