Three bands. Clearer questions.

Working Towards | Expected | Greater Depth

Six printable question mats: one for each band in Years 3–4 and Years 5–6. Select the phase first, then choose questions that reveal the reader's thinking.

WHAT THE BANDS MEAN HERE

Working Towards: secure the next reading step.
Expected: apply the phase's skills securely.
Greater Depth: explore nuance, alternatives and effects within the same curriculum.

ASSESSMENT ACCURACY

These are NOWAY classroom bands, not official KS2 reading grades. Statutory KS2 reading uses test outcomes; the three statutory teacher-assessment bands apply to writing. [2, 3]

USE THE MATS WELL

Years 3–4 mats draw on lower KS2; Years 5–6 mats draw on upper KS2. The phase expectations build towards the end of Years 4 and 6. Use your school's year-by-year curriculum for interim judgements. [1]

The supplied Levels 1–5 do not map directly onto these bands. Text difficulty, the response and the support needed all matter.

PREPARE EACH QUESTION

Choose a suitable text and two or three prompts. Replace square brackets with the exact word, named character or numbered paragraph. Use only questions supported by the chosen text.

Invite oral rehearsal, then full-sentence written or typed answers when appropriate. For find-and-copy tasks, copy only the requested words.

Working Towards

Years 3–4 | Lower KS2

Secure the next step. Find a clue. Explain it.

Adult: replace [brackets] with exact details before asking. Choose prompts that fit your text.

1 Read accurately & fluently

Read [word] using the letters and sounds you know. Which part needs a second look?

Reread [sentence]. Where will you pause so the meaning is clear?

2 Retrieve & summarise

In [paragraph], where is [character]? Find the words that name the place.

What happens first and next in [section]? Retell the two main events.

3 Infer & predict

How might [character] feel in [scene]? Choose one action that supports your idea.

What might [character] do next? Use one clue from [section].

4 Explore vocabulary

What could [word] mean in [sentence]? Reread the nearby words for a clue.

Which word in [paragraph] tells you how [character] moves? Explain what it shows.

5 Language & structure

Which words in [paragraph] help you picture the setting? Describe the picture.

Which heading or illustration helps you find out about [topic]? Explain how.

6 Compare & discuss

What does [character] want? Talk about an event that helps you decide.

What question would you ask about [section]? Say which part puzzled you.

Say it first. Answer in a full sentence. Use a clue and explain it when asked. For find-and-copy tasks, copy only the requested words.

Working Towards

Years 5–6 | Upper KS2

Secure the next step. Find a clue. Explain it.

Adult: replace [brackets] with exact details before asking. Choose prompts that fit your text.

1 Read accurately & fluently

Break [word] into a root and any prefixes or suffixes. How does this help you read it?

Reread [paragraph]. Correct any word that changes the meaning, then explain the paragraph.

2 Retrieve & summarise

Find two stated details about [topic] in [section]. Say where you found each one.

What is the main point of [paragraph]? Explain it in one clear sentence.

3 Infer & predict

Why might [character] act in this way in [scene]? Explain one relevant clue.

What is likely to happen after [event]? Link your prediction to a stated or implied clue.

4 Explore vocabulary

Explain [word] in [sentence]. Which nearby detail supports your meaning?

Try a familiar word instead of [word]. Does the sentence still mean the same thing?

5 Language & structure

Which phrase in [paragraph] creates a tense mood? Explain what it makes you picture.

How does [heading] help you locate information about [topic]?

6 Compare & discuss

Which of these two selected statements is a fact and which is an opinion? Explain.

What idea does [partner] offer about [character]? Add one relevant detail from the text.

Say it first. Answer in a full sentence. Use a clue and explain it when asked. For find-and-copy tasks, copy only the requested words.

Expected

Years 3–4 | Lower KS2

Connect your answer to the text and explain your evidence.

Adult: replace [brackets] with exact details before asking. Choose prompts that fit your text.

1 Read accurately & fluently

Read [word] aloud. How does its root or ending help you understand it?

Read [dialogue] with expression. Which words guide the voice you use?

2 Retrieve & summarise

Use the contents page or index to locate [topic]. Record two relevant facts.

Summarise the main idea across [two paragraphs]. Leave out details that are less important.

3 Infer & predict

Why does [character] make this choice in [scene]? Explain using evidence.

Predict what will follow [event]. Which stated or implied detail makes this likely?

4 Explore vocabulary

What does [word] mean in [sentence]? Check that your explanation fits the whole sentence.

Which phrase in [paragraph] captures your interest? Explain the picture or feeling it creates.

5 Language & structure

How does [description] help you understand the setting or a character?

How do [headings, numbered steps or layout] help the reader use this text?

6 Compare & discuss

What theme appears in [story]? Explain it using an event from the text.

How does [partner]'s idea compare with yours? Explain your view and listen to theirs.

Say it first. Answer in a full sentence. Use a clue and explain it when asked. For find-and-copy tasks, copy only the requested words.

Expected

Years 5–6 | Upper KS2

Connect your answer to the text and explain your evidence.

Adult: replace [brackets] with exact details before asking. Choose prompts that fit your text.

1 Read accurately & fluently

Read [unfamiliar word] accurately. Explain how its root or affixes support your understanding.

Prepare [poem or dialogue] aloud. Explain how tone and emphasis communicate its meaning.

2 Retrieve & summarise

Retrieve information about [topic] from [two sections]. Organise it clearly for a reader.

Summarise [several paragraphs]. Select the key details that support the main idea.

3 Infer & predict

What motivates [character]'s decision in [scene]? Explain how the evidence supports your view.

How does [new event] affect your earlier prediction? Revise it using relevant clues.

4 Explore vocabulary

Explain the meaning of [word or phrase] in context, including any suggested feeling.

How does [simile, metaphor or other image] affect the reader's view of [subject]?

5 Language & structure

How does the order of information in [section] shape what the reader understands?

What effect does [specific word or sentence] have at this point? Explain how it works.

6 Compare & discuss

Compare how [two texts] present [theme]. Support one similarity and one difference.

Distinguish a fact from an opinion in [section]. Explain how each is presented.

Say it first. Answer in a full sentence. Use a clue and explain it when asked. For find-and-copy tasks, copy only the requested words.

Greater Depth

Years 3–4 | Lower KS2

Explore alternatives, weigh evidence and explain subtle effects.

Adult: replace [brackets] with exact details before asking. Choose prompts that fit your text.

1 Read accurately & fluently

Read [dialogue] in two plausible ways. Which interpretation fits the surrounding text better?

When you misread [word], how did the sentence meaning change? Explain your correction.

2 Retrieve & summarise

Which detail from [two paragraphs] matters most to a summary? Explain what would be lost without it.

Find information about [topic] in [two sections]. Explain how the details fit together.

3 Infer & predict

Could [character]'s action suggest two different feelings? Weigh the clues for each.

Offer two possible outcomes after [event]. Explain which has stronger support.

4 Explore vocabulary

Compare [word] with [alternative]. How would the change affect the reader's picture?

How does the meaning of [word] change between [two selected sentences]? Use the context.

5 Language & structure

How do [two descriptions] change the mood between the opening and ending?

Would a different order for [two events or sections] change the meaning? Explain why.

6 Compare & discuss

Compare the same theme in [two familiar stories]. How do the characters respond differently?

Which evidence could challenge your view of [character]? Explain whether it changes your thinking.

Say it first. Answer in a full sentence. Use a clue and explain it when asked. For find-and-copy tasks, copy only the requested words.

Greater Depth

Years 5–6 | Upper KS2

Explore alternatives, weigh evidence and explain subtle effects.

Adult: replace [brackets] with exact details before asking. Choose prompts that fit your text.

1 Read accurately & fluently

Perform [passage] to reveal a meaning beneath the spoken words. Justify your tone using clues.

How do emphasis, pauses and phrasing change the possible meaning of [line]? Test two readings.

2 Retrieve & summarise

Create a concise summary of [two accounts]. Keep their shared facts and important disagreements.

Which detail seems minor at first but becomes important later? Explain its changing significance.

3 Infer & predict

Weigh two interpretations of [character]'s motive. Which evidence supports or weakens each?

How might an unreliable narrator affect your prediction? Separate reported claims from stronger clues.

4 Explore vocabulary

How does [phrase] suggest more than its literal meaning? Explain the effect in this scene.

Evaluate [word] against two alternatives. Which best preserves the tone and implied attitude?

5 Language & structure

How do language and structure work together in [section] to steer the reader's response?

Where does [narrator]'s account leave uncertainty? Explain how the omission affects your judgement.

6 Compare & discuss

Compare the viewpoints in [two accounts]. Which evidence supports or challenges their claims?

How is [theme] handled differently across [two texts]? Offer a reasoned interpretation of the contrast.

Say it first. Answer in a full sentence. Use a clue and explain it when asked. For find-and-copy tasks, copy only the requested words.

What stronger reasoning can look like

Original NOWAY example: Mrs Hope held the staffroom door open. Mr Crow slipped a pink envelope beneath his planner. "Just timetables," he said, although nobody had asked. When the envelope slid onto the floor, he stamped his shoe over it. Mrs Hope raised one eyebrow and waited.

Working Towards

How might Mr Crow feel? Use one action as a clue.

Mr Crow may feel worried because he covers the envelope with his shoe.

Expected

What might explain Mr Crow's behaviour? Connect two clues.

Mr Crow seems keen to keep the envelope private. He hides it beneath his planner and covers it again when it falls, suggesting he does not want Mrs Hope to see it.

Greater Depth

Is embarrassment the only possible reason for his behaviour? Weigh two interpretations.

He may be embarrassed because he explains himself before anyone asks. He might also be hiding a surprise. Both fit his concealment, but the unknown contents mean we cannot be certain.

Gather evidence over time. Note the text, its difficulty, exact responses and any prompts or access support. Consider accuracy, fluency and comprehension across fiction, non-fiction and poetry. Oral depth can exceed decoding fluency; assess each separately. Read-aloud support reveals listening comprehension, not independent word reading.

CURRICULUM & ASSESSMENT SOURCES | CHECKED 19 OCTOBER 2026

[1] DfE: English programmes of study, lower and upper KS2
[2] STA: KS2 teacher assessment guidance 2027
[3] STA: Assessment results at the end of KS2, information for parents