

Literacy Thursday Reading Comprehension

Street Child is based on the true story of James Jarvis, whose life first inspired Doctor Barnardo to set up his famous home for children. The setting is in London in the 1860s. Jim has nowhere to live. He finds a warm welcome at Doctor Barnardo's Ragged School, but soon it is time to leave for the day.

"You ought to go home at once," Barnie insisted.

"Your mother will know the other boys have gone. She'll wonder what kept you so late."

"I ain't got no mother."

"Your father, then"

"I ain't got no father."

Barnie was getting impatient. Jim could see that. It was almost as if he didn't believe him. "Where are your friends then? Where do you live?"

"Ain't got no friends. Don't live nowhere."

Barnie stared at him. He walked away from the fire and back to it again, then went to the desk. He sat down on his chair and stayed with his fingers drumming across the flat of the desk-top, like the patter of rain on a roof. Jim wondered if he was angry with him.

"It's the truth, sir," he said anxiously, "I ain't telling you no lies." He spoke in the whiney voice the other street boys used to adults.

"Tell me," the man said at last "How many boys are there like you? Sleeping out in the streets?"

"Heaps," said Jim. "More than I can count."

It was Barnie's turn now to stare into the fire, as if there were secrets in its flames, or answers to great puzzles. He was as still as if he had gone to

sleep, and Jim kept still too, afraid to break into the man's thinking. The only sound was the spitting of the logs, and outside, the bleak voice of the wind.

"Now," the man said, very slowly, like someone creeping up on a bird I case they frightened it away. "If I am willing to give you some hot coffee and a place to sleep in, will you take me to where some of these other boys are?"

Jim looked sideways at him. "You wouldn't tell the police?"

"No," said Barnie. "I wouldn't tell the police."

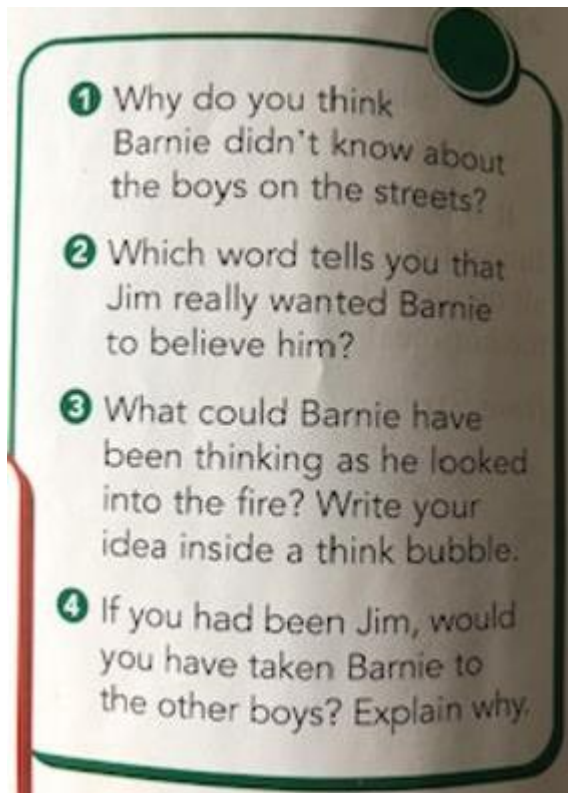
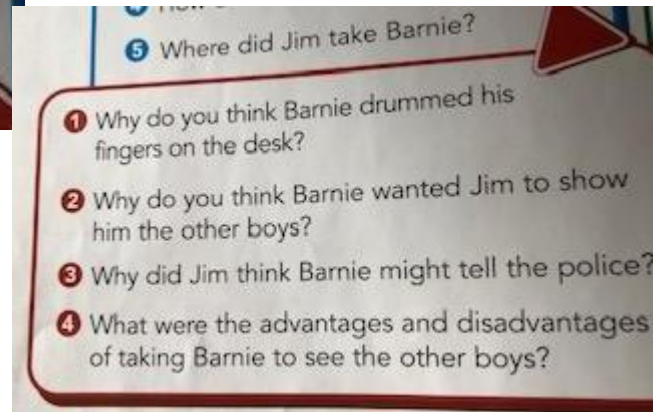
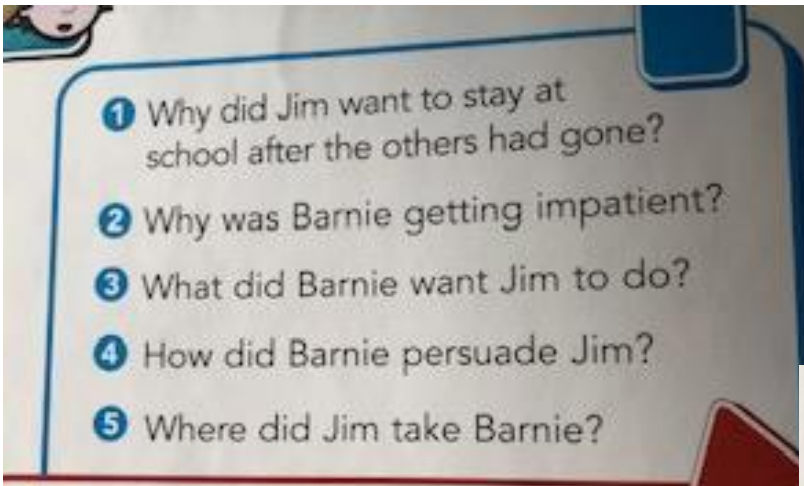
"All right," said Jim. "I'll take you."

It was some time later that they arrived at the high wall of the market. Jim stopped, afraid again. What if Barnie told the police about them, and sent all the boys to the workhouse? But if he didn't show Barnie, he wouldn't get the hot meal and the shelter to sleep in. He didn't know what to do.

From STREET CHILD by Berlie Doherty



Comprehension Questions



The blue square questions are the easiest.

The red triangle questions are in the middle.

The green circle questions are the most tricky.

POWERFUL VERBS

For all groups

3 Powerful verbs

These sentences could have been used in the story of Jim and Barnie. Change the words in **bold** in these sentences to more powerful verbs. Then, see how many other words you can think of for each verb. Discuss with a partner how using different verbs changes the sentence.

- 1 Barnie **walked** across the roof towards the boys.
- 2 Barnie looked at the sleeping faces. "Oh, my goodness," he **said**.
- 3 Two of the boys woke up and **ran away**.
- 4 Jim **took** the mug of hot coffee.
- 5 Jim **lay down** on the soft blankets.

Think of some ideas of your own for how the story might continue. Write some sentences which include powerful verbs.

Remember!

- Check that your verbs give the information you want

LETTER WRITING

4 Writing a letter about a character

Pretend that you know Barnie very well. Write to a friend who has never met him.

Paragraph 1: Introduce Barnie and say who he is.

Paragraph 2: Describe Barnie and explain how he behaves, what he thinks and how he feels. Include details about Barnie that will help your friend see him exactly as you do.

Paragraph 3: Give your opinion about Barnie and say what you think he might do next.

Remember!

- Include what Barnie looks like with one sentence of description.
- Use commas to drop some extra information into a sentence
- Choose your words to describe Barnie very carefully.