

Opening Worlds Adaptive Teaching

What about adaptation?

In making knowledge do its work of strengthening **reading**, we are being inclusive. This means we need to think in refreshingly different ways about adaptation. The content may appear challenging, but the moment we contemplate not giving pupils access to the core vocabulary and the content that sits underneath it, we exclude them more, not less.

A key goal of the humanities curriculum is to bring many more pupils into the conversation of the lesson and into the knowledge that makes reading possible. If we exclude pupils from that knowledge, we widen the attainment gap and widen the disadvantage gap.

So take great care not to think about adaptation by curricular input. We need all pupils to encounter the stories, repeat the words and participate in recalling them together. Any pupil struggling needs more practice in the new vocabulary not less.

Overly elaborate and unnecessary adaptation is to be avoided. Such adaptation often excludes some pupils from the knowledge. This will widen the disadvantage gap.

We recognise, however, that some pupils, because of severely limited prior knowledge or specific barriers, may need extra time and help to access some materials. The other FAQs in this section attend to this.

How does whole class teaching help pupils with additional needs?

Those parts of the lesson where you are teaching the whole class are crucial for pupils with additional needs. They will benefit hugely from:

- building knowledge through oral work. Your most basic aim is for pupils to be **familiar with the words aurally and orally**, even if written recognition lags behind this. We won't accelerate recognition of the written if they don't have plenty of **aural** work (listening) and **oral** practice (speaking).
- **brief spurts of punchy, pacy, whole-class work** which keep pupils attentive and focused. Like rhymes, poems and songs, the pleasure and satisfaction that comes through being able to join in on choral response, is a key tool in gradually enabling weaker pupils to 'feel' the vocabulary in their ears and on their tongues. They are more likely to be able to follow the text or enjoy the ensuing story if they have joined in this kind of choral work. The more they can join in, the more the knowledge liberates them by giving them access to what everyone is talking about.
- **pre-teaching** of content/specific vocabulary before moving onto the booklet, so that pupils have a positive experience of reading chunks of the text,

checking that particular pupils have ‘got it’ as you go along. Small amounts of information followed by reinforcement and retrieval. Remember that whenever you ask pupils to remember something (retrieval) you’re not just checking they’ve got it, you’re strengthening it in their memories. It therefore has a double value. Retrieval practice has two roles: checking they remember and strengthening memory!

- **prioritising attention to pupils with additional needs** whenever you are teaching core vocabulary. Ensure these pupils take part in the choral response so that they hear themselves saying new vocabulary. Ensure these specific pupils are quizzed as part of the five or six pupils quizzed when you’re checking.

How can I give extra practice to pupils with additional needs?

When pupils are not in whole-class teaching, that is, when they are working on their own, or perhaps in pairs, some adapted provision can be helpful. Think of it in terms of ‘**extra practice**’ and ‘**extra access**’ rather than alternative input. You are not giving them easier work; you are giving them extra input to ensure they understand the thrust of the lesson. Then they have more chance of clambering into the main drama and direction of the lesson when whole-class teaching resumes.

A few pupils will certainly struggle to tackle even simple tasks such as writing a sentence in response to a question, let alone writing a couple of paragraphs. Some pupils will need further reinforcement of the story, concept or process just taught.

Rather than struggling to write a paragraph and not really reinforcing the knowledge or tackling misconceptions in the process, they would be better off hearing or rehearsing the knowledge again or differently or having a chance to talk about it with a classroom assistant, or to ask a question about it in order to process it, or to look again at a map or picture and have fundamentals explained again with additional visual reinforcement.

For these reasons, we recommend with a very small minority of pupils, where the task the majority of students are doing is prohibitively difficult or would take so long that the time taken would outstrip its value, one of the following might be useful, depending on the child’s needs and available classroom assistant support:

- a missing word exercise (cloze procedure);
- simple annotation of a diagram or map, sometimes using pictures;
- matching pictures and definitions;
- drawing (and/or labelling a drawing of) a feature or event.

Samples of such ‘extra practice’ tasks to go with each half-termly unit will be found in some of the subject’s resources sections. You may wish to make more, along these lines, to suit your pupils.

But it's important not just to think about opportunities in terms of alternative tasks. Classroom assistants could profitably spend the five minutes or so spent in individual work simply doing some re-explanation, some oral repetition and some additional quizzing for core knowledge so as to build pupils' security and sense of satisfaction and motivation that comes from that security.

What if a very small minority of pupils are too confused by fundamentals to gain much benefit even from 'extra practice' tasks?

Sometimes, it is oral work that such children need. Often oral work is the only way to emphasise story or process, and make it interesting. Completing an easier worksheet might keep the pupil happily busy, but it may not be addressing the issue head-on and overcoming it. This is where judicious work with classroom assistants, or, where classroom assistants are not available, focused brief teacher input with particular pupils, can be invaluable.

Often, what certain pupils need is a reiteration of the really big main story (what a glacier is and how it moves) or outline concept ("the water in the river is being spread all over the land!") so that they are at least not confused by fundamentals. For example, a struggling pupil who has not appreciated that the Romans came from Italy to Britain, and cannot yet make meaning out of a map to show those places and people, is going to be very confused about the idea of Britons rebelling against invaders. Who are these invaders? And they won't readily identify Claudius with the people in Italy and Caractacus with the Britons. Grasp of what is going on then quickly unravels and they cannot make sense of listening to a story, watching it acted out or hearing it read.

For this reason, additional one-to-one teacher input or precious moments with a TA are often best spent not in 'busy work' that isn't actually addressing these confusions, but in simply going over such outline summaries or 'big picture' stories. For example:

Look: here is a map showing where we can see the places where different people lived. See how this country, Italy, is a long, long, long, long way away from Britannia! The people here were called the Romans. They travelled all this way, a long, long way (trace it together with fingers on the map), all the way to Britannia. They tried to invade and conquer. This means they tried to march in and tell everyone what to do. The people who lived in Britannia didn't like this. Why didn't they like it? They had a leader called Caratacus. And so on.

This is a crude simplification of the story, but it can be necessary where such underlying confusions such as distance, the concept of there being different peoples or the idea of leadership are still extremely alien. These **abstract** notions need extra **concrete** reinforcement through one-to-one talk with an adult, and appropriate visuals.

Helping TAs to stay focused on the 'big stories' such as this could be more useful than a pupil spending ten minutes annotating a Roman soldier when they still don't really know what a 'Roman' was in any geographical or historical sense.