

LO: To retrieve and interpret
information from a text

Today we are going to be using the story of Miss Hemswell to complete a reading comprehension task.

Read the text and then answer the questions in full sentences in your book.

Remember you can keep looking back at the text to find your answers.

Good luck.



“Come on everyone, stop dilly dallying!” Miss Hemswell called as she stood by the coach. Talking enthusiastically, the children clambered aboard. They were all extremely excited about their visit to the museum, but no one was more excited than Miss Hemswell. She adored history and relished the opportunity to wonder around all the exhibits, sharing her knowledge with her pupils.

Miss Hemswell was a wonderful teacher, but from the outside she didn't appear to be anything special. She was a small, pale woman. Her brown, pin stripe skirt and pale blue blouse ensured she merged into the background. Pulled back into a tight bun, her hair was as bland as her outfit, and the small, gold-rimmed glasses that sat daintily on the end of her nose made her look like a little mole. Yet, if you looked a little closer you would notice Miss Hemswell has a sparkle in her hazel eyes- a sparkle that suggests a youthful excitement- a sparkle that suggests a desire for adventure.

Sitting on the bus alongside her was her TA- Mrs Jensen, they chatted casually as the children sang and talked loudly. Miss Hemswell was overwhelmed with excitement. All of a sudden, the towering, stone pillars of the museum came into view and the bus steadily came to a stop. “We're here everyone, we're here!” Miss Hemswell announced eagerly, “Everyone grab your coats and packed lunches and meet at the entrance.”

The entrance of the museum was magnificent; curving, stone steps flanked either side of the room, leading to the second floor. A shiny, marble floor chattered as people walked across the room. Hanging regally around the walls, portraits in antique, gold frames surrounded them, like an audience looking on. But what was most striking, was a bronze statue towering above them in the middle of the room, his hand outstretched as if beckoning them inside. As Miss Hemswell led her class towards the first exhibit, she was sure she saw the statue's eyes follow her. 'Creepy' she thought to herself- but then brushed it off and carried on, keen to explore.

Miss Hemswell and the class enjoyed exploring all of the exhibits, but none were more exciting to them than the medieval section, as this is what they had been studying this term. Walking into the room, Miss Hemswell's attention was grasped by a glimmer of light. In the middle of the room, stood a knight- encased in steel- standing proud. A shield grasped in his left hand, proudly emblazoned with the cross of St George. Surrounding the knight, were flags and artefacts on shelves.

The children gathered round, looking up in astonishment at the knight, as Miss Hemswell told them stories about bravery and heroic quests from time gone by. The children ooohed and arghhed and the stories and Miss Hemswell smiled; she loved to bring history to life!

“Right, next up let's head to the Viking section.” Mrs Jensen called, leading the class to the next exhibit. Turning to walk away at the back of the class, Miss Hemswell was taken aback as she felt a tight hold on her wrist, she looked down expecting to see one of her pupils, she gasped in shock as she saw a glimmering metal, mesh glove holding onto her.

“My sword, I must have my sword.” a deep, powerful voice whispered as the knight let go of her wrist and pointed toward a tattered, leather-bound book sat on one of the nearby shelves. Miss Hemswell pushed up her glasses on her nose and took a closer look at the book, opened on a page with a faint picture of a knight- holding a shield with the cross of St George adorned on it and holding a sword- with a gold blade and a handle with wings spreading out at the base. She reached out to hold the book, to get a closer look. Without warning, Miss Hemswell felt as if she was falling, she closed her eyes in an attempt to steady herself; she continued to fall...

Suddenly, her mind and body felt still again. Gradually, she opened her eyes, blinking several times and straightening her glasses. She couldn't believe what she saw in front of her. She must have hit her head, this must be a dream... mustn't it? The smell of smoke and the sudden caw of ravens above her told her it wasn't.

Standing, she looked around. Her hands were shaking, her eyes wide. She tried to steady her breathing, but her heart was beating so fast she had no choice but to gulp for air. It took several minutes for her to acclimatise herself to her surroundings.

In front of her, she saw a cobble pathway, slithering like a cobra around a jagged hill. On top sat a castle, like a king on a throne. At the foot of the hill were tangled brambles, scattered rocks and caves, that were like hollow and empty eyes staring at her. There was a chill in the air, not cold but uneasy. The whole place was shrouded in fog that devoured the hillside. It was damp and dingy; the smell of it clawed at the back of your throat. The place was eerily silent, except for the gentle flicker of the flames, in torches that lit the pathway and the occasional screeches of birds that flew overhead.

Despite her beating heart and her reluctant feet, Miss Hemswell trekked up the cobblestone pathway, the fear in her eyes lit by torches- wide and filled with astonishment. The words of the knight rang in her ears “My sword, I must have my sword.” She knew what she had to do, but she had no idea where to start looking. The vast castle cast a long shadow over her and as she looked up she was struck by the size of it.

A huge wooden door stood like a guard, blocking her path. She reached out with a quivering hand and pulled on a rusting handle, the door screeched open announcing her arrival. She stepped in; her footsteps echoed around the courtyard. Around the edges was towering walls consisting of two floors built from jagged stone. Equally spaced wooden doors looked down on her like an army of soldiers. Miss Hemswell sighed- the sword could be anywhere. Her eyes darted back and forth, considering where to go first.

CAW, CAW, CAW. A raven landed on a nearby wall. CAW, CAW, CAW. Miss Hemswell spun around, startled by the black menace. "Well, what do we have here then?" enquired the raved, tilting its head to one side.

"You can talk?" stuttered Miss Hemswell in utter amazement.

"Well of course I can, now are you going to explain what your doing here." cawed the raven, with a slight sense of aggravation.

"I'm looking for a sword, a sword that belonged to a knight." she replied

"Well you looking in the wrong place," the raved smirked, "the sword you seek is in the cave at the foot of the hill." the raven paused for a second, "It's guarded by a vicious dragon." With that, the Raven flew off, circling above Miss Hemswell's head before flying over the castle walls and out of sight.

Miss Hemswell sighed, looked down at her pin stripe skirt- she was hardly dressed to defeat a blood-thirsty, killer dragon, but she needed to get out of here and getting that sword was the only way. She turned and made her way out of the castle and back down the winding pathway to the foot of the hill.

Standing in front of the caves, it was pitch-black and uneasily still. She stepped inside, immediately feeling a chill run up her spine. Scared, petrified and unnerved, Miss Hemswell journeyed deeper into the mouth of the cave, swallowed up by the blackness.

After some time, ducking, climbing and squeezing through the dripping walls of the cave, she saw a flickering light. She crept closer. Her heart in her mouth. Her legs only just holding her upright. Suddenly she came to a vast opening, a cavern of treasures: gold, rubies and diamonds cast shadows that danced on the ceiling of the cave. She was in such of awe of the beauty, it distracted her for a second or two from the monstrous creature that lay amongst it all. The dragon, who had grey sharp scales and red spines running down his back, breathed heavily and deeply. His sharp claws were like daggers and his teeth like the sharp points of a wrought iron fence. His body was so huge that he engulfed every part of the cavern- his abdomen move steadily as he breathed pushing against the walls of the cave.

Miss Hemswell took a deep breath and approach him. Her hair coming loose as he breathed heavily. As she stepped closer, she knocked a pile of gold coins and they came scattering to the floor, clinking noisily. His eye opened. Yellow was replaced by black as he stared at her- she could see her reflection in the lens of his eye. He roared, swishing his tail back and forth. Miss Hemswell leapt behind a pile of gems, consumed by utter terror!

The dragon heaved a deep breath in, Miss Hemswell shielded her self, scrunching her eyes closed tightly as she braced herself to be engulfed in flames, but instead she felt a cold gust, like a strong breeze on an autumn day. Then nothing...except the sound of sniffing and sobbing. Miss Hemswell reluctantly opened her eyes. The dragon, who had looked so fearsome only moments ago, was now huddled in a ball, back facing her, breathing heavily between desperate sobs. Huge tears splashed on the floor.

Miss Hemswell stared towards the exit- she considered making a dash for it, but as she looked at the towering dragon- so sad and vulnerable- she knew she had to help. Tentatively, she took a few steps towards the dragon, she placed a shaking hand on his back, his scaled were jagged and sharp, yet smooth at the same time. "Whatever is the matter?" Miss Hemswell asked in a soothing voice. "It's my fire, I've lost my fire." the dragon spluttered between sobs. "Well there, there now I'm sure there's a way I could help." she said.

“You’d help me.” the dragon said, turning his head to look at her, tears pooling in his eyes.

“Why of course, I know how you could make fire.” she smiled.

With that Miss Hemswell headed out of the cave, returning promptly with some branches from the bramble outside. “These should do the trick.” she said. Then she dashed outside again, before returning with some dried leaves and some twigs. “Let’s get you some fire shall we.” she looked up at the dragon and smiled, the dragon had stopped crying now and looked at the piles of twigs and leaves with interest.

Miss Hemswell showed the Dragon how to build up a pile of dry leaves and branches. She then showed him how to twist the twigs to make an ember and then gently blow to create flames. **As the flames appeared, dancing and swaying,** the Dragon beamed with joy. “I wish I knew you could make fire like that,” he grinned “blowing fire has always given me dreadful heartburn.”

The two of them sat in the light of the fire, mesmerised by the flames. “Why did you come here in the first place?” the dragon asked “I never get any visitors especially not a nice lady like yourself.” Miss Hemswell smiled.

“I’m looking for a sword- with wings at the base, to return to a knight.” she said. The dragon lumbered up to his feet and headed over to a pile of gold in the far corner of the cave.

“Aha! Is this what you’re looking for?” he asked holding up the sword Miss Hemswell had seen in the book. It was even more stunning that the picture had portrayed. The steel glistened in the fire light, regal wings of gold spread out, like the wing span of an eagle.

“That’s the one” she said.

“Here take it, to say thank you for helping me.” the dragon beamed.

“It was my pleasure.” with that Miss Hemswell took hold of the base of the sword and once again blackness overtook her.

All of a sudden, Miss Hemswell felt her body still and calmness wash over her. She gradually opened her eyes. Surprisingly, she was sat on the marble floor of the museum, looking up at the knight.

“Oh Miss Hemswell are you OK?” Mrs Jensen asked with concern as she stretched out her hand to help her up. “You must have fallen and bumped your head, you’ve been unconscious for a couple of minutes.” Miss Hemswell rubbed her head gently and felt a bump growing under her palm. Her class gathered around her with wide eyes, looking down silently.

“Not to worry children I’m absolutely fine.” Miss Hemswell reassured them. Surely she hadn’t imagined what had happened: the castle, the raven, the dragon and the cave. Surely, she couldn’t have just imagined it all...Could she?

Just then she looked towards the knight, and there it was, grasped tightly in his hand...the sword and on the bookshelf, closed shut ,was the leather-bound book. She smiled to herself, she’d done it, she’d returned the sword. This is a history lesson that she might just keep to herself for now she thought.

Reading Comprehension Questions:

- 1) What was Miss Hemswell wearing?
- 2) Look at page 1: What does the word “bland” mean?
- 3) What animal does the author compare Miss Hemswell to?
- 4) What was Miss Hemswell’s TA called?
- 5) What did Miss Hemswell see of the museum first?
- 6) Look at page 2: What does the word “beckoning” mean?
- 7) What clue is there early on in the story that suggests something slightly different and magical in happening in the museum?
- 8) What period of history has Miss Hemswell’s class been studying?
- 9) Which word/phrase on page 3 shows the children were impressed with the knight?
- 10) What adjectives are used to describe the book?
- 11) How did Miss Hemswell feel when she arrived outside the castle and how do you know?
- 12) On page 4 it says “slithering like a cobra” what does this imply about the setting?
- 13) Had the wooden door been opened recently? How do you know?
- 14) Miss Hemswell was shocked to see the raven. Which word on page 6 means shocked?
- 15) What treasures did Miss Hemswell see in the cavern?
- 16) What suggests in the description of the dragon that he was dangerous?
- 17) What caused the dragon to wake up?
- 18) Choose 3 words to describe Miss Hemswell- justify your choices.
- 19) What did Miss Hemswell get to make fire? (Name 3 things)
- 20) Do you think Miss Hemswell had really bumper her head- how do you know?
- 21) Do you think her adventure was a dream- how do you know?
- 22) Why do you think Miss Hemswell had decided “this is a history lesson she might keep to herself for now”?

Reading Comprehension **ANSWERS**

- 1) Brown pin-stripe skirt and a light blue blouse
- 2) Boring, ordinary, plain
- 3) A mole
- 4) Mrs Jensen
- 5) The stone pillars
- 6) To call someone over by moving your arm
- 7) The bronze statue followed her with his eyes
- 8) Medieval times
- 9) Looked up in astonishment
- 10) Tattered/ leather-bound
- 11) She was shocked/ panicked as her hands were shaking, eyes were wide and her heart was beating fast
- 12) It was a dangerous/ scary place.
- 13) No it hadn't been opened recently as it screeched open.
- 14) startled
- 15) Gold, diamonds and rubies
- 16) He had sharp scales and spines, he was very big, he had sharp teeth and claws
- 17) Miss Hemswell knocked over some gold coins and they made a noise
- 18) VARIETY OF ANSWERS (e.g. brave, kind, intelligent, enthusiastic, friendly, helpful) support by evidence from the text
- 19) Branches, dried leaves, twigs
- 20) Yes because when she felt her head there was a lump there
- 21) No because the sword was in the knight's hand and it hadn't been before.
- 22) Because people wouldn't believe her/ think she was crazy