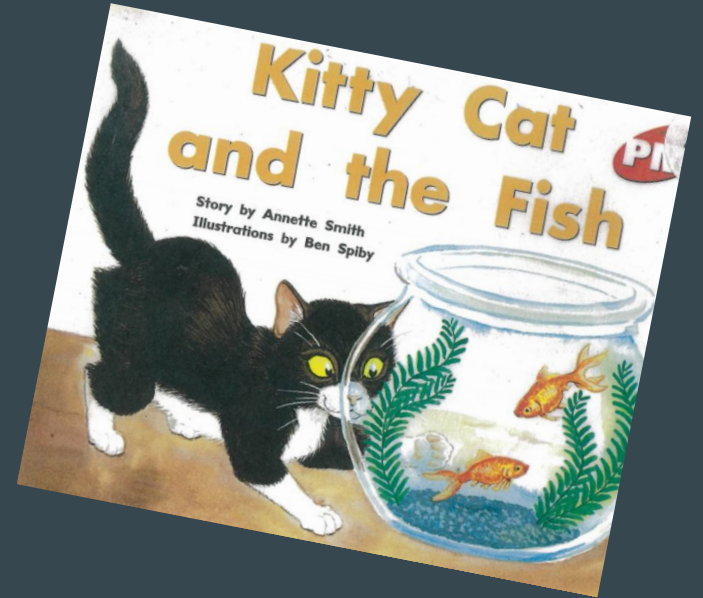# 7 Ways to Improve Reading Comprehension

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MPS Families

7 ways to build *Reading Comprehension*

1. Start early

2. Pay close attention while reading

3. Ask inferential comprehension questions

4. Is your child asking questions?

5. Relate to real-life experiences

6. Make predictions

7. Retell the story

1. Start building reading comprehension skills early

Before your child learns to read fluently, you can begin building early reading comprehension skills during daily reading sessions at home. When you read with your child, ask them questions as you flip through the book.

For example, *"Why is the cat hungry?"*

or

"What makes you think that?"

This will help your child understand that the [words in books convey meaning](#) and that it's important to listen closely to understand.

2. Encourage your child to pay close attention while reading

Ask your child literal comprehension questions, which require answers that can be found directly from the text.

For example,

"Who does Kitty Cat see by the water?"

This will encourage your child to pay close attention to key information in the text.

3. Ask inferential comprehension questions to help your child draw conclusions

Inferential comprehension questions are a bit trickier than literal comprehension questions. The answer cannot be found directly from the text.

They require answers which are less obvious and require your child to draw conclusions based on what they have read.

For example,

"Why is Fat Cat's tail going up and down?"

or

"How do you know the big fish is safe?"

4. Make sure your child is asking questions

Children who have reading comprehension skills understand what they have read and can recognise when they do not.

Check to see if your child looks confused or disengaged while reading and make sure they are asking questions when they get stuck.

Try modelling asking questions to your child. *"I wonder if Kitty Cat has eaten any fish in the bowl before?"*

5. Relate what you read to real-life experiences

Can your child make connections between what they've read and what they already know or have experienced?

Try to encourage them to relate what they have read to prior experiences and knowledge.

They may even make connections between what they are reading currently and what they have already read in the past.

"Have you ever seen a cat try and eat goldfish in a bowl?"
"Have you ever seen a cat go fishing from a river before?"

6. Ask your child to make predictions

Stop periodically while reading to ask your child to predict what might happen next.

Children who read for meaning are able to take what they have already read and make predictions about the story before it ends.

7. Ask your child to "retell" what they have read

After reading a book, ask your child to draw a picture to depict the story and its main characters.

Practice doing this with books which include little or no illustrations.

This is a fun and creative way for them to think about what they've just read and 'retell' a story in their own way.
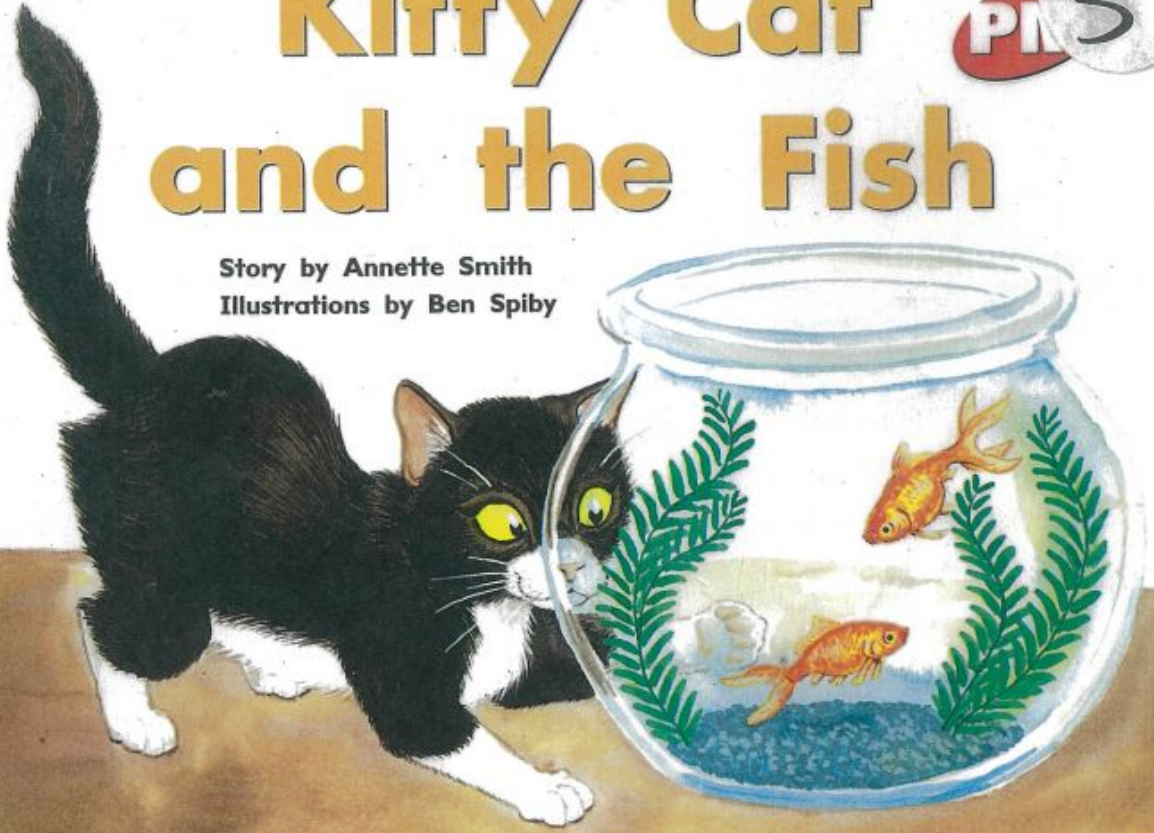
Or if they are a reluctant drawer, ask them later in the day to retell you the story in their own words.

If they are keen on dramatics, have them perform the story in a puppet show.

Kitty Cat and the Fish

PM 5

Story by Annette Smith
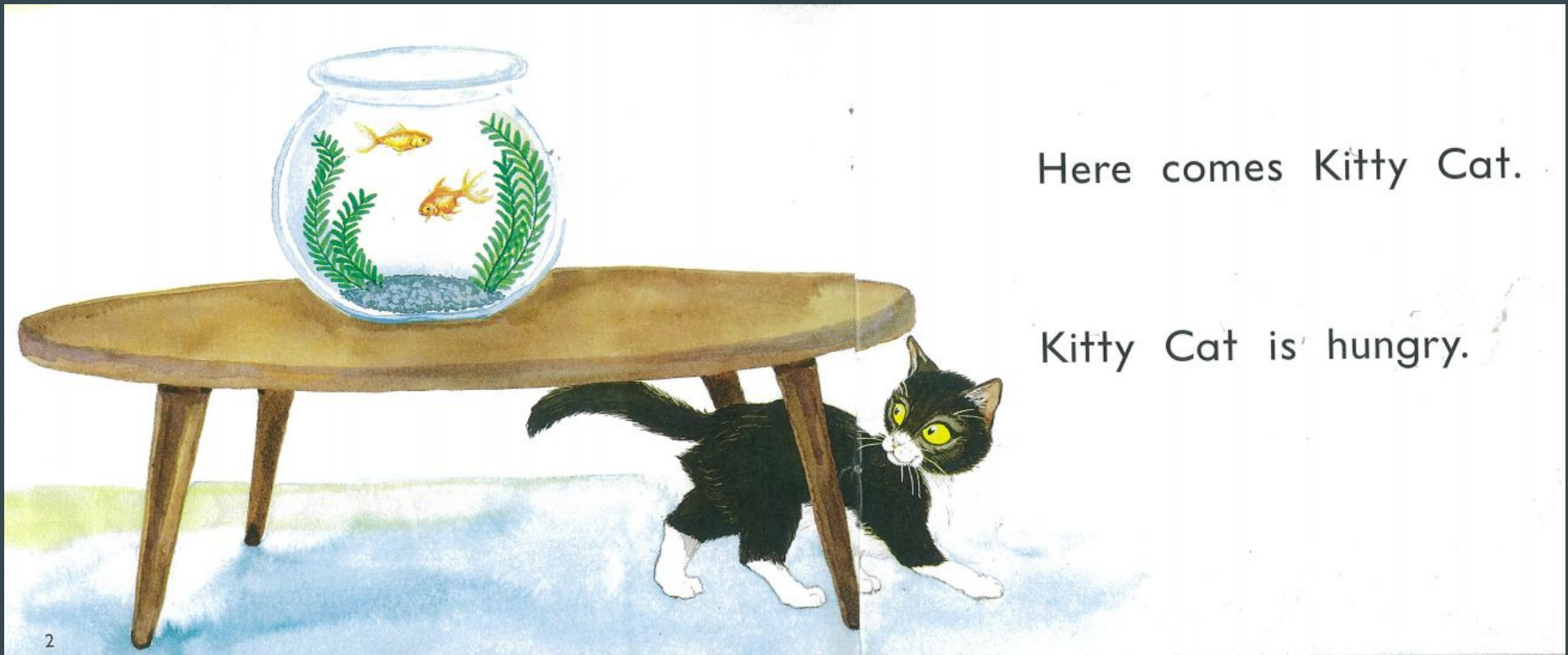Illustrations by Ben Spiby

Predicting - What do you think this story will be about?

Why do you think that?

Connecting - Have you ever seen a cat approach a fish bowl before?

Connecting - Do you remember another story involving a cat and some fish?

Here comes Kitty Cat.

Kitty Cat is hungry.

2

Predicting - What do you think Kitty Cat is going to do next?
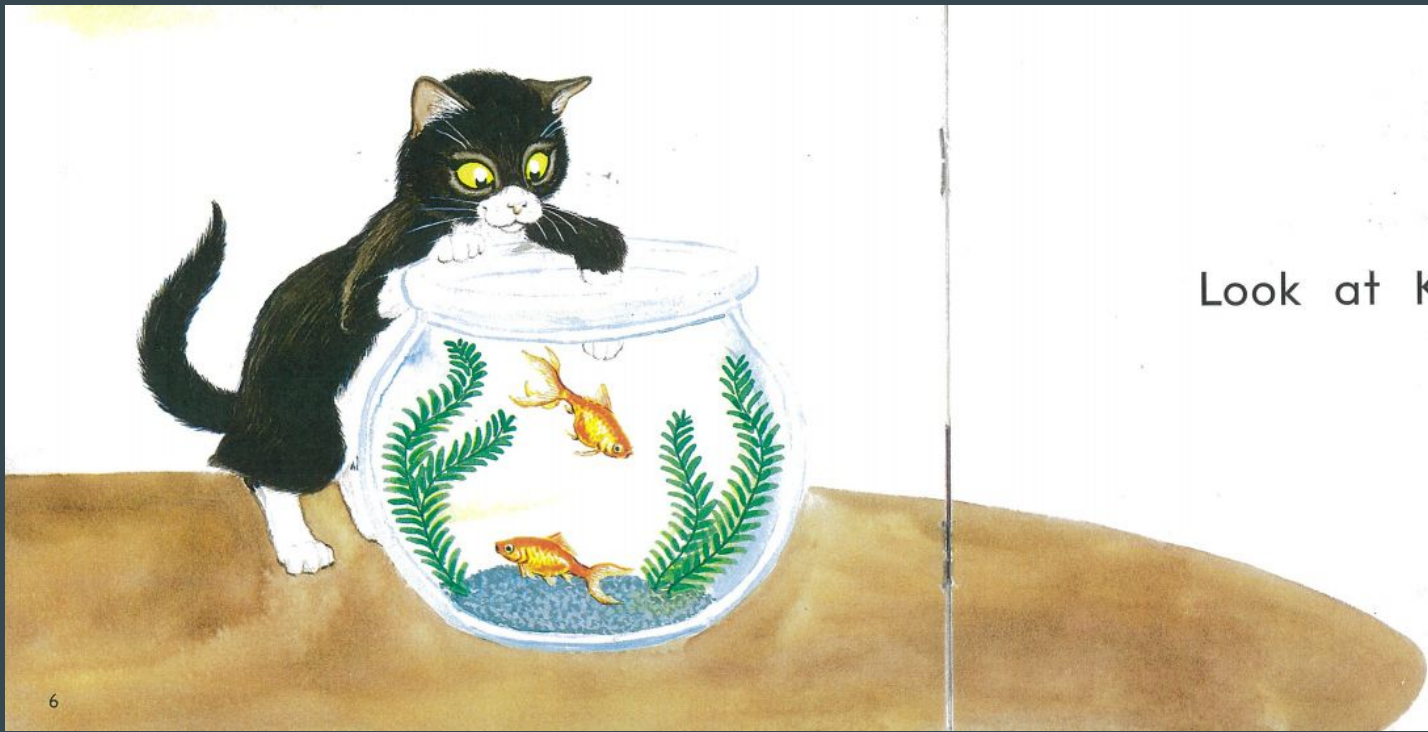*Inferential/Literal -* What in the picture makes you think that?

Kitty Cat is looking
at the little fish.

4

Inferential - What do you think Kitty Cat is thinking?
Predicting - What do you think Kitty Cat will do next? What in the picture makes you think that?

Look at Kitty Cat!

6

7

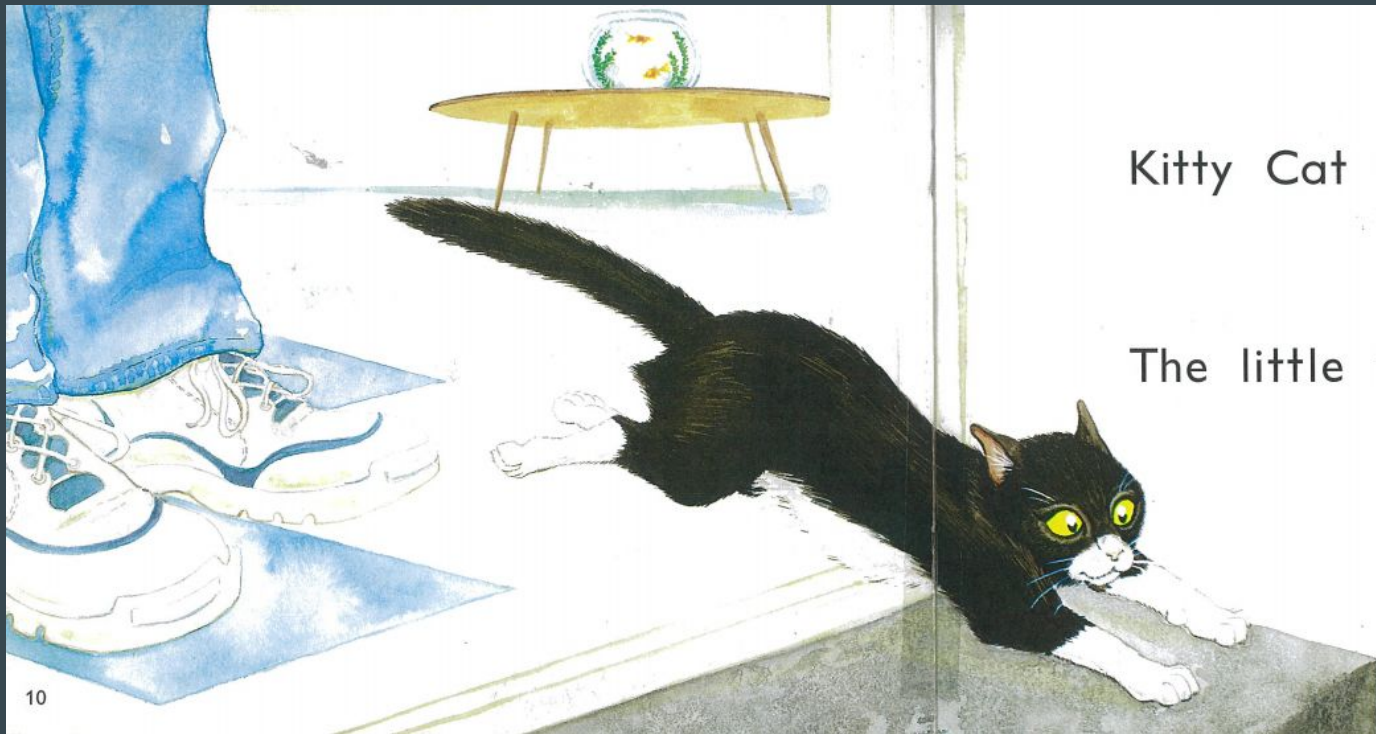Inferential - Is Kitty Cat doing the right thing right now?
What makes you think that?

"No! No! No!

Kitty Cat, you are naughty!

Go away!"

8

9

Literal - What does the person say to Kitty Cat?
Inferential - Who is telling Kitty Cat to go away? Why do you think that?

Kitty Cat runs away.

The little fish are safe.

10

11

Inferential - Why is Kitty Cat running away?
Inferential - Whose shoes are in the picture?

Kitty Cat can see Fat Cat.

Fat Cat is looking at the **big** fish.

Fat Cat's tail goes up and down, up and down.

12

13

Literal - Who does Kitty Cat see by the water?
Literal/Inferential - What is Fat Cat doing?

Inferential - Why is Fat Cat's tail going up and down?

Here comes Kitty Cat.

"Meow!"

14

15

Literal - What does Kitty Cat do to Fat Cat?
Literal - What happens when Kitty Cat jumps on Fat Cat's tail?
Connecting - Have you ever seen a cat jump on another cat's tail before?

The **big** fish is safe!

16

Inferential - How do you know the big fish is safe?

Understanding - What did Kitty Cat do in this story?

The older student

- Monitor for comprehension

- Model effective questioning

- Explain inference (high-level thinking)

- Story structure

- Summarising

Comprehension monitoring

Teach your child to ask themselves the following questions when they're reading.

- Does this make sense?
- Do I understand what I am reading?
- What does this have to do with what I already know?
- What will happen next?

Tips

- Identify the difficulty (vocabulary, pronunciation, concept)
- Think-aloud
- Re-read
- Look back/forward through the text

Model effective questioning

Good readers ask themselves questions before, during and after reading.

Poor readers often fail to self-question and therefore do not draw the full meaning from the text they are reading.

Model effective questioning throughout the story to assist your child in developing self-questioning skills.

Inference

Explain that some questions can be answered by referring back to the text however others require high-level thinking (e.g. inference making, prediction) to find answers beyond what is explicitly stated in the text.

Ask;

- what has happened,
- which characters were involved
- when did the event occur
- where did the event take place
- why did the event happen
- how did the event happen

Structure

Stories follow a predictable format;

- Time
- place and characters
- Problem
- actions following the problem
- resolution of the problem

Students who are explicitly taught about story structure will more easily comprehend stories they hear and read and become more capable of retelling stories within a logical framework. They also show improvements in asking and answering who, what, where, why and how questions.

Try

- Five finger recall - each finger is used as a memory prompt for one of the structural elements (characters, setting, problem, plot, resolution)
- Write each structural element on a post-it note.
- As your child reads or listens to the story being read, they flag each section as they come to it.

Summarising

1. Decide what the most important ideas are in the text
2. Generalise from examples or ideas that are repeated in the text
3. Ignore irrelevant details

The first or last sentence, key vocabulary, and repetitions of the same word or words often give hints.

Tips

- Read a paragraph.
- Ask yourself – "What were the main idea and details in this paragraph?"
- Put the main idea and details into your own words

Bibliography

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NELSON, Cengage Learning, PM Plus, Kitty and the Big Fish