



Essential Reading Comprehension Skills for 3rd Grade

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During the 3rd grade, reading instruction reaches a critical juncture in which students use their acquired reading skills as a tool for learning across all subject areas. In a recent article, we talked about how children strengthen their skills during the 1st grade and begin making that transition in grade 2. This becomes even more important in the 3rd grade as they are expected to begin developing text analysis skills.



At this stage, learners turn away from learning to decode words and instead focus on making meaning beyond surface-level reading skills. Some of the most essential skills they form include identifying main ideas and supporting details, making use of text structure and features, asking specific text-based questions, and comparing and contrasting texts to construct meaning rather than simple understanding.

If you're wondering about what you can do to help boost your 3rd grader's reading comprehension to enhance their learning, join us as we explore some of the most critical aspects to focus on to help foster those important skills.

6 Essential Reading Comprehension Skills for 3rd Graders

1. Identifying the main idea and supporting key details in a text

First up, we have what is quite possibly the most practiced and assessed skill for this grade level: identifying main ideas and key details in a text. That's because for kids to use reading as a learning tool, they must be able to reduce what they've read into concise, easy-to-remember points.

3rd graders must be able to find a main idea of a paragraph, section, and the entire text, as well as identify specific phrases or sentences that convey that idea. They must be able to find key details that point towards a larger idea. The best way to practice this is through plenty of reading, and back and forth discussion and feedback. Start with shorter texts before working up to longer stories and informational pieces.

[This lesson](#) offers a brief passage for children to read and think about. It also demonstrates how reading is used as a tool to learn in other subjects because the paragraph is science topic that teaches about landforms and volcanoes. In the second worksheet, learners practice supporting a main idea with supporting details.

Estimated classroom
time: 6 min

Chapter: Key Ideas and
Details/ Craft and
Structure

Unit: Reading
Informational Text

Click on any activity below to start learning.

1st

⌚ 3:00 min

2nd

⌚ 3:00 min

Landforms: Mountains

Read about mountains.
Check the main idea below.

Mountains are a kind of landform on our Earth. They reach higher than the land around it. The tallest mountain is Mount Everest. It is 29,000 feet high! Mountains are often very cold at the top. Some have snow on the peak, or highest point.

Landforms: Mountains Worksheet

Worksheet

Volcanoes: Main Idea and Supporting Details



The **main idea** is the most important idea of a story or paragraph. **Supporting details** tell you more about the main idea and make it stronger.

Volcano Facts Worksheet

Worksheet

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2. Ask and answer text-based questions, like who, what, where, when, why, and how

As readers advance to longer texts, it becomes very important to encourage them to be curious about specific text details. At this stage, many learners tend to get off topic and question anything their mind wonders about related to the topic presented in the text.

Instead, narrow their focus on questions that won't lead them astray. Teach kids to ask text-based questions, like who, what, where, when, why, and how, to find out all the details they can about a story or article.

To introduce this concept, read a story with students like [this one](#) about a dog and his bone.

THE DOG AND HIS BONE -KIDS

READ THE STORY.



One day, a hound dog found a bone. He set off to the woods to bury it. As he walked, he thought about how tasty it would be. He couldn't wait to chew his new bone.

He passed a stream and looked at the water as he walked by. He saw a dog in the water with a big bone. "Oh," he thought, "I would love to have two bones! After all, why should anyone else eat these yummy treats?"

He growled at the dog in the water. The dog growled back! Then he opened his strong jaws to steal the second bone.

With a splash, his bone fell into the water and disappeared. And the dog in the water had vanished also. Now the hound dog didn't have any bones at all.

**WHO IS TELLING THIS STORY?
CHECK THE CORRECT ANSWER.**



THE HOUND DOG THE DOG IN THE WATER AN UNSEEN NARRATOR

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Encourage children to answer the question at the end but follow up with [this worksheet](#) that specifically focuses on text-based questions, such as who, what, and where.

THE DOG AND HIS BONE: QUESTIONS -KIDS

Read the story written on [THE DOG AND HIS BONE](#) worksheet. Then, read each question and check the correct answer.

1. Where was the hound dog going?	<input type="checkbox"/> to a party	<input type="checkbox"/> to the woods	<input type="checkbox"/> to the beach
2. Was there a real dog in the water?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, there was.	<input type="checkbox"/> No, it was his reflection.	
3. Why did the hound dog open his mouth?	<input type="checkbox"/> He yawned.	<input type="checkbox"/> He barked.	<input type="checkbox"/> He tried to get the bone.
4. How many bones did he have at the end of the story?	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
5. How would you describe the dog?	<input type="checkbox"/> selfish	<input type="checkbox"/> kind	<input type="checkbox"/> cheerful

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3. Understand the basics of a story, such as character traits, conflict, and plot events

Another important concept that is taught heavily in the 3rd grade is fictional plot structure and the beginnings of literary elements. Children start thinking about character traits, conflicts, and how stories progress from problem to resolution.

One essential component of this is learning to analyze character traits as this jumpstarts their critical thinking and analysis skills. Use [this lesson](#) to help them get the hang of identifying traits based upon text evidence.

Estimated classroom time: 6 min

Chapter: Literature

Unit: Comprehension

Click on any activity below to start learning.

1st

⌚ 3:00 min

2nd

⌚ 3:00 min

[Finding Character Traits](#)



If we pay attention to what a character says and does, we can learn about the traits that the character has.

Read the description of each character and circle the trait that best describes the character.

Sam always made sure to get his chores done. He did his homework as soon as he got home, and studied hard for all of his tests.



[Finding Character Traits Worksheet](#)

Worksheet

[Trait Maze](#)



We can describe how a character acts using [character traits](#). A trait is different than a feeling because a feeling is temporary, a trait is part of a character's personality.

Follow the traits through the maze. Don't get fooled by the feelings!

helpful

tired

START



[Trait Maze Worksheet](#)

Worksheet



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4. Analyze and use text structure and features

When it comes to informational text, it is critical to teach kids not only to read the text on the page, but also to look for common ways that authors structure their pieces, as well as text features such as pictures, captions, diagrams, and more!

[This lesson](#) helps readers to notice helpful features they may not have otherwise noticed, and encourages them to look at all aspects of a text to glean meaning.

Click on any activity below to start learning.

1st

3:00 min

2nd

3:00 min

TEXT FEATURES Readers use **text features** in order to help them better understand a text. Look at the article, check off the correct name for each text feature.

CAPTION **TITLE**

The Wampanoag Tribe The Wampanoag people lived in southern Massachusetts and Rhode Island at the beginning of the 17th century. They came in contact with the first English colonists and helped

Text Features Worksheet

Worksheet

CAPTIONS AND IMAGES **KIDS** **Photographs and captions** help the reader build understanding about the text they are reading. A caption tells the reader what the picture is.

Look at each picture and check off the correct caption to match the image.



Captions and Images Worksheet

Worksheet



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5. Comparing and contrasting texts

Even in the third grade, it is imperative to introduce research skills that kids will continue to develop and refine all throughout their schooling and beyond. When conducting research, one of the most important aspects is to read through multiple sources, and to compare the information found within them to verify and validate accuracy.

While 3rd grade readers do not exactly learn how to choose reputable and valid sources, they begin this years-long process by comparing texts they read in class. **This lesson** starts with a worksheet that tasks readers with reading two sources about the same topic. It wraps up with a worksheet that asks them to read two distinct paragraphs to find details that are found within both.

Click on any activity below to start learning.

1st

🕒 3:00 min

2nd

🕒 3:00 min

COMPARE TWO SOURCES

1. Read the sources.



-KIDS

Source 1
Bats are amazing creatures. They have many adaptations that help them to survive. Possibly the most amazing adaptation is bat's ability to fly at night. In the dark, bats use echolocation. They send out sound waves and as the waves bounce back, the bat is able to figure out how far away the object is.

Source 2

Bats are in trouble. A mysterious disease known as

Compare Two Sources
Worksheet

Worksheet

COMPARISONS

1. Read both paragraphs.



Many of the animals in our oceans are in great danger. Animals like the great white shark are endangered. That means that there are very few of them left. While sharks are often hunted for their fins, they also can get caught in fishing nets. Humans need to protect these animals, not harm them.

Green sea turtles are also endangered. These

Comparisons
Worksheet

Worksheet



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6. Understanding cause and effect text structure

Finally, another vital concept to focus on is cause and effect text structures. Integral to both informational and argumentative texts they will read later on, cause and effect relationships are essential for learning concepts in subjects across the curriculum.

This lesson is great for introducing the idea of cause-and-effect relationships in text, while also offering an informational text to read to illustrate how such a structure works in a longer paragraph.

Click on any activity below to start learning.

1st

⌚ 3:00 min

2nd

⌚ 3:00 min

CAUSE and EFFECT Cause is what happens. Effect is what happens as a result.
Read the cause and check off the most accurate effect.

1. A boy falls off his bike.
he reads a book
he skins his knee



Cause And Effect
Worksheet
Worksheet

CHANGES TO THE AMAZON KIDS
1. Read the text. Look for cause and effect relationships.

The Amazon Rainforest is one of the most important ecosystems in the world. It is home to thousands of species of plants and animals. This unique habitat is in danger. Climate change has caused changes in weather patterns which has harmed the delicate ecosystem. Deforestation (massive amounts of trees being cut down) has taken away the habitat of many



Changes to the
Amazon Worksheet
Worksheet



Open in Free Online Classroom!

The 3rd grade is another pivotal year for students as they blossom into more sophisticated readers. While they are still building fluency and developing vocabulary, their reading abilities become much more nuanced in that they begin to use reading to develop critical thinking and analysis skills. Find more worksheets and lessons on reading and other subjects inside our free [Interactive Classroom](#) that is suitable both for teaching in class and homeschooling.