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Introduction

The Importance of Listening:

The first steps we take to learn a language, whether as a child or as an adult, involve the process of listening.

Through listening we gain a greater understanding, not only of the explicit rhythms and patterns of speech, but also the implicit grammatical forms and conventions of the written word.

Listening, therefore, must never be viewed as a poor relative to the other core aspects of literacy: that of speaking, reading and writing, a somewhat distant cousin whom we seldom visit. Rather, developing this key skill needs to be seen as an integral and necessary component of learning literacy as a whole.

Such an important and transferable skill lies at the heart of good language learning. It forms the foundation of understanding upon which other language skills are built.

Poor listeners usually lack concentration and find it difficult to 'filter out' less important information. This can affect their overall language performance and development and serves to highlight the necessity of developing this often neglected skill.

One reason why the connection between listening and learning is such an important one is that listening is not simply a matter of 'hearing' but the active process by which we make sense of what we hear.

It is by 'listening', rather than simply 'hearing', that allows us to engage with and respond to what we have heard with increased effectiveness.

Good listeners get involved with what they hear, both intellectually and emotionally.

All this serves to promote the simple fact that children need to be taught to become ACTIVE LISTENERS!

Promoting Active Listening Skills in the Classroom:

There are 3 key activities that directly contribute to the overall comprehension of what the learner listens to:

Listening for gist

This is listener based. It allows the listener to 'tune in' to what they are listening to and make predictions as to what they may encounter. The language used, the tone, pace and inflections of the speaker's voice, the added sound effects all combine to help the listener make sense of what they are listening to and ascertain the overall context.

Questions that are asked in this section help learners to consider:

• Which type of text is this? [Genre]

• Where and when is this text placed? [Setting]

• Who is this text for? [Audience]

• What is it trying to tell me? [Main idea]

• Why has this text been written? [Purpose]

• How formal/informal is this text? [Style]

Listening for specific information

This is text based. It allows the listener to 'filter out' non-essential text and select the specific words, phrases and grammatical constructions needed to discover meaning.

Questions that are asked in this section help learners to listen out for cues, both spoken and unspoken, that tells the listener that the answer is near:

■ Was Jupiter a Greek or Roman god?

■ What did Mrs Brown find in her soup?

■ In what year did Alfred, Lord Tennyson write 'The Eagle'?

Listening to evaluate

Strategic listeners are able to monitor and evaluate their own listening. By checking their own answers and comparing them with those selected by their peers, learners begin to discern to what degree they are able to state the following:

• I am able to use a variety of strategies to help me understand what I am listening to.

• I can plan which strategy will serve me best in a particular situation.

• I am able to decide how effective this strategy was and if necessary, change it, in the future.

• I can determine how successful I have been in reaching my listening comprehension goals and whether the combination of strategies I selected was an effective one.

With this in mind, '*Reading Explorers – Aloud!*' has been specifically designed to promote the core idea that learners need to actively engage with what they are listening to in a focused and purposeful way.

The worksheets provided help support this process, enabling children of all abilities to access a wide variety of text types and gain authentic listening practice. They also provide teachers with self-contained and easy to manage lessons that enhance the entire listening experience.

It is important to note at this stage that a range of 'answering' is encouraged rather than simply asking learners to "write down" their answers. You are exploring and encouraging their listening skills, not their ability to write in full sentences!

For this reason, the worksheets are illustrated with a variety of visual cues and learners asked to 'answer' in a number of different ways.
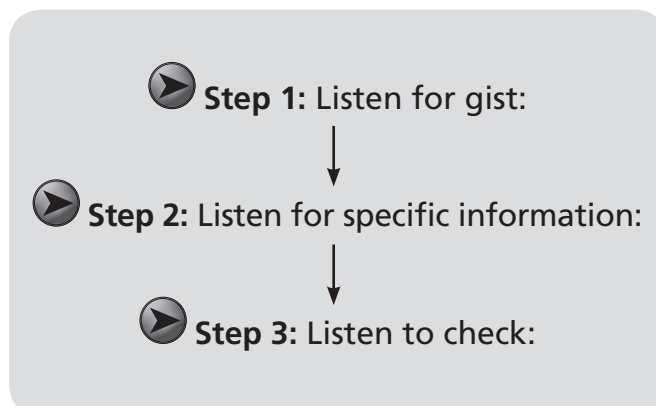
Task orientated instructions include:

Listening for Purpose – A Three-Step Approach:

> **Step 1:** Listen for gist:

> **Step 2:** Listen for specific information:

> **Step 3:** Listen to check:

As learners begin to adjust their listening behaviour in order to deal with a variety of situations and text types, each learner will develop their own set of listening strategies and enhance their ability to apply those strategies more effectively to the various listening situations they encounter.

As individuals develop their overall listening dexterity (their ability to use a combination of strategies simultaneously) not only will the learner's comprehension improve but so too will their confidence to explore and interpret the world around them.

The CD

Each book is accompanied by a CD that contains up to 28 original audio tracks. Each track has been produced in the studio using the latest technology and sound effects and is read by a professional voice-over artist in order that it is as authentic and engaging as possible.

The CD also contains copies of all worksheets and activity pages seen within the book itself, together with any additional sheets that may be required in order to complete an extension activity.

Circle your answer

Colour your answer

Match your answer
A ⟶ B

Draw your answer

Tick ✓ 1 box

Write your answer 1066

Sample Worksheet

Track number
on CD

Title

Instruction

Listening
for gist

Arachnophobia

Name: .... Date:....................

Listen to *Track 01*. Answer these questions:

• Do you think the narrator... *Circle your answer*

    is scared
of spiders   loves spiders

• In what lesson are you most likely to hear this information? *Circle your answer*

    An English
lesson   A Geography
lesson   A Science
lesson
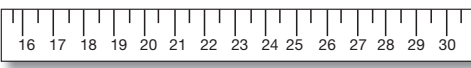
Now listen again and answer these questions:

• How long can it take the giant trapdoor spider to make its burrow?

    hours

• Where does the goliath spider live? *Tick ✓ 1 box*
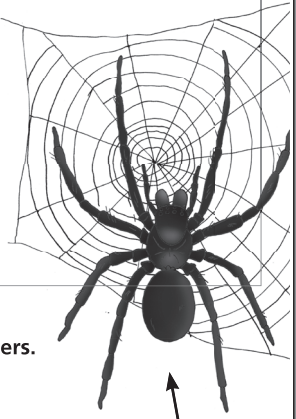
    ☐ Britain

    ☐ America   ☐ South America

• How many cm can it grow to?

16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30

• What colour is the hourglass shape
on a black widow's abdomen?
Colour your answer

Now listen one more time to check your answers.

Reading Explorers *Aloud!* - Year 6

Instruction

Instruction

Listening
for specific
information

Instruction

Listening to check

Picture cue

Lessons Overview

Arachnophobia (A Nature Programme)	**The Gunpowder Plot** (A Historical Recount)	**Rhodes** (An Advertisement)
Record Breakers (A Radio Programme)	**Roald Dahl** (An Audio File)	**Dingle Village** (Community Notices)
The Virus (An Audio Book)	**A Great Escape!** (An e-mail)	**Tea Time for Tyler** (An Audio Book)
The Eagle (A Poetry Reading)	**TV or not TV?** (A Talk Show)	**Horror** **At Fang Rock** (A Choose Your Own Adventure)
I am who I am (A Poetry Reading)	**Beddgelert** (A Welsh Folktale)	**UFO Alert!** (A News Report)
A Penny for your Thoughts (Character & Setting)	**Abandon Ship!** (An Audio Book)	**Snot Science** (A Scientific Explanation)
The Warlock's Whiskers (A Radio Play)	**My Brother Jack** (A Class Presentation)	**How I Learn to Spell** (A Conversation)
Mayday, Mayday (A Flashback)	**The Launch** (A Poetry Reading)	**On Your Bike!** (A Safety Campaign)
Winds of Change (An Argument)	**A Recipe for Disaster** (A Recipe)	**A Class Act** (A Radio Play)
Ozymandias of Egypt (A Poetry Reading)		

Abandon Ship!

An audio book

Warm up Questions:

- Listen to the title. What type of ship do you think you will need to abandon?

- How might the differences in the type of ship you need to abandon effect the possible plot and setting of this story?

- Why might you need to abandon ship?

Main Activity:

Listening for gist

▶ Play Track 17

Ask yourself:
- Where is this piece set?
- Is it set in the past, present or future?
- How are the people feeling at this time?
- Why are they feeling this way?

Listening for specific information

▶ Play Track 17

Answer the following questions:
- How long have the Patax been attacking the Excelsior for?
- What are the identification codes for: Captain Nathan James Holt. Second Officer Josephine May-Weather
- What colour is the planet Captain Holt and his crew are heading towards?
- How does the writer describe Captain Holt's ship?

Listening to check

▶ Play Track 17

Self-check your answers or swap your answer sheet with a partner to mark.

Answers to worksheet:

Q1: In the future

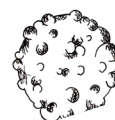**Q2:** SCIENCE-FICTION

Q3: 40 mins

Q4: A7D9   B4T1

Q5: Purple

Q6: Old   Male

Evaluative Questions:

- Did you enjoy this extract? Why? Why not?

- Why do you think the writer peppers this narrative with the computer countdown? How effective do you think this idea was? Why?

- Does the fact that Ensign Keller dies in this attack, indicate who the target audience for this book may be? How?

Extension Activity:

Design and create a book jacket for a new and exciting sci-fi adventure. Where will you decide to set it? What title will you give it? Remember, to make your cover look real, you will need to include elements you would find on the front and back of a book, as well as on its spine. What elements would these be? Perhaps looking at other book cover designs as part of your research will help you. Think about how your design will be in keeping with the genre and title of the story itself. Think also about how to grab the attention of your reader and how to make your cover eye catching.

ABANDON SHIP!

Name: ....Date:...

Listen to *Track 17*. Answer these questions:

- Is this story set... *Tick ✓ 1 box*

  ☐ In the past   ☐ In the present   ☐ In the future

- What genre of story is this? *Draw your answer*
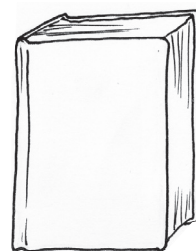
  Romance   Horror   SCIENCE-FICTION

Now listen again and answer these questions:

- How long have the Patax been attacking the Excelsior for? *Circle your answer*
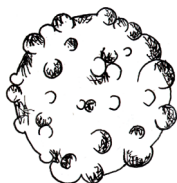
  20 mins   30 mins   40 mins   50 mins

- Write down the identification codes for:

  Captain Nathan James Holt

  Second Officer Josephine May-Weather

- What colour is the planet Captain Holt and his crew are heading towards? *Colour your answer*

- How does the writer describe Captain Holt's ship? *Tick ✓ 2 boxes*

  ☐ Young   ☐ Old   ☐ Male   ☐ Female

Now listen one more time to check your answers.