

Comprehension Workbook 8

Pier

Memories of a pier ghost

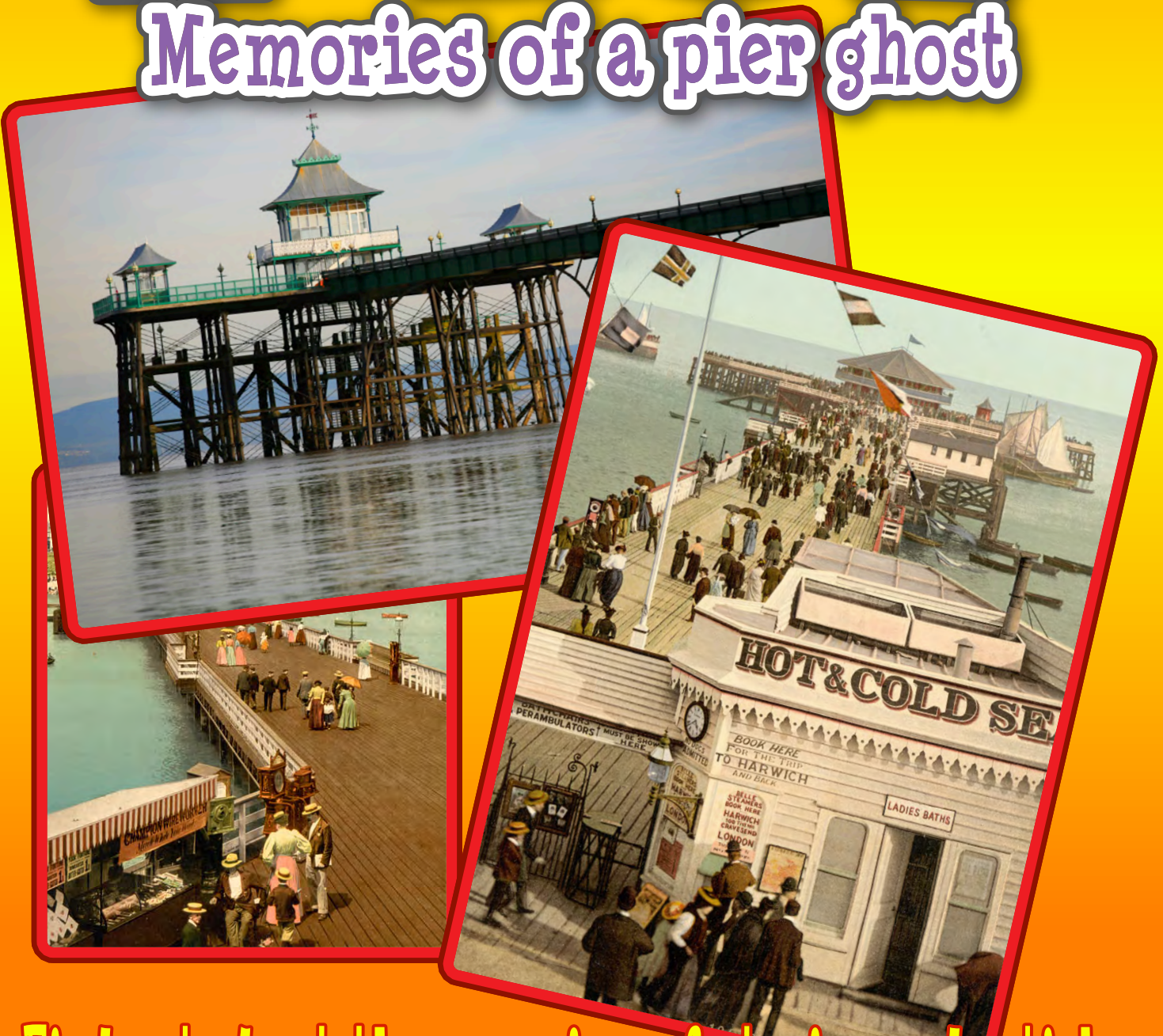


Find out about the meaning of stories and articles

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Pier

Matches the requirements of the Literacy Strategy and designed to integrate with your normal subject studies. (This material is independent of any specific text book and can be used alongside any publisher's books including our textbook.)

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A ghostly pier

I am the ghost of my pier. Did you know that all piers have ghosts? A ghost is a kind of memory of things that have happened at a place in the past. So wherever you go, there will be a pier ghost looking on.



I remember the first time I came into being. It was when my town decided it was time to have a pier. Naturally I needed to be on hand right from the start. It was all the idea of the railway company, and it started in 1871, which was fifty years into the reign of Queen Victoria.

Railways had been going for a few years, but some lines did not join up, so the railways ran steam services from one pier to another along the coast. The idea was to get more people to use the railway – and my pier.

It took tons and tons of wrought ironwork, and miles and miles of wood planking, but in the end the pier stood proudly into the sea for nearly a quarter of a mile. Oh, the opening was a grand event. The mayor and corporation and the railway owners turned up, and so did the local army regiment. A brass band played and every part of the pier was hung with bunting.

My pier was a rip-roaring success. In fact, it was so successful that, a few years later, a new large polygonal section was added to the end. Us Victorians loved long words. Polygonal. It sounds really grand doesn't it? Anyway, as a result, my pier got a pavilion – another grand word – and a concert hall, lots of stalls where you could buy small gifts and get food and there were even waiting rooms, so that ladies and gentlemen could (separately) wait for the arrival of the steamers while protected from the elements. There were even baths and lavatories.

All my visitors continued to have a splendid time. By the 1920s, I had a new dance hall added. It was called the Blue Lagoon. How tropical that sounded. Then we got a new theatre and even a swimming pool by the 1930s.

Those were the days. But then the war came and people were afraid that my pier could be used by the enemy to land troops for an invasion, so great sections of my pier were cut out. And in 1940 part of the pier was blown up by a German mine floating along the coast. Fortunately, after the war, the pier was put back together again.

I have seen some severe storms come and go in what is nearly 150 years of my existence, and in some years it was touch and go as to whether the pier would cope with the battering of the waves. But she is a grand old lady, and still stands up proudly. Why not come and visit her – and me?



Understanding words

Before we can understand a story we have to know what all of the words mean. Let's try one...

a Write the sentence in which you found the word 'invasion'.

b From that sentence, suggest what 'invasion' means.

c Write a new sentence using the word 'invasion'.

d Use a dictionary to find words with a similar meaning (synonyms) to 'invasion'.

e Draw a small picture showing what you think 'invasion' means.



Finding key words

Next, we need to find the key words that tell us what the story is about...

Read the story and underline the key words. Write the most important of these key words in a list like the one below. Write next to it a word that means a similar thing (a synonym). You don't have to use all the spaces, but you should not use more.

Key word	Synonym (similar word)
Example: rip-roaring	great

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Summarising

(the gist of the story)

To summarise means to rewrite the story in a shorter version using as many of our key words from Task 2 as needed.

1 Write a heading for your summary.

Clevedon pier.

2 Now write the main idea in one sentence.
e.g. "This story tells us..."

3 Now add some detail to the main idea by writing more sentences after it.

**Finally,
can you rewrite your
summary to make it better?**

- 1. Look out for errors such as using the same word too often – use alternatives.**
- 2. Make sure you have summarised the author's purpose in your OWN words.**
- 3. Make sure your summary is in a logical order.**
- 4. Is your summary informative AND interesting to others?**

**There is
nothing wrong
with rewriting; even
the best authors
rewrite their
work.**

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Sequencing

Morecambe pier.

Sequencing means getting the events in the right order. Write these sentences in the correct order, so they make sense.



In 1940 part of the pier was blown up by a German mine.

The pier still attracts people today when they come to visit the town.

The pier was started in 1871 to allow steamers to reach my town.

When the war started, parts of the pier were removed.

In the 1920s a new dance hall was added.

A large polygonal section was added a few years after opening.



Get to the facts

Answer these questions to see how much you know about the facts of the story.



Clacton pier.

1 When was 'my pier' opened?

2 What was the pier first used for?

3 When was the dance hall added?

4 When did a mine hit the pier?

5 When was the theatre added?



Whys and wherefores

Answer these questions to see how much you know about the meanings in the story and how it was written.



Clacton pier.

1 Why was the pier built?

2 Why was it built by a railway company?

3 Why were there two waiting rooms?

4 Why did the pier keep changing?



Opinions matter

Answer these questions to give your views and to develop the story.

- 1 Do you think most people realise what piers were first built for?
- 2 Would you walk up and down the pier in your best clothes like Victorians did?
- 3 What would have been special about the view from the pier.
- 4 Do you think a pier is still a useful part of a seaside town?
- 5 If you were to design a new pier what would you do?





Talking it through

It often helps if a group of people get together and discuss a problem.



Bournemouth pier.

Discussion topic: Why have a pier?

Imagine you are in the town of Bournemouth in Victorian times. The pier has just got underway as shown in this picture. Discuss what some people might have said in favour of the pier and what others might have said against it.



Make a story...

When you read a description it often gives you ideas about how the event might be described differently.



Arriving at Llandudno pier!

Imagine you are on this steamship coming in from Liverpool in Victorian times. What are you expecting to do and see? Make a story of your walk down the pier.

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