

# 2. THINKING ABOUT HOW YOU READ

## What happens when you read?

- In small groups, discuss the following as a way of thinking about how you read.
  - How do you choose what you are going to read?
  - How much do you read of something before you decide whether or not you like it?
  - Do you always read things from start to finish?
  - What goes on in your head when you are reading? For example, do you see images, hear voices, think about how it relates to your own life, and so on?
  - Discuss your responses as a whole class, with your teacher making a list headed, 'What happens when we read...'

## Thinking carefully about the reading process

### Short story openings 1

This task is designed to make you think hard about what happens when you start reading a new short story.

- In small groups read the first sentences of four short stories. Four sentences from very short stories have been selected and printed below for you to use in this way, but you can do this activity with any stories.
- Discuss your response to each opening. What does it make you think? How does it try to make you read on?
- Remove the story that you are least interested in continuing to read.

(Be careful not to read on until you have completed this task, as your teacher will give you additional sentences as the activity develops.)

#### Story A

Dog did not like baby.

#### Story B

His parents had not meant to abuse him; they had meant to love him, and did love him.

#### Story C

It seemed to Myop as she skipped lightly from hen house to pigpen to smokehouse that the days had never been as beautiful as these.

#### Story D

She was standing by the river looking at the stepping stones and remembering each one.

## Short story openings 2

- Now read the first two sentences of the three stories you have left.
- What is your response to each? What does it make you think about? How does it try to make you read on?
- Remove the story that you are least interested in continuing to read (you will be left with two stories).

### Story A

Dog did not like baby. For that matter, Dog did not like Cat.

### Story B

His parents had not meant to abuse him; they had meant to love him, and did love him. But Oliver had come late in their little pack of offspring, at a time when the challenge of child-rearing was wearing thin, and he proved susceptible to mishaps.

### Story C

It seemed to Myop as she skipped lightly from hen house to pigpen to smokehouse that the days had never been as beautiful as these. The air held a keenness that made her nose twitch.

### Story D

She was standing by the river looking at the stepping stones and remembering each one. There was the round unsteady stone, the pointed one, the flat one in the middle – the safe stone where you could stand and look around.

## Short story openings 3

You now have *two* stories to choose from.

- Discuss your response to each. What does it make you think about? How does it try to make you read on?
- Choose the story you are most interested in continuing to read.

### Story A

Dog did not like baby. For that matter, Dog did not like Cat. But cat had claws – sharp claws.

### Story B

His parents had not meant to abuse him; they had meant to love him, and did love him. But Oliver had come late in their little pack of offspring, at a time when the challenge of child-rearing was wearing thin, and he proved susceptible to mishaps. A big foetus, cramped in his mother's womb, he was born with inturned feet, and learned to crawl with corrective casts up to his ankles.

### Story C

It seemed to Myop as she skipped lightly from hen house to pigpen to smokehouse that the days had never been as beautiful as these. The air held a keenness that made her nose twitch. The harvesting of the corn and cotton, peanuts and squash, made each day a golden surprise that caused excited little tremors to run up her jaws.

### Story D

She was standing by the river looking at the stepping stones and remembering each one. There was the round unsteady stone, the pointed one, the flat one in the middle – the safe stone where you could stand and look around. The next wasn't so safe for when the river was full the water flowed over it and even when it showed dry it was slippery.

## Discussing your reading choices

- Tell the class which story your group has chosen. When you do this, explain your reasons and how you expect it to continue. What do you particularly like about the sentences you have read? What put you off the stories you removed?
- Everyone in your group should now read your chosen story in full. Discuss how it is similar or different to what you were expecting. Do you wish you had chosen a different story? If so, why?
- Discuss as a class how your chosen stories did or did not meet your expectations.
- If you like, you can vote as a class about which story you would like to explore more, then complete the activities for it in this resource pack.

## Reading your own work

- Individually, write the opening to a short story. You can write no more than five sentences and need to write in a way that you think will make someone want to read on.
- Get into groups of four, gather your story openings together and swap them with another group of four.
- Read the story openings your group has been given. Decide which you like best and discuss your reasons.
- Read out the story openings you have chosen as the best to the whole class and give reasons for your decision.
- Discuss as a class which of the story openings you like best overall and why.