

Under the Couch

Read the science fiction story.

Then follow the directions in the Text Marking box.

Theo was reading in the living room when he heard faint, barely audible sounds. “Where was this whispering coming from?” he wondered. He searched the room but saw nothing.

“Pssst—here, under the couch.”

Startled, Theo looked down, thoroughly perplexed. “Come out,” he ordered. “Who or what are you, and why are you under my couch?”

A dozen creatures, none larger than a fly, slowly emerged from their hiding place. Each had two heads, three arms, and three legs. “We’re octons, visitors from another galaxy,” one replied. “I’m Quidron.”

“But...but...how did you get here?” sputtered Theo.

“We simply walked under your front door,” Quidron answered with two grins. “We came by spaceship, naturally, and now we await a second ship coming to take us home.”

“You must be terrified,” Theo said kindly.


“Actually, we’re more hungry than scared. In fact, we’re totally famished.” Hearing that, Theo graciously asked his tiny guests what they like to eat.


All 24 little heads answered immediately as a single voice. “Chocolate chips!” they shouted gleefully. “Got any?”



Text Marking

Use context clues to figure out word meanings.

 Circle the words *audible*, *perplexed*, and *famished*.

 Underline context clues for each word.

Under the Couch

► Answer each question. Give evidence from the story.

1 If something is *audible*, you can _____ it.

- A. taste
- B. see
- C. hear
- D. smell

What helped you answer? _____

2 Which is the normal thing to do when you are *famished*?

- A. Take a nap.
- B. Eat something.
- C. Make soft sounds.
- D. Hide under a couch.

What helped you answer? _____

3 How do you know that this story is science fiction?

4 Describe Quidron, using details from the story.

Teaching Routine for Close Reading and Purposeful Text Marking

Any text can become more accessible to readers once they have learned to bring various strategies, such as purposeful text marking, to the reading process. Here is one suggested routine that may be effective in your classroom.

Preview

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- **Engage prior knowledge** of the topic of the piece and its genre. Help students link it to similar topics or examples of the genre they may have read.
- **Identify the reading skill** for which students will be marking the text. Display or distribute the Comprehension Skill Summary Card that applies to the passage. Go over its key ideas. (See Comprehension Skill Summary Card, page 4, for more.)

Model *(for the first passage, to familiarize students with the process)*

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- **Display the passage**, using an interactive whiteboard, document camera, or other resource, and provide students with their own copy. Preview the text with students by having them read the title and look at the illustration or photograph.
- **Draw attention to the markings** students will use to enhance their understanding of the piece. Link the text marking box to the Comprehension Skill Summary Card for clarification.
- **Read aloud the passage** as students follow along. Guide students to think about the skill and to note any questions they may have on sticky-notes.
- **Mark the text together.** Begin by numbering the paragraphs. Then discuss the choices you make when marking the text, demonstrating and explaining how the various text elements support the skill. Check that students understand how to mark the text using the various icons and graphics shown in the text marking box.

Read

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- **Have students do a quick-read of the passage independently** for the gist. Then they should read it a second time, marking the text as they go.
- **Encourage students to make additional markings of their own.** These might include noting unfamiliar vocabulary, an idiom or phrase they may not understand, or an especially interesting, unusual, or important detail they want to remember. Model how to use sticky-notes, colored pencils, highlighters, question marks, or check marks.

Respond

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- **Have students read the passage a third time.** This reading should prepare them to discuss the text and offer their views about it.
- **Have students answer the questions** on the companion Do More page. Encourage them to look back at their text markings and other text evidence. This will help students provide complete and supported responses

Comprehension Skill Summary Card

To help students review the reading-comprehension skill this lesson addresses and the specific terms associated with the skill, have them use the reproducible Comprehension Skill Summary Card (page 6). The boldface terms on the card are the same ones students will identify as they mark the text.

You might duplicate, cut out, and distribute the Comprehension Skill Summary Card before assigning the passage. Discuss the elements of the skill together to ensure that students fully grasp it. Encourage students to save their card, which they can use as a reading aid to refer to whenever they read any type of literary text.

Tips and Suggestions

- The text-marking process is versatile and adaptable. While numbering, boxing, circling, and underlining are the most common methods, you can personalize the strategy for your class if it helps augment the process. You might have students use letters to mark text; they can, for example, write MC to indicate a main character, D to mark a detail, or 1st for first person and 3rd for third person. Whichever technique you use, encourage consistency of marking.
- You may wish to extend the text-marking strategy by having students identify other aspects of writing, such as figurative language or confusing words, expressions, or idioms.

Comprehension Skill

Character

Characters take part in the events of the story. A character can be a person, an animal, or a thing.

- 4 Read for details that describe how each character looks, speaks, acts, and responds to challenges.
- 4 Notice whether and how a character changes or learns during the story.

A story may have a **main character** and one or more **minor characters**.

- 4 The main character is the most important character in the story. This is the character the story is mostly about.
- 4 A minor character is not the focus of the story but is necessary for it to develop.

Comprehension Skill

Point of View

Knowing *who* is telling a story gives you its **point of view**. Authors usually use one of two points of view.

- 4 **First-person** point of view has a character *in* the story acting as the **narrator**. In first-person stories, readers learn about events from that character's point of view. Look for words like *I, me, and we*.
- 4 **Third-person** point of view has a narrator—someone *outside* the story telling it. That person is the narrator. In third-person stories, readers learn the thoughts, actions, and feelings of many characters. Look for words like *he, she, and they*.

One way to tell a character's point of view is by what he or she says.

Comprehension Skill

Compare & Contrast

Authors often discuss people, places, things, or ideas by describing how they are alike and ways they differ.

- 4 To **compare** means to tell how two or more things are alike.
- 4 To **contrast** means to tell how two or more things are different.
- 4 **Signal words** give clues that help you compare and contrast.

Examples for comparing: *both, too, like, also, and in the same way*.

Examples for contrasting: *but, only, however, unlike, and different*.

Connections to the Standards

This lesson supports the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading for students in grades K–12. These broad standards, which serve as the basis of many state standards, were developed to establish rigorous educational expectations with the goal of providing students nationwide with a quality education that prepares them for college and careers. The chart below details how the lesson aligns with specific reading standards for literary texts for students in grade 3.

These materials also address language standards, including skills in the conventions of standard English, knowledge of language, and vocabulary acquisition and use. In addition, students meet writing standards as they answer questions about the passage, demonstrating their ability to convey ideas coherently, clearly, and with support from the text.

Reading Standards for Literature

Key Ideas and Details

- Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.
- Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.
- Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

Craft and Structure

- Describe the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from nonliteral language.
- Refer to parts of stories, dramas, and poems when writing or speaking about a text, using terms such as chapter, scene, and stanza; describe how each successive part builds on earlier sections.
- Distinguish their own point of view from that of the narrator or those of the characters.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

- By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, at the high end of the grades 2–3 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

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Comprehension Skill

Context Clues

Authors may use words you may not know. But nearby words or sentences can offer clues about the meaning of an unknown word.

- **Context** refers to all the words and sentences around an unknown word.
- **Context clues** are hints that can help you figure out a word's meaning. As you read, search for related words, such as synonyms, antonyms, explanations, or examples in nearby text. Link these clues to the unknown word to understand it.

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"Actually, we're more hungry than scared. In fact, we're totally (famished)." Hearing that, Theo graciously asked his tiny guests what they like to eat.

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Sample Text Markings

Passage: Under the Couch

1. C; Sample answer: I picked C because Theo heard faint sounds, like whispers, so *audible* has to do with sound.

2. B; Sample answer: I picked B because I figured out that *famished* means "very hungry," so you should eat.

3. Sample answer: It has science facts (spaceships, galaxy), but fictional details like odd-looking alien creatures that speak English, come into someone's house, and like chocolate chips.

4. Sample answer: Quidron is a tiny, talking space creature with two heads, three arms, and three legs. He or she seems to be the leader of a group of twelve creatures from another galaxy.