

Aristotle

Fiction

Content domain focus:

2a give/explain the meaning of words in context

2b retrieve and record information/identify key details from fiction and non-fiction

2d make inferences from the text/explain and justify inferences with evidence from the text

Text summary

Aristotle, by Dick King-Smith, is the story of a white cat (Aristotle) and his rather mysterious owner Bella Donna. Like all cats, Aristotle has nine lives and, because of his mischievous nature, it isn't long before he has lost many of them. Bella Donna seems to be able to sense when her cat is in trouble and an alert reader begins to use the clues in the story to work out exactly who, or what, Bella Donna is.

Unit summary

The questions are, generally speaking, in chronological order. They start with some relatively simple information-retrieval questions then move on to include questions that require the children to work out the meanings of words and to make inferences.



Teaching prompts

- Ask whether any of the children have cats as pets. Discuss their cats' personalities and behaviour. Ask whether their cats have ever got into trouble. If necessary, explain and elaborate on the notion of cats having nine lives.
- Discuss strategies that the children can use when they come across unfamiliar words in order to work out word meanings, e.g. read the rest of the sentence, identify root words, use the context.
- Explore the children's awareness of techniques they can use to find information efficiently and effectively, e.g. identifying and visualising key words in questions, looking for capital letters when searching for proper nouns, running the eye down the centre of the page rather than reading every word.
- Ask the children to remind you of what they understand about making inferences. If appropriate, introduce the idea of reading beyond the lines – using clues that the author has left in the text to help them work out information about the characters, the setting and the plot.

Revisiting the text

Ask the children to:

- draw pictures of what they think Bella Donna and Aristotle look like
- role-play the scene described in the extract
- nominate a child to take on the role of Bella Donna and to carry out a hot-seating activity
- write speech bubbles for what Bella Donna says to Aristotle when she eventually finds him
- carry out research into Dick King-Smith – the author of *Aristotle*.



Answers

Links to content domain requirements are in brackets after the answer.

1. by the kitchen fire [2b]
2. her broomstick [2b]
3. black [2b]
4. a big pot [2a]
5. food/magic potion [2d]
6. A train; with any acceptable explanation, e.g. because of the kinds of noises/the noises get louder and then go quieter. [2d]
7. a high-pitched sound. [2a]
8. quickly [2a]
9. rushed out/hurried out [2a]
10. Answers to include reference to him being naughty or mischievous, inquisitive or noseey. [2d]



Assessment

The children are secure in their understanding if they are able to give or explain word meanings and if they can identify synonyms for words or phrases, or connect words with definitions.

The children are able to locate and note down information effectively if they find and visualise key words in the questions to help them look for specific words and phrases.

The children are able to make inferences if they link clues in the text with their own experience and knowledge.

Next steps

Ask the children to work with their reading partners. They should each select three words in a dictionary and then challenge each other to suggest a definition for the words, then look them up in the dictionary to check their definitions.

To develop vocabulary knowledge, give the children cloze procedure activities where you have deleted specific words in a passage and ask them to write in words that they think would work to fill the space. Encourage the children to think about the word class of the missing word to help them identify an appropriate replacement.

Show a relatively brief passage on the interactive whiteboard (IWB) and ask the children to scan it to get the overall gist of what it is about. Then hide the passage and give children two or three questions. Reveal the passage for a short, but realistic, period of time and ask them to skim the text to find the answers to the questions.

Using images that contain objects, places and people, ask the children to work with their reading partners to look closely at the pictures and to make up a back story that explains what is happening.