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# Introduction

## Texts For Close Reading and Deep Comprehension

Close reading involves careful study of a short text passage to build a deep, critical understanding of the text. By developing children’s comprehension and higher-order thinking skills, you can help them make sense of the world.

“A significant body of research links the close reading of complex text – whether the student is a struggling reader or advanced – to significant gains in reading proficiency, and finds close reading to be a key component of college and career readiness.”  
(Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, 2012, p7)

## Reading and Re-Reading For Different Purposes

The texts in *Close Reading* are carefully selected and deliberately short. This focuses children on purposeful reading, re-reading and responding. They learn about the topic through rich vocabulary development and deep comprehension.



Children re-read and analyse the text through questioning to explore:

- text structure and features
- key ideas and details
- connections/conclusions
- predictions/inferences
- words and phrases in context.

Children actively respond to the text using:

- higher-order thinking skills
- paired discussion
- written responses.

## Text Marking: A Powerful Active-Reading Strategy

To improve their comprehension of informational texts, children must actively engage with the material. Careful and consistent text marking by hand is one valuable way to accomplish this. The true goal of teaching text marking is to help children internalise an effective close-reading strategy, not to have them show how many marks they can make on a page. Text-marking skills are encouraged in each passage.

# 'The Glory-Beaming Banjo'

Read the music article.

Then follow the instructions in the Text-Marking box.

The banjo is a stringed instrument often heard in American folk, bluegrass and country music. The banjo did not originate in America, though it is often associated with American music. Rather, musicologists trace the banjo to various locations throughout Africa and the Middle East nearly a thousand years ago.

All early banjos were handmade from local materials. A hollow gourd made a body. An animal skin stretched over the gourd could capture sound and bounce it back. A long stick attached to the gourd served as a neck on which to anchor strings. Three or four strings, made of waxed grass, animal gut or hair, ran from the body up the neck and were pegged in place. Vibrating strings made the notes.

The banjo probably arrived in America with slaves who had been kidnapped from Africa. Their instruments went by different names, including *bangoe*, *banza* and *banzil*. Thomas Jefferson's personal writings describe slaves playing '...the Banjar, which they brought hither from Africa'.

People react differently to banjo music. Many enjoy the bright, twangy, jazzy sounds a skilled banjoist can make. Some appreciate how cheerful and clear the banjo sounds. Others find banjo music scratchy, hollow or tinny. Despite personal preferences, it is fair to regard the banjo as an 'outstanding American contribution to the music of folklore'.



The title of this article comes from the writings of humorist Mark Twain.

## Text Marking

Find the main idea and supporting details.



Circle the main idea in each paragraph.



Underline supporting details for each main idea.

# 'The Glory-Beaming Banjo'

► Answer each question. Give evidence from the article.

1 Which of the following words is *opposite* in meaning to **anchor**, as it is used in paragraph 2?

- A peg      ► B secure      ► C embark      ► D release

What in the text helped you answer? \_\_\_\_\_

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2 Which statement about the banjo is *not* supported by information in the text?

- A Banjo strings vibrate to make its sound.
- B It was Mark Twain's favourite instrument.
- C American banjos probably had their roots in Africa.
- D The banjo is heard in a variety of musical styles.

What in the text helped you answer? \_\_\_\_\_

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3 In your own words, support the statement about the banjo as an 'outstanding American contribution to the music of folklore'.

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4 Suggest a different title that would be appropriate for this piece. Explain your thinking.

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**1 Main Idea & Details** Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### 'The Glory-Beaming Banjo'

Read the music article.  
Then follow the instructions in the Text-Marking box.

The banjo is a stringed instrument often heard in American folk, bluegrass and country music. The banjo did not originate in America, though it is often associated with American music. Rather, musicologists trace the banjo to various locations throughout Africa and the Middle East nearly a thousand years ago.

All early banjos were handmade from local materials. A hollow gourd made a body. An animal skin stretched over the gourd could capture sound and bounce it back. A long stick attached to the gourd served as a neck on which to anchor strings. Three or four strings, made of waxed grass, animal gut or hair, ran from the body up the neck and were pegged in place. Vibrating strings made the notes.

The banjo probably arrived in America with slaves who had been kidnapped from Africa. Their instruments went by different names, including *banjoe*, *banza* and *banzil*. Thomas Jefferson's personal writings describe slaves playing '...the Banjar, which they brought hither from Africa'.

People react differently to banjo music. Many enjoy the bright, twangy, jazzy sounds a skilled banjoist can make. Some appreciate how cheerful and clear the banjo sounds. Others find banjo music scratchy, hollow or tinny. Despite personal preferences, it is fair to regard the banjo as an 'outstanding American contribution to the music of folklore'.



The title of this article comes from the writings of humorist Mark Twain.

**Text Marking**

Find the main idea and supporting details.

○ Circle the main idea in each paragraph.

— Underline supporting details for each main idea.

14 Close Reading Non-fiction 10+ SCHOLASTIC

◀ Sample Text Markings

**Passage 1: 'The Glory-Beaming Banjo'**

1 D; *Sample answer:* Something that is anchored is held in place or secured. And I can see from the photo that the neck holds the strings in place. 'Release' is the opposite of 'anchor'.

2 B; *Sample answer:* There is no information about Mark Twain's musical preferences in this piece, though the title uses his words.

3 *Sample answer:* Banjos were handcrafted by people so they could make their own music. Banjos were used in many different kinds of traditional music and widely appreciated.

4 *Sample answer:* I might call it 'All About the Banjo' because that's what this article does – it gives background, explains how the banjo is made and played and discusses a variety of reactions to banjo music.

**2 Main Idea & Details** Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### The Dog Collar Museum

Read the museum review.  
Then follow the instructions in the Text-Marking box.

If you like quirky museums, the world's only Dog Collar Museum is for you! It's at Leeds Castle in Kent, once the home of Edward I and later the home of Catherine of Aragon, who was Henry VIII's first wife. Nowadays, Leeds Castle is open to the public.

The museum started after Mrs Gertrude Hunt donated her unique collection of antique dog collars to Leeds Castle in 1977. They came from all over Europe, and some were centuries old. The astonishing collection has been growing ever since.

The oldest collar looks like an instrument of torture with its iron chains and huge spikes, but this brutal design would have protected the dog's throat from the bears and wolves that it hunted. It was made for a German hunting dog in about 1485.

There are many eye-catching collars in the collection that would have been worn by the pets of wealthy owners. Most of these are made from brass, some with a leather lining, and many are engraved with intricate patterns, the dog's name or even amusing rhymes. There are also some weird modern dog collars made from beads, polyester or wool! It's a mind-boggling museum, but do bear in mind – you can't take your pet for a visit. Only assistance dogs are allowed!



A dog collar display in the museum

**Text Marking**

Find the main idea and supporting details.

○ Circle the main idea in each paragraph.

— Underline two supporting details for each main idea.

16 Close Reading Non-fiction 10+ SCHOLASTIC

◀ Sample Text Markings

**Passage 2: The Dog Collar Museum**

1 D; *Sample answer:* The other choices describe features typical of most museums.

2 C; *Sample answer:* In paragraph 1 the authors says that the Dog Collar Museum is at Leeds Castle. In paragraph 2, the author describes Mrs Gertrude Hunt as the person who gave her collection of dog collars to Leeds Castle.

3 Accept three of the following. *Sample answer:* Here are three opinions I found: In paragraph 2: the author calls it 'an astonishing collection' of dog collars. In paragraph 3: the author says the collar 'looks like an instrument of torture'. In paragraph 4 the author says: that there are many 'eye-catching' collars; that the rhymes are 'amusing'; there are some 'weird' modern collars; calls the museum 'mind-boggling'.

4 *Sample answer:* I think the author wanted to give information about an interesting and unusual place people might not know about. The review makes the place sound fun to visit, educational, surprising and entertaining.