



## DARTS: a range of text games to develop reading skills

### 1. CLOZE procedure

#### Insert missing words thinking about the meaning and style:

The \_\_\_\_\_ of anacondas live in swamps, marshes, and slow-moving streams, \_\_\_\_\_ in the tropical rain forests of the Amazon and Orinoco basins. They are cumbersome on land \_\_\_\_\_ stealthy and sleek in the water. \_\_\_\_\_ eyes and nasal openings are on top of their heads. \_\_\_\_\_ allows them to lay in wait for \_\_\_\_\_ prey while remaining nearly completely submerged.

Silence

is when you hear:

the ..... of the fridge downstairs;  
a distant ..... calling;  
traffic ..... on the road.

A fly ..... in a web;  
Rain ..... on the window;  
Thoughts ..... in your head  
and the wind ..... across the town.

The ..... of your heart;  
a ..... voice at the edge of your hearing.  
The ..... of your pen and the ..... of paper.

### 2. Predict

**What do you think will happen next? Justify your suggestion.**

*Miss Groan strode into the classroom. She took one look at 3B and there was silence. No one breathed. Even the gerbil stopped pedalling on his tread wheel.*

### 3. Reorganise

a. Alfred Tennyson's poem has had each line cut in half (roughly speaking) and the order changed. **Reorganise it, considering meaning and structure:**

<b>The Eagle</b> he falls. with crooked hands; close to the sun beneath him crawls; in lonely lands, ring'd with the azure world, from his mountain walls, The wrinkled sea he stands. He clasps the crag he watches and like a thunderbolt	
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b. This poem has been rewritten with no line breaks – rewrite it as it might have originally been written:

Owl was darker than ebony, flew through the night eyes like amber searchlights, rested on a post, feathers wind-ruffled, stood stump-still, talons ready to seize and squeeze. Owl was death that swamped the fields for it flew through the dark that tightened its knot that bandaged the hills in a blindfold of fear. Owl flew – who – who – who –

#### 4. Sequencing

a. Put the words back together to create a haiku – 3 lines long with a pattern of 5/7/5 syllables.

, - .	
searchlights barbed wire stars prison fence	
Christmas in in glitters wire made a of	

b. This paragraph has been disorganised into its 4 sentences – put it back together with the sentences in the right order.

<p>Their jaws are attached by stretchy ligaments and this allows them to swallow their prey whole, no matter the size.</p> <p>They are described as nonvenomous constrictors, coiling their muscular bodies around captured prey and squeezing until the animal asphyxiates.</p> <p>Not surprisingly, they can go weeks or months without food after a big meal. Anacondas reach their monumental size on a diet of wild pigs, deer, birds, turtles, capybara, caimans, and even jaguars.</p>	
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c. Put this poem back together into 2 verses of 4 lines in each.

And his dark, secret love Does thy life destroy. Has found out thy bed In the howling storm	
Of crimson joy, O Rose, thou art sick, That flies in the night The invisible worm	
<b>The sick rose</b>	

## 5. Diagram

Convert the text into a diagram only using simple labels.

<p><b>How to Travel to Castle Crow</b></p> <p>Have you been asked to travel to Castle Crow? Are you about to embark on this perilous journey? Are your knees knocking at the thought of what you might encounter? If so, read these instructions and soon you will reach your destination in safety.</p> <p><b>What you need:</b> a mighty steed, a golden horn, a magical bow and arrows.</p> <p><b>What you do:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. First, choose the fastest horse from the King's stable.</li><li>2. Next, ride through the Forest of Doom.</li><li>3. After that, follow the River Ruin towards the distant mountain.</li><li>4. Finally, cross over the bridge that whispers.</li><li>5. When you reach the castle gates, blow the golden horn.</li></ol> <p><b>A word of warning:</b> If you are in danger, you may use your magical bow and arrows. Do not stop to talk with any strangers on the way as they may enchant you.</p>	
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## 6. Label

<p><b>The Queen of the Bittersnakes</b></p> <p>Skater stared at the rubbish tip. Two long, red ears poked out of a metal bucket. The ears turned this way and that, listening. Then the face appeared; a green face with huge, sea-blue eyes, a nose like a carrot and a thin mouth with two rabbit-teeth jutting out. Its fur was light orange and little mushrooms grew where the ears should have been. Its paws had long, sharp claws that curved like a crescent moon. Its grey whiskers twitched.</p>	<p><b>Draw and label:</b></p>
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<b>Sharks – the deadly fish?</b>	<b>Label with subheadings:</b>
Have you ever stepped into the sea and wondered whether a shark will attack you? Most people live in fear of sharks and believe that they are cold-blooded killers. However, only a few different types are actually dangerous. Sharks are a sort of fish. There are about 450 different types.	
The large majority of sharks are easily recognisable because nearly all types have a long tail. Typically, they move this from side to side to help them swim. Additionally, they have staring eyes that help them see in dark water. Furthermore, they are famous for their sharp teeth. During their lifetime, sharks grow and lose many thousands of teeth. Another common feature is that their skin is made of scales that feel rough to touch and they have pointed snouts that are very sensitive. There are a few amazing exceptions. For instance, the Hammerhead Shark is known by most people because their heads are shaped like a huge hammer!	
Sharks live in the sea and are found around the world. A few live in fresh water. For instance, Bull Sharks swim up and down the Zambezi River. Some sharks live on the seabed and tend to have flattened bodies. These have what are known as 'barbels', which they use to disturb sand in order to find food. However, the	

majority live nearer the surface and their fins can be seen as they glide through the water. Basking sharks drift along the surface with their mouths wide open as they ingest plankton.	
Everyone knows that sharks are meat-eating fish. Many hunt fish and squid whilst those who feed on the seabed eat lobsters, crabs, shrimps, mussels and sea urchins. They use their teeth to crush, slice and chew their food. Tiger sharks will also eat jellyfish as well as turtles. Sharks have been found with cows, horses, dogs and chickens in their stomachs. The Great White will even feed on the carcass of a whale!	
Whilst sharks are fascinating creatures, they are much feared by swimmers. However, shark attacks are rare. It is rather unfair that whilst tigers and elephants kill humans, they are viewed in a more positive light. Perhaps, if more people visited aquariums and found about these graceful creatures then they would be treated with more respect. Many varieties are in danger of over-fishing and therefore we do need to speak up on behalf of the shark!	

## 7. Transform

### a. Some words have been altered – restore the text.

It was a dark, blustery porcupine in spring, and the charabanc of London was chasing a small mining town across the dried-out dynamite of the old North Sea.	
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### b. Rewrite to make the main character totally different:

<p>When Mrs Malevant stepped through the Smith's front door, the hall suddenly seemed to grow darker. She was tall and broad with a voice like a rusty saw.</p> <p>'I'm used to children,' said the new minder, 'so don't for one moment think you can get away with anything wicked.'</p> <p>The four Smith children backed away, even Sam, who was big for twelve and thought himself brave.</p>	
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## 8. Sorting

### a. Sort the facts into possible sections with subheadings

- All have lean bodies with long, thick fur
- Enjoy eggs and fruit
- Hunt alone at night
- 27 species around the world
- Have adapted to town habitats
- Most are reddish brown colour
- Some species are yellow, white or black
- Usually live in wooded areas
- Can hear a mouse by its squeak
- Mark their territory with scent
- Have a bushy tail, or brush, and sharply pointed muzzle
- Live in a den underground
- Can see in the dark
- Will defend territory against intruders
- Mainly eat mice, rabbits, lizards, insects, frogs
- Sneak up on prey, freeze and pounce
- Can climb trees, walls and even rooftops
- Very hard to tame
- Do not make good pets
- Member of the dog family
- Most have large, pointed ears
- Keen sense of smell and hearing

### b. Sort the facts about Blue Whales from opinions:

Blue whales are one of the most extraordinary creatures on the planet. Amazingly, they are the largest animals ever known to have lived on Earth. These magnificent marine mammals rule the oceans at up to 30 metres long and upwards of 200 tons. Their tongues alone can weigh as much as an elephant; their hearts, as much as an automobile. Blue whales reach these mind-boggling dimensions on a diet composed nearly exclusively of tiny shrimp-like animals called krill.

Facts	Opinions

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## 9. Matching

Which of these words matches 'sneer' the best?

**Sneer** – scoff mock delude snigger make fun of jeer

## 10. Character profile/role on the wall

**Contrast how the characters feel in these two paragraphs using quotes:**

*Kevin zipped up the tent flap and we chatted for a while. I could just see my watch hands giving off a strange, green glow. It was creeping towards ten o'clock. Kevin had just told me a joke about a man with a dog that wore shoes when we first heard it. A strange scratching noise coming from just outside the tent. We froze. What on earth could it be?*

*Then it came again. Something or somebody was moving along the side of the tent towards the entrance. It was making a scraping noise like somebody's last rasping breath! There was no escape. All we could do was lie there waiting. Terrified, both of us ducked our heads deep into our sleeping bags and waited. I could feel my heart thumping.*

## 11. Graphic representation

**Draw and label using the information provided:**

Would you be able to identify a Mountain Giant if you saw one? In fact, they are very similar to the large majority of giants. Like most giants, they have an enormous head, powerful limbs and possess the strength of a small army. Typically, they are the size of a large elephant and when crouching may easily be mistaken for a hillock. In order to stay hidden, these unsociable giants wear massive coats of woven turf, covered in slabs of rock and may even have small



trees and bushes growing out of their hair. In this way, they are very hard to spot, especially when crouching. Furthermore, the Mountain Giant is known for its extremely long legs which allow it to move rapidly from valley to valley. Indeed, its ability to travel swiftly and stay camouflaged has helped it to survive over the years.

## 12. Note key points

### **Underline and bullet point the key points**

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## 13. Relevance sort, e.g., statements

*There are two rich kids in our form. Sandra Morris and Ben Fox. They are both snobs. They think they are too good for the rest of us. Their parents have big cars and big houses. Both of them are quiet. They keep to themselves.*

### **Which 3 statements are most accurate and why:**

- a. Rich children are snobbish.
- b. Sandra and Ben think they are better than everyone else.
- c. People who have a big car and live in a big house are snobs and think they are better than everyone else.
- d. Sandra and Ben are shy.
- e. Sandra and Ben keep to themselves because they think they are better than everyone else.
- f. Sandra and Ben think everyone else doesn't like them.
- g. The narrator is jealous.
- h. Sandra and Ben would like to be friends.
- i. The narrator fancies Sandra.

## 14. What's the title

**Provide a title:**

Like a small **B**ear it  
bundles over the d**A**rK road,  
                                brushes past the front gate,  
as if she owns the joint.  
                    rolls the **D**ustbin  
                                like an expert barrel rider.  
Tucks into yesterday's **G**arbage,  
                                crunches worms for titbits.  
Wakes us from deep sl**E**ep,  
                                blinks back at torchlight.  
Our midnight feaste**R**,  
ghost-friend,  
moon-lit,  
zebra bear.

## 15. Compare

Reluctantly, Skater picked up the unwanted package.

Wingshaven arrived on their doormat, in an envelope from the estate agent.

That morning after he discovered the lion, Sandra went and stood under the Travellers Lodge Hotel sign and waited for the school bus just as usual.

His name was Toy Jubilee and he was the largest person that I had ever met. My Grandfather warned me not to hang around with Toy but that made it even more tempting.