

# THE ART OF READING

Stage 1

**An Engaging & Systematic Path to Phonics Mastery**

**SAMPLE**

get complete stage 1 at  
[shop.foundationsofhomeschool.com](http://shop.foundationsofhomeschool.com)



# **THE ART OF READING**

Stage 1

**An Engaging & Systematic Path to Phonics Mastery**

**FIRST EDITION**

© 2025 Victoria Poulton

**COPYRIGHT & USAGE POLICY**

All content in this book is copyrighted material. This book is for personal use only and may be printed for use within your own household.

**For families:** You may use this book as within your own home. However, this book may not be shared electronically, posted online, or photocopied.

**For schools, classrooms, and groups:** This book may not be reproduced, photocopied, or distributed for classroom or group instruction. Commercial use is strictly prohibited. This book is designed for one-on-one instruction and is not intended for use in a group setting.

Unauthorized reproduction, distribution, or resale of this material is a violation of copyright.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Lesson 1 - Short A .....                    | 1   |
| Lesson 2 - Short E .....                    | 4   |
| Lesson 3 - Short I .....                    | 7   |
| Lesson 4 - Short O .....                    | 10  |
| Lesson 5 - Short U .....                    | 13  |
| Vowels Review .....                         | 16  |
| How to Teach Blending .....                 | 17  |
| Lesson 6 - M .....                          | 18  |
| Lesson 7 - D .....                          | 22  |
| Lesson 8 - T .....                          | 26  |
| Lesson 9 - S .....                          | 30  |
| Lesson 10 - N .....                         | 34  |
| Lesson 11 - B .....                         | 40  |
| Lesson 12 - F .....                         | 47  |
| Lesson 13 - H .....                         | 54  |
| Lesson 14 - S as /z/ .....                  | 61  |
| Lesson 15 - TH (like in that) .....         | 63  |
| Lesson 16 - R .....                         | 69  |
| Lesson 17 - P .....                         | 77  |
| Lesson 18 - C .....                         | 84  |
| Lesson 19 - G .....                         | 91  |
| Lesson 20 - K .....                         | 98  |
| Lesson 21 - CK .....                        | 101 |
| Lesson 22 - L .....                         | 107 |
| Lesson 23 - ALL .....                       | 114 |
| Lesson 24 - W .....                         | 116 |
| Lesson 25 - OO (long and short oo) .....    | 123 |
| Lesson 26 - SH .....                        | 129 |
| Lesson 27 - Long Vowels .....               | 135 |
| Lesson 28 - EE .....                        | 137 |
| Lesson 29 - X .....                         | 143 |
| Lesson 30 - J .....                         | 147 |
| Lesson 31 - Z .....                         | 151 |
| Lesson 32 - U ( short oo like in put) ..... | 155 |
| Lesson 33 - Y .....                         | 158 |
| Lesson 34 - AY .....                        | 162 |
| Lesson 35 - V .....                         | 168 |
| Lesson 36 - Q .....                         | 172 |

## ABOUT THE ART OF READING

The Art of Reading is a comprehensive, multi-sensory, systematic phonics program designed to build a solid foundation for reading. It uses a carefully sequenced, step-by-step approach, introducing each concept one at a time to ensure your child masters the skills needed for proficient reading.

Lessons are **short**, focused, and include **engaging**, hands-on activities that reinforce the material. These activities are designed to be completed after each lesson, offering practical opportunities for your child to apply what they've learned. The program follows a simple, **open-and-go structure** that makes it easy to use, while keeping the experience fun and effective.

In addition, each lesson is paired with a controlled reader that reinforces the concepts covered, ensuring your child gets plenty of practice in context, this approach not only helps with decoding skills, but also builds reading fluency as your child progresses through this book.

This book is **consumable**. It is designed to be cut, written in, and used directly by your child. The Art of Reading is a complete phonics program. No additional materials are required to teach your child to read.

## IS YOUR CHILD READY TO READ?

### BEFORE STARTING, YOUR CHILD SHOULD BE ABLE TO:

- Recognize all lowercase and capital letters.
- Understand that letters can make more than one sound (e.g., long and short vowel sounds).
- Name vowels and their short sounds.

If your child has not yet learned the alphabet, take the time to teach the letters and their sounds. Use the games on page **ix**. This will help build the groundwork for learning to blend sounds.

## IMPORTANT NOTES

### METHODOLOGY

English is structured on an open and closed syllable system, with the majority of syllables being closed. We introduce reading by first teaching the child to close the syllable, where a vowel is followed by a consonant (**-VC**). This approach helps early readers easily and comfortably blend sounds, such as **-am (-VC)**. We teach two-letter blends and then progress to blending consonant-vowel-consonant (**CVC**) words.

**Note:** Some consonants cannot be blended in -VC patterns as they form digraphs, or there are no words containing those letter combinations (e.g., uw). In those lessons, your child will be taught to read that consonant with a previously taught VC blend.

While we don't strictly follow a traditional phonics sequence, we introduce each new concept one at a time. The most frequently used digraphs are introduced early to reduce the number of sight words a child must memorize. Teaching a child to decode words is far more effective than relying on rote memorization of words. When a child understands the sound(s) each letter or digraph makes, they can apply this knowledge to read new words independently.

The **included readers** are **100% decodable** (called Stories) and are carefully aligned with the concepts taught in each lesson. The program starts gently, introducing one concept at a time. Early lessons begin with a single sentence, gradually increasing in length and complexity. By the end of the book, your child will confidently read 10–12 sentences. It is important not to skip the early, simpler lessons, as they are essential for building a solid reading foundation.

# LESSON LENGTH AND STRUCTURE

The recommended pace is **one lesson per day, five days a week**. There are a total of 100 lessons in Stage 1. Each lesson, including activities and the reader, will take approximately **10 minutes** to complete.

## DAILY STRUCTURE:

1. **Teach (or review)** the concept in Lesson X.
2. Complete **one page** of activities.
3. **Read** the assigned **story**. A note at the bottom of each activity page will direct you to the correct story.

# CONSISTENCY

Consistency is key when it comes to learning to read. Setting aside a regular daily time slot ensures that your child has dedicated time to focus on learning to read without distractions. It's best to choose a time when your child is well-rested and alert, as this allows them to fully engage with the new material.

If your child is struggling to master a concept, it's perfectly fine to go back and review previously learned lessons to solidify their understanding. It is important **not** to take a break just because a concept feels challenging - working through it helps strengthen their skills and build perseverance over time.

# READING PRACTICE

Each new concept is reinforced through the built-in **controlled readers** (labeled "**Stories**"), which allow children to practice decoding and gradually build fluency.

## WHY ARE STORIES IMPORTANT?

- They help children see how words **connect** to form sentences.
- They build **reading comprehension**.
- They develop reading stamina.

# NO ILLUSTRATIONS IN READERS

Illustrations have been **intentionally** omitted to prevent children from guessing words based on pictures rather than focusing on the text itself. Many children learning to read rely on images to predict words instead of developing **strong decoding skills**. By removing this visual aid, children are encouraged to **sound out each word**, recognize patterns, and build reading accuracy.

This approach ensures that reading comprehension comes from understanding the words on the page rather than making assumptions based on illustrations. Over time, this strengthens a child's ability to read independently and with confidence.

# SIGHT WORDS

Sight words are an important part of learning to read, as English contains some irregularly spelled words that don't follow standard decoding rules. Words like "one" and "says" are introduced throughout the stories, one at a time. These words will be **highlighted in red** when first introduced, making them easier to spot, and will be reinforced through the activities in the book.

# GRAMMAR

As your child begins reading sentences and Stories, they will be gradually introduced to basic grammar concepts. These include capitalization, punctuation, commas, nouns, verbs, and adjectives. Each concept will be introduced in context, helping your child understand how grammar shapes meaning in sentences.

# COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Each story includes comprehension questions. These do not need to be repeated during the second reading of the Story.

# WHAT TO EXPECT

At first, your child will **sound out each letter** in a word before moving on to blending the sounds together. Blending **takes time** and does not happen automatically. With **patience and practice**, it will eventually all come together.

## BEGINNER-FRIENDLY FONT

Reading can be tiring for beginners. The fonts in this book were carefully selected to make reading less strenuous for young children.

This program uses fonts that help beginners by:

- Giving each letter a distinct shape to reduce confusion.
- Increasing word spacing for better visibility.
- Increasing line spacing to improve tracking.

## DIGRAPHS

In the stories, digraphs are underlined when first introduced to help your child spot and easily distinguish them from other letters.

## FOUNDATIONS OF SPELLING

Recognizing and separating individual sounds is a critical step in learning to spell. We equip you to teach your child with the ability to listen for individual sounds in a word, isolate those sounds, and then build the word using letter cards.

By the end of this book your child will be able to competently spell CVC words CCVC words and CVCC words.

## WHAT IF MY CHILD IS:

### LEARNING FASTER THAN EXPECTED:

You know your child best - adjust the pace of this book as needed. It is okay to skip activity pages if your child has already mastered the concept, but be sure to read every story, as they provide essential daily reading practice.

### STRUGGLING:

If your child is struggling to remember letter sounds, use the card games in this section daily for a fun, multi-sensory phonics review. These games will help reinforce learning in an engaging way. If your child forgets a sound, revisit the instructions at the start of the lesson as needed, to ensure they have a solid foundation before moving onto the next concept.

## REVIEW GAMES

Review games are designed to reinforce the differences between lowercase and capital letters, as well as their sounds - without relying on tedious flashcard drills. These games can be skipped if your child already recognizes letters and remembers sounds easily. However, they add a fun element to the lesson, so you may wish to include them regardless.

When laying out the letter cards, ensure all letters are facing the correct direction. Some children may confuse similar-looking letters, such as d and p, u and n, or q and b. To help with orientation, underline letters *b*, *d*, *p*, *q*, *n*, and *u*.

**Do not skip** the *b* and *d* card games. These letters are commonly confused, and the games provide valuable reinforcement to help your child distinguish the **difference** between them.

# GRAMES

## GAME 1: Focusing on one particular letter/sound, eg. letter S.

**Set Up:** Lay out half the alphabet cards (one of each - lowercase and capital letter) on the floor in mixed order. Make sure to include the letter your child is practicing remembering eg. S.

**Gameplay:** Ask your child what sound does letter “S” make?

Have your child to find the lowercase and capital letters among the letters laid out on the floor.

Have your child close their eyes while you quickly move the letter S cards to a different spot.

Ask the child to find the capital and lower case “S” again.

**Repeat a few more times.**

## GAME 2: SPOT THE LETTER

**Set Up:** Lay out half of the alphabet cards on the floor in mixed order (one of each - lowercase and capital letters). Set aside 3–8 cards (either lowercase **OR** capital letters).

**Gameplay:** Show your child one of the **set aside** cards.

Ask your child to find it's matching lowercase **OR** capital card on the floor.

Have your child tell you which of the two cards is the lowercase letter and what sound the letter makes.

**Repeat with the remaining withheld cards.**

## GAME 3: GO FISH

**Setup:** You will need 20 cards.

Use one of each lowercase and its matching capital letter cards.

Each player gets 5 cards.

The rest go in a pile in the middle.

**Take Turns Asking**

**Gameplay:** On your turn, look at your cards.

Pick a letter in your hand and ask the other player:

“**Do you have a capital B? /b/ /b/ /b/.**”

**OR**

“**Do you have a lowercase b? /b/ /b/ /b/.**”

If they have it, they must give you the card.

If they don't, they say “**Go fish!**”

**Go Fish!**

If they say “**Go fish!**”, take one card from the pile.

**Make Pairs**

If you have a capital and a lowercase letter, put them down as a pair!

**Keep playing until all pairs are found.**

**The player with the most pairs wins!**

## GAME 4: HIDE AND SEEK LETTERS

**Set Up:** Hide up to six letters (both lowercase and uppercase, total of up to 12 cards) around your living area.

**Gameplay:** Ask your child to find the cards, as your child finds them, have the child identify what letter it is, whether it is a vowel or a consonant, uppercase or lower case and what sound(s) the letter makes and if the child can think of any words starting with that sound.

## GAME 5: SWAT THE LETTER

Use a fly swat for this game.

**Set Up:** Lay out one of each lowercase and uppercase letter cards (A -Z) in mixed order on the floor.

**Gameplay:** Ask your child to find and swat (for example) a capital letter M, then say the sound letter M makes.

Next, have them find and swat the matching lowercase letter.

**Repeat this with 5-8 other letters.**

## GAME 6: RUN AND FIND

**Set Up:** Lay out all of the alphabet cards on the floor in mixed order.

**Gameplay:** Have the child stand at the other end of the room. Call out the name of the letter and ask the child to run and find the card on the floor then bring it back to you. Ask the child what sound that letter makes then to run back and find its upper or lowercase counterpart.

**Repeat this with 5-8 other letters.**

## WHAT YOU NEED:

- Scissors
- Glue
- Pencil or colored markers
- Highlighter
- Coin and a game piece
- Fly swat
- Any set of Alphabet Flashcards (lowercase and capital letters) that you already own
- b & d cards (found at the back of this book) Laminating the b & d cards is recommended for durability.

## A NOTE ON DIALECTS AND PRONUNCIATION:

English is spoken with many regional accents and variations. The Art of Reading is based on standard phoneme-grapheme correspondences, but slight differences in pronunciation are expected. Where applicable, adjust the pronunciation to reflect your own regional dialect.

## VOWEL VARIATIONS:

English vowel sounds can be inconsistent and may vary slightly depending on regional accent. For example, words like frog, ox, and orange all use the short /ɒ/ sound, but you might hear subtle differences in how they're pronounced, even by the same speaker.

Use the guide word at the top of the instruction page to indicate the intended pronunciation, as your anchor when introducing the sound. This word reflects the target pronunciation in that lesson.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Learning to read is a journey that unfolds with **time, patience, and consistent practice**. Celebrate each step forward and enjoy the process of building a lifelong love of reading.

**READY TO BEGIN?**

# LESSON 1

# SHORT A

/ă/ LIKE IN AS

- Ask the child to point to the pictures and name them.

## TEACH YOUR CHILD:

- Capital and lowercase letters.
- Name of the letter.

## READ TO CHILD:

Apple, ant, and astronaut all start with the letter A.

Letter A is a vowel. The short sound for A is /ă/.

/ă/ /ă/ /ă/ apple  
/ă/ /ă/ /ă/ ant  
/ă/ /ă/ /ă/ astronaut

Practice making the short sound for letter A.

## WHICH WORDS BEGIN WITH THE SOUND /ă/ ?

pen, and, rat, avocado, boy, alpaca, animal

CAN YOU HEAR THE SOUND /ă/ IN THESE WORDS?  
IF YOU CAN, IS IT IN THE BEGINNING, MIDDLE, OR END?

cat, ant, sat, ask, apple, hat, lack, sleep

What is the short sound for letter A?

Letter A also has a long sound. It is the same as its name.  
/ā/ Like in the word “acorn”.

# A a

apple



astronaut



ant

## 1 NAME EACH PICTURE

If it starts with the same sound as the letter in the middle, draw a line connecting them.



# Aa



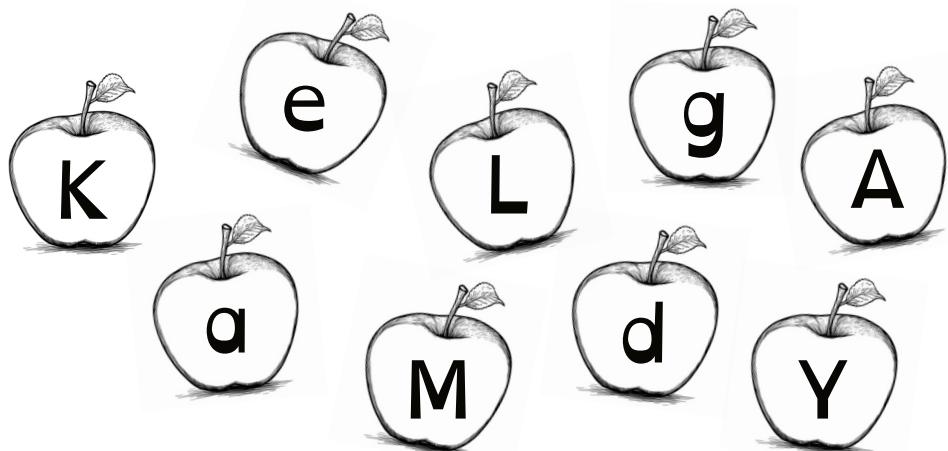
## 2 LETTER MATCH

Circle the lowercase letter that matches the uppercase letter.

A      C      a      c  
g      a      p      d      g

## 3 COLOR

Color in all the uppercase As.



## 4 USE ALPHABET CARDS

### CARD GAME SET UP:

Lay out approximately half of the lowercase and uppercase alphabet cards in mixed order on the floor. Make sure to include lowercase and capital A cards.

### GAMEPLAY:

Ask your child to tell you the long and short sounds for letter "A". Find the lowercase and capital letter A among the letters laid out on the floor. Have your child close their eyes while you quickly move the letter A cards to a different spot.

Repeat a few more times.

## 1 WHAT SOUND DOES THE LETTER M MAKE?

Find and circle all the lowercase and uppercase Ms.

e + m u S

+ y n B M

M C d w k

o P i m v

x G M l f

m h r x U

## 2 READ THE SOUND BLENDS

Follow the instructions on page 17 to teach blending.

a m

e m

i m

o m

u m

am

em

im

om

um

## STORY 1 - DAY 13

# STORIES

When children are learning to read, they sometimes **forget** that we read from left to right. To help with this, a **small figure of a boy walking** will appear at the top of every story page, with a weighted arrow beneath him.

If your child starts reading backward or skips around the page, point to the little boy and ask:

**"Which way is the little boy walking? Where does he start?"**

This gentle reminder will help reinforce the correct reading direction.

## INTRODUCING SENTENCES

### READ TO CHILD: <

This is a sentence. Every sentence begins with a **capital letter** and ends with a **punctuation mark**.

Look at the first word in this sentence - it is the word "**I**".  
This is a common word. Try to remember it.

Can you see the dot at the end of the sentence?  
That is called a **period (or full stop)**.

A period is the most common way to end a sentence.  
It tells you that the sentence is **finished**.

Now, can you try to read the sentence?



I am.

# LESSON 9

# LETTER S

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Sssssssss, *not* Sssssuh.

- Ask the child to point to the pictures and name them.

## TEACH YOUR CHILD:

- Capital and lowercase letters.
- Name of the letter.

## READ TO CHILD:

Strawberries, socks, and sunflower all start with the sound /s/.

Letter S makes the sound /s/. Can you hiss like a snake and say “Sssssssss”.

/s/ /s/ /s/ strawberries  
/s/ /s/ /s/ socks  
/s/ /s/ /s/ sunflower

Practice making the sound for letter S.

**CAN YOU HEAR THE SOUND /s/ IN THESE WORDS?  
IF YOU CAN, IS IT IN THE BEGINNING, MIDDLE, OR END?**

fuss, sat, time, stop, pot, sun, floss, soap, cat

Now, you will practice blending a vowel with the letter S.

# Ss

socks



sunflower



strawberries

## ① HIGHLIGHT THE WORD THAT MATCHES THE PICTURE



n ot  
n ut



n it  
n et

10

ten  
fan

## ② WHAT IS IN THE PICTURE?

Color the word that matches the picture.



en d

an d

m an

an t

## ③ NAME ALL THE VOWELS (a, e, i, o, u)

'A' or 'An' indicates one object. For example, 'an apple' means one apple. Use 'An' before words that start with a vowel, and 'A' before words that start with a consonant. Name the picture. Would you use 'A' or 'An' before the word? Circle the correct answer.

a

an



a

an

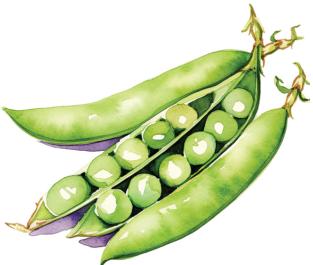


## ④ READ STORY 6 ON PAGE 39

1

## DOES THE WORD MATCH THE PICTURE?

Cross out words that do not match the picture.



b ad

b ut

b ot

t ub

s ob

b ed

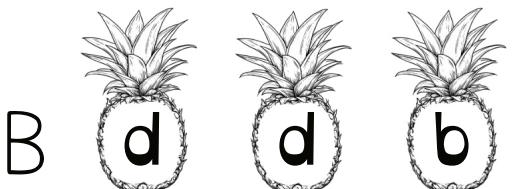
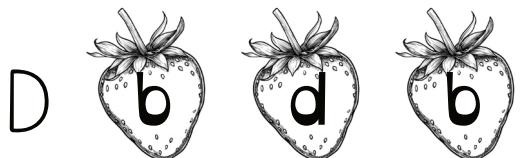
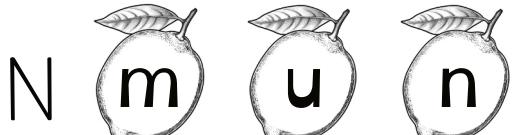
## 2 B OR D?

What is in the picture. Circle the letter that the picture starts with.



## 3 LETTER MATCH

Color the lowercase letter that matches the uppercase letter.



4

READ STORY 7 ON PAGE 43

1 WHAT IS IN THE PICTURE?



h en

f an

of

h ot



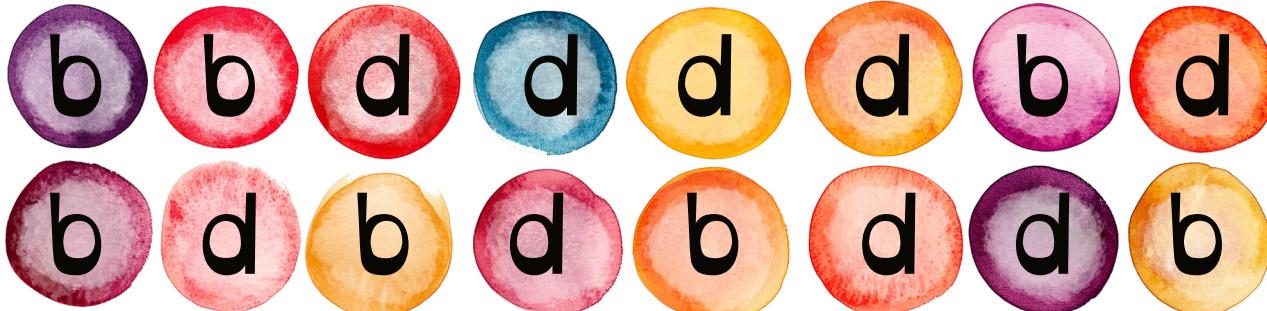
2 RHYMING WORDS - CIRCLE THE RHYMING WORDS

Rhyming words end with the same sound blend, for example - in words "man" and "pan" - both words end with "an".



h at

s at      h am      h ad      f at      b at      h ut      h im



3

B OR D? FIND AND CROSS OUT B

4 READ STORY 11 ON PAGE 57

## STORY 15 - DAY 37 & 39

- A sentence that ends with a period (full stop) gives information.
- What punctuation mark does Sentence 4 finish with?  
**(A question mark.)**

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

#### LINE 1

- Is it a cold or a hot day? *(Circle the answer.)*



#### LINE 5

- Is the fan on or off?

#### LINE 6

- What do you think setting the fan on means?

#### LINE 7

- Why is Ted no longer hot?



1. It is hot.
2. The fan is off.
3. Ted is a bit hot.
4. Is the fan on?
5. Ted's fan is off.
6. Ted sets the fan on.
7. Then Ted is not hot.

## 1 READ THE SOUND BLENDS

Read each letter separately, then blend them together.

a c

ac

e c

ec

i c

ic

o c

oc

u c

uc

## 2 WHAT IS THE MISSING SOUND?

Color the letter that completes the word to match the picture.



c  
r  
at

p  
c  
ot

c  
b  
ut

## 3 SHORT OR LONG VOWEL SOUND

Name the vowels. Name the picture and listen to the vowel sound in the word.

Circle the pictures with a short vowel sound.



## 4 SINGULAR OR PLURAL (CIRCLE THE RIGHT WORD)

Singular means one, plural means many. For example "one cat" is singular, "two cats" are plural.

c ob



c obs

## 5 READ STORY 20 ON PAGE 86

1 FIND THE HIDDEN WORDS IN THE PICTURE

- back
- tuck
- peck
- rock
- duck
- hack
- nick
- to
- do
- there



3 P OR Q? FIND AND CIRCLE P

p q p p q q p q p p q

103

4 READ STORY 26 ON PAGE 106

DAY 58

2 SINGULAR OR PLURAL

Circle the right word.

Singular means one, plural means many.  
For example "one cat" is singular, "two cats" are plural.



dog dogs



sock socks



cap caps

## STORY 46 - DAY 97 & 98

- Can you point the quotation marks in sentence 5? What do quotation marks mean? (They show that someone is speaking. The words inside the quotation marks are what the person is saying.)

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Who are the main characters in this story?
- How does the story start?
- What happens in the middle?
- How does the story end?



1. Vic is a vet.
2. He helps sick pets.
3. Max is there to help.
4. Vic looks for his vest.
5. "Is it at the back?" asks Max.
6. "No! The vest is not there," says Vic.
7. "Is it on the hook?" calls Max from the back.
8. "I may have put it on the stool!" Vic calls to Max.
9. "It is not there," says Max.
10. "May be it went in the wash?" asks Vic.
11. "Look! The vest is there!" says Max.
12. The vest was put in the wash.