

Comprehension Workbook 9

# Whitby

## Seaside town



Find out about the meaning of stories and articles

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Matches the requirements of the Literacy Strategy. (This material is independent of any specific text book and can be used alongside any publisher's books.)

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# Whitby

Whitby is one of the most famous seaside towns along the North Yorkshire coast. It is not a big town, but it has a unique history stretching back to Saxon times, an amazing abbey, fantastic cliff-top views and a harbour whose houses are crammed along steep valley slopes. It was home to St Hilda, Captain Cook and the author of Dracula, to name but a few. All in all it makes it a 'must-see destination' for many tourists.



It has always been hard to find a sheltered harbour in North Yorkshire. Tall, steep cliffs face out to a North Sea whose storms have caused many a shipwreck. So a sheltered valley harbour – even one that is quite small and narrow – is a prize.

Whitby didn't start out as a bustling port. In fact, it was chosen to be as remote as possible, for that was where abbeys were founded in Saxon times. St Hilda and her nuns lived here, but even though they were hardy folk, they needed provisions, and so the abbey was connected to the harbour by a steep path from cliff-top to riverside.

The abbey was rebuilt and enlarged over the centuries before finally being ruined during Henry the eighth's time. And it has stayed ruined ever since, now adding a haunting building to a dramatic cliff.

The steep path was later converted to steps, and if you walk down them you get a magnificent view across the harbour. Today it links the cliff top to what has become a town by the riverside. It is this old town that most tourists walk through when they get to the bottom of the steps.

Whitby has always been first and foremost a fishing port and many famous seafarers trained here. There is even a replica of the Endeavour, made famous by Captain Cook in his voyage around the world.

The original marketplace did not have any building in it. But the town council needed somewhere to meet, so they put up a building made of local sandstone with covered space underneath for stalls in rainy weather and they put their meeting room above.

From the bridge over the River Esk there is a good view across the West Cliff with the great Victorian hotels on the cliff top and the tumble of houses that reach down the cliffside to the fish quay. The fish quay does still have a fish market, but the main purpose of the quay now is for amusement arcades and fast food shops – all the things that won't fit into the old town.

All in all, Whitby is a grand small town with lots of character even today.



# 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 'stalls'.

**b** From that sentence, suggest what 'stalls' means.

**c** Write a new sentence using the word 'stalls'.

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

**e** Draw a small picture showing what you think 'stalls' 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: grand	fine



3

# 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.

**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.**



123  
4

# Sequencing

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



Steep steps were built between the abbey and the riverside.

Many tourists now come to visit Whitby.

The abbey was built on the cliff top.

Large hotels were built on the cliff above the railway station.

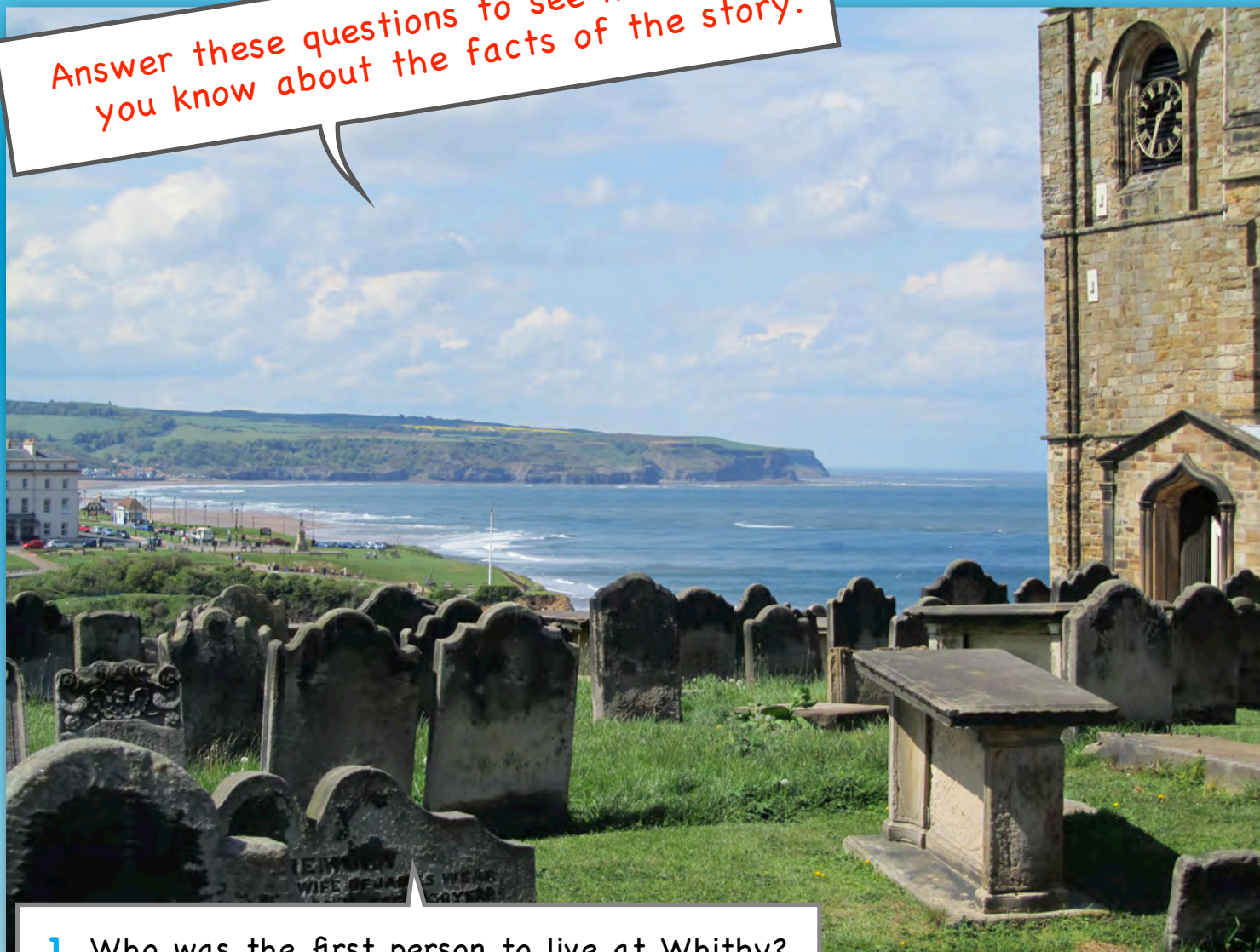
In Victorian times a railway was built to Whitby.

The abbey is the oldest building.



# Get to the facts

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



1 Who was the first person to live at Whitby?

2 What was the name of Captain Cook's ship?

3 Which river comes to sea at Whitby?

4 What is the fish quay used for?

5 When was the abbey ruined?





# Whys and wherefores

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



1 What attracted St Hilda and her nuns to Whitby?

2 Why does lots of history matter to Whitby?

3 What caused Whitby to grow up on both sides of the River Esk?

4 What caused large hotels to be built in Victorian times?





# Opinions matter

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

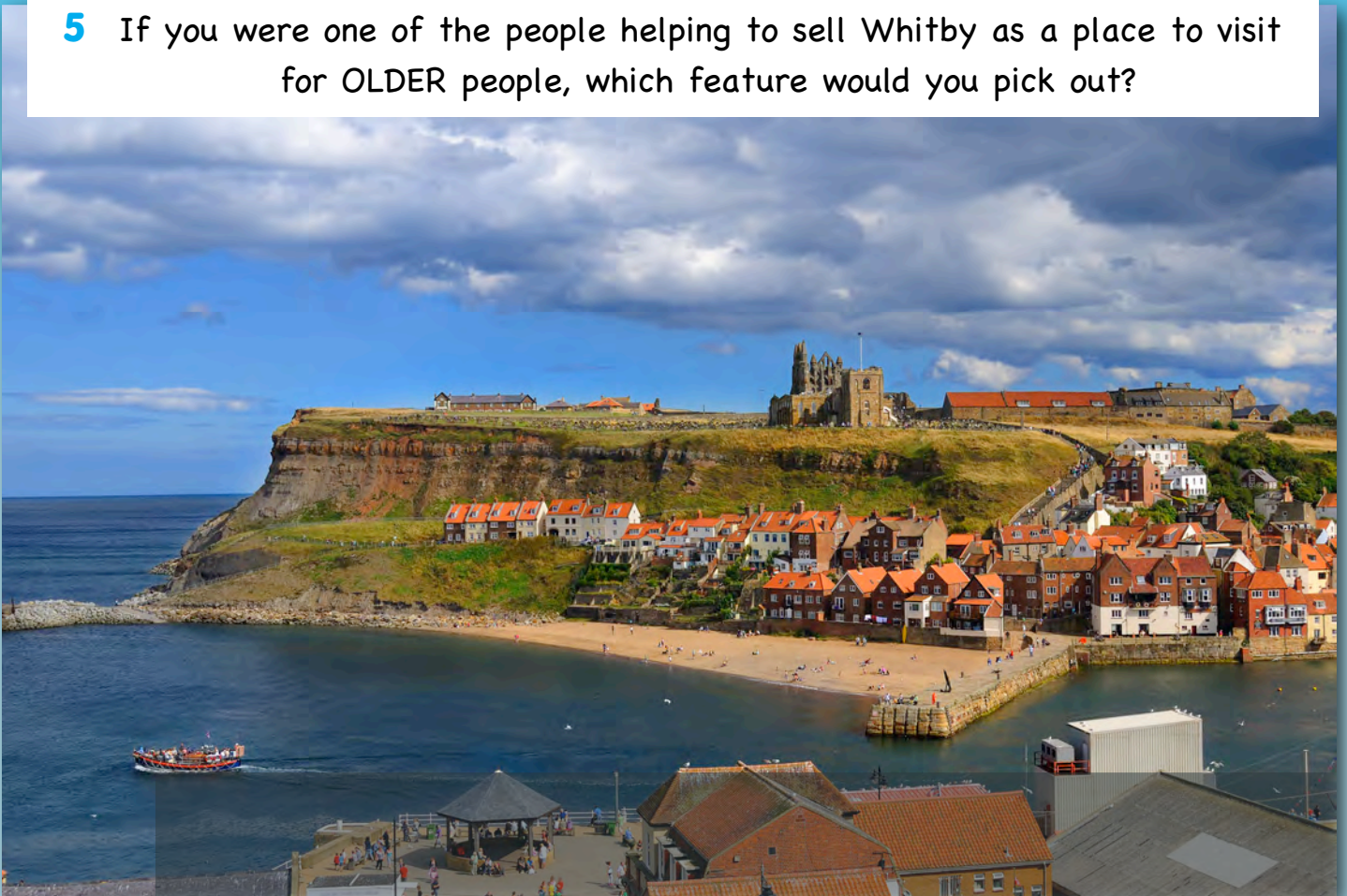
1 Do you think it is right to rely on tourists?

2 What do you think could attract tourists beside the history?

3 What do you think Whitby is like in winter, if it relies on tourists?.

4 Do you think it would be better to rebuild the abbey?

5 If you were one of the people helping to sell Whitby as a place to visit for OLDER people, which feature would you pick out?





# Talking it through

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



## Discussion topic: Attracting tourists

If you were part of a group of people helping to sell Whitby as a place to visit for OLDER people, which feature would you pick out and why?





# Make a story...

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



## A bird's-eye view

Imagine you are the seagull that has decided to perch on the statue of Captain Cook. There are a group of people gathered below it. Suddenly you give them a fright by giving a speech about Whitby. Now write what that speech might be.



# Whitby

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