

Dick King-Smith: A Biography

Non-fiction

Content domain focus:

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

2f identify/explain how information/narrative content is related and contributes to meaning as a whole

Text summary

This extract is a biography of Dick King-Smith, the prolific children's writer. It gives some background information about the author's life and how it influenced his writing. The biography includes details of where he got his ideas, advice he gave to other writers and how he felt about being a writer.

Unit summary

The unit focuses on retrieving and recording information using key words in the questions to help look for the key details. Questions 6 and 7 involve the children in finding information from across a paragraph.

Question 9 involves thinking about the organisation and presentation of the information. Question 10 requires children to make a personal response to the information given in the extract.



Teaching prompts

- Remind the children that skimming a text will give them an idea of what it is about before they start reading in detail, and will help them to remember where they might find answers to questions.
- Ask them to remind you of key words in questions that will guide them towards looking for particular types of information, e.g. the word "Who?" or the question starters, such as "What was _____ called ...?" or "What was the name of ...?" will mean that they are looking for names and, therefore, capital letters.
- Ask the children to tell you about how non-fiction texts can be organised, e.g. in paragraphs, with headings and subheadings, chronologically.
- Remind the children to think how they feel about a person they are reading about. Does the person remind them of anyone they know or have read about? What would they say to the person if they met?

Revisiting the text

Ask the children to:

- work in pairs to develop questions they would like to ask Dick King-Smith
- carry out a hot-seating activity in which they question Dick King-Smith. You may wish to be in the hot-seat yourself or ask a confident child to take on the role
- watch and review the film *Babe*

- compare the film *Babe* with the book *The Sheep-Pig*
- turn Dick King-Smith's advice to writers into a poster and display it in the classroom
- research their favourite author and write their biographies.



Answers

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

1. 1922 [2b]
2. over 100 [2b]
3. Myrle [2b]
4. Because he wasn't very good at farming. [2b]
5. *The Sheep-Pig* [2b]
6. He was a farmer, a soldier, a teacher. [2b]
7. His experiences, books he'd read, places he'd worked and animals he'd cared for. [2b]
8. "Writing my books is like handing out presents." [2b]
9. Because it was about a big change in his life./Because he was doing something different. [2f]
10. Any response supported with reasons and evidence from the text. [2d]



Assessment

The children are able to locate and note down information effectively if they identify clues in the question to help them know the kind of information they are looking for. They can find and visualise key words in the questions to help them look for specific words and phrases, e.g. "When?" means looking for a date or phrase related to time; "How many?" means looking for a number; "called" and "name of" means looking for a proper noun and capital letters. Refer to question 8 and establish that the children are looking for what Dick King-Smith said and, therefore, inverted commas.

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

The children are secure in identifying how information is related if they are able to identify the paragraphs in the extract and find the subheadings. Establish that they summarise the information given in the paragraph so help the reader to know what each paragraph is about.

Next steps

Develop the children's abilities to find information quickly by displaying a text on the IWB and asking them questions that involve finding proper nouns, numbers and dates, and particular punctuation marks. Challenge the children to work in teams and award points to the team that finds the answer first.

Develop the children's ability to empathise by asking them to examine photographs of people and illustrations of characters in stories and to discuss what the person might be thinking, saying or feeling. Encourage the children to make connections with their own experiences.

When reading non-fiction, draw the children's attention to 'signposts' that are used to help readers find information, e.g. the contents and index pages, headings, subheadings, captions and labels.