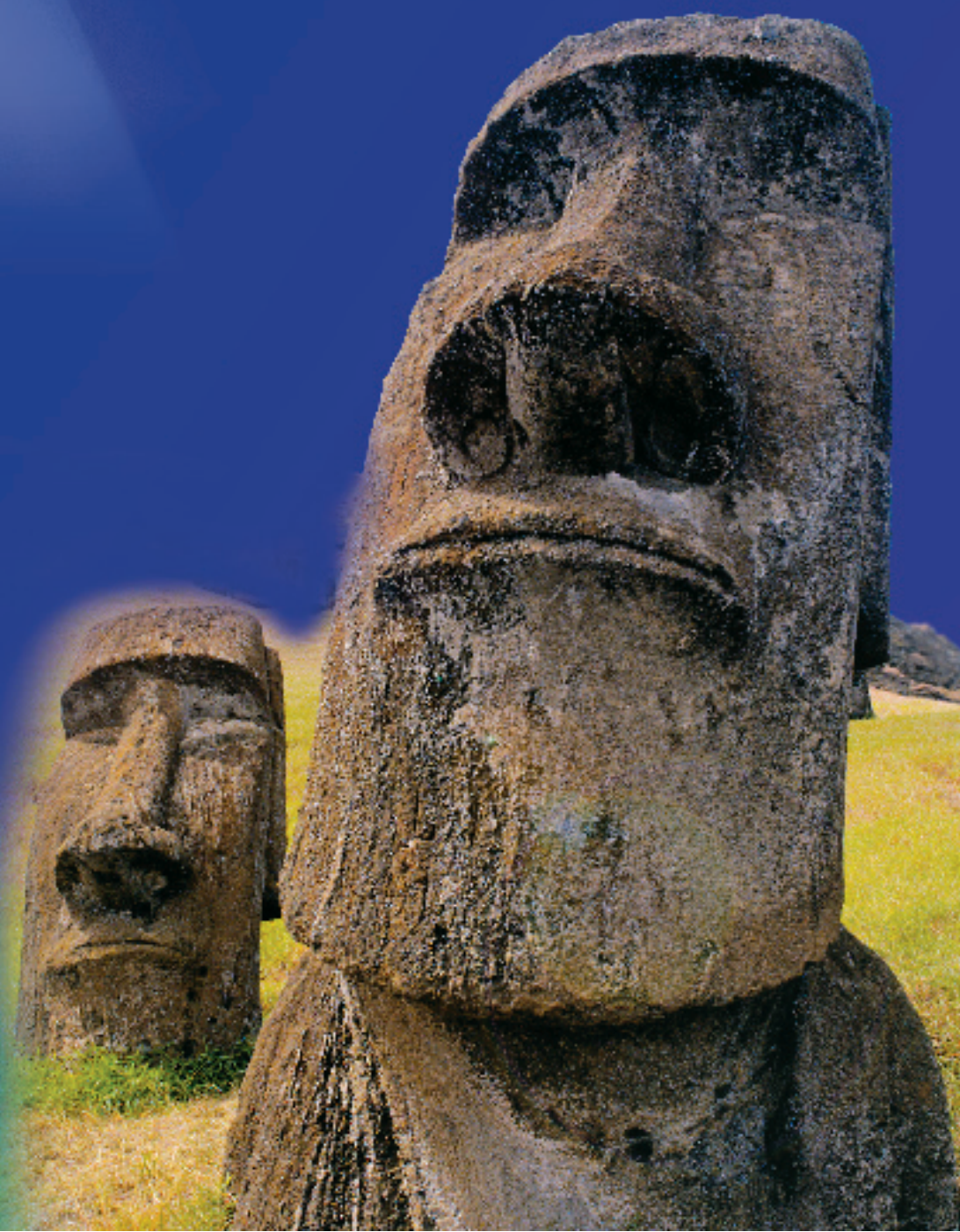


X•zone

Program Overview



X•zone

Program Overview



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Welcome! I'm your guide to *X-Zone*. I'll appear in the student books and CD activities to ask questions, make comments, and of course, have fun!

Reluctant Readers

READING AS A COGNITIVE PROCESS

Reading is a complex activity involving sophisticated cognitive processes. Not only must readers construct relationships between the information within the text, they must also make connections to prior knowledge. They must be aware when the text does not make sense to them and know what steps to take to derive meaning. They need to decide what information is important and what is unimportant, when they need to reread, and when they should continue reading forward. In addition, they must be proficient in the basic skills of letter and word recognition and the grammatical structure of the language. It is no wonder, then, that many students struggle with reading and are reluctant to read.

In addition to this heavy cognitive load, working against many struggling readers are their background experiences, sometimes as second language learners, or as children in families that do not model or promote reading in the home. Most reluctant readers have known the experience of failure with reading, which compounds the problem. Unlike good readers who continue to become better readers by building their reading experiences and reading vocabularies and making future reading experiences more accessible, students who are reluctant to read, or who struggle with reading, fail to build up the necessary reading experiences and vocabularies they need to become better readers. For students struggling with reading, reading becomes a chore; an activity to avoid if at all possible.

SUPPORTING RELUCTANT READERS

How then can we motivate reluctant readers and show them that reading can be a successful, enjoyable activity? The answer lies in the strategies we choose to teach, how we teach them, and what materials we use for instruction.

Explicit Strategy Instruction

Research has shown that struggling readers can be taught the strategies that good readers automatically

use. Teachers who used explicit methods of instruction that involved demonstration of a strategy, guided practice, and independent application of the strategy by students achieved positive results with their struggling readers and improved the comprehension levels of their students. To provide the most effective instruction for struggling readers, teachers need to target the comprehension strategies that research has proven to be most useful—monitoring, questioning, connecting, predicting, visualizing, summarizing, and organizing. These strategies need to be explicitly taught by providing explanation and demonstration of each strategy, along with opportunities for guided practice and independent application.

Dole summarizes the studies which show that comprehension strategies can be explicitly taught. (Dole, 2000)

Benefits of Small Group Support

Knowing what strategies to teach and using explicit instruction are only part of the picture. Instruction in a small group situation, where readers share similar reading needs, provides an atmosphere of shared learning that allows students to draw on the expertise of the teacher and other classmates. Small group instruction allows students to feel supported and gives

Strategies need to be explicitly taught by providing explanation and demonstration of each strategy, along with opportunities for guided practice and independent application.

Set the Purpose

Teacher Tip: This lesson pertains to pages 2–7 of *Nature’s Look-Alikes*. This lesson is scaffolded, with students gradually taking more responsibility for learning. Explicit instruction for one section of the book is provided in *During Reading*. *After Reading* includes guided practice for another part of the book and directions for releasing students to finish the book independently. Depending on your students’ needs, you may choose to use the explicit methods of *During Reading* with additional sections of the book.

them a chance to be heard. Working with a small group of students allows the teacher to assess the strategies students are using and to adjust instruction to their needs, as well as helping to focus those students who have difficulty attending to the task.

High-Interest Materials

Selection of appropriate materials is another crucial factor in motivating reluctant readers. Materials should be based on students’ interests and background knowledge in order to promote more active involvement with the text. Research has shown that students can read beyond their normal reading level provided the text is interesting to them and they have background knowledge of the topic.

How the materials are constructed can either serve to support students in their application of reading strategies, or hinder them. If the materials are high-interest and use simplified vocabulary and structure, the student will not need to expend as much mental energy on the basic skills of decoding and word recognition and will be able to focus more on cognitive functions when reading. In addition, texts that are well organized and provide topic sentences and cohesive links between text ideas will support readers as they strive to derive meaning from their reading.

Develop Vocabulary Skills

Finally, teachers should look for ways to increase students’ listening, speaking, and reading vocabularies. Explicit instruction that teaches students to recognize familiar structures in words, such as inflectional endings, prefixes, and suffixes, will help students increase their reading vocabulary. Knowing how to make use of different types of context clues will help

them derive meaning from unfamiliar words. Explicit teaching in vocabulary development skills will help make readers more fluent, which allows them to focus more on the meaning of the text and makes it more likely they will enjoy what they are reading.

Duke and Bennett-Armistead summarize research on the effects of interest and reading levels. (2003)

Stahl and Shiel discuss the importance of vocabulary teaching and reading achievement. (1992)

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- X provides explicit instruction in the reading strategies proven most effective
- X promotes teaching in small-group situations where students can share ideas
- X provides high-interest reading material written at a simplified level to enable students to focus more on cognitive processes
- X provides explicit instruction in vocabulary skills.

Effective Reading Strategies

The report issued by the National Reading Panel in 2000 that identifies key strategies leading to reading achievement has had a significant impact on teaching practices and materials used in schools. The following comprehension strategies have been listed by the panel as key.

COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

- X **Connecting to prior knowledge** (What does this text remind me of? What do I already know about this?)
- X **Visualizing aspects of the text** (What mental picture can I make to help me understand what I'm reading?)
- X **Asking/answering questions** (What do I wonder about this text? How do I know where to go to find the answers to my questions?)
- X **Monitoring comprehension** (Does what I'm reading make sense?)
- X **Using the structure of texts** to get at the meaning (How is this text organized? How is the text set up to help me derive meaning? What do I expect from this type of text?)
- X **Using graphic organizers** to focus on concepts and organize text information (How can I organize the information I've learned in a way that makes sense and is easy to remember?)
- X **Summarizing/synthesizing information** (What are the most important details to remember? What is the big idea here? How can I put what I have learned into my own words?)

In addition to these powerful strategies, research has also shown that prediction is a valuable strategy to help readers engage with the text:

- X **Predicting** (What will this text be about? What do I expect to learn? What do I think will happen next? What have I learned that makes me want to change my prediction?)



WHAT ARE METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES?

Readers who know what to do when reading doesn't make sense and who understand how these strategies help them make meaning are using metacognitive knowledge. Perkins and Swartz describe the different stages of metacognitive awareness:

TACIT READERS: lack awareness of strategies

AWARE READERS: know when the text doesn't make sense but don't know what to do to fix the problem

STRATEGIC READERS: use strategies of monitoring, self-questioning, making connections, etc. to understand the text

REFLECTIVE READERS: apply strategies flexibly and analyze how they use the strategies.

Harvey and Goudvis summarize the stages as defined by Perkins and Swartz. (2000)

Most struggling or reluctant readers are either at the tacit reading stage, or they may be aware that their reading doesn't make sense but don't know what strategies to use. When text doesn't make sense, it fails to be interesting and reading is not fun. No wonder such readers are reluctant to pick up a book. If teachers can help students become strategic readers who understand what they read, know when it doesn't make sense, and know what to do to fix the problem, they will become strategic readers who will discover that reading can be enjoyable.

COMPREHENSION INSTRUCTION

Traditionally, comprehension instruction has involved asking students questions after reading, which has often resulted in more of a testing situation than a teaching situation. Current research supports the

instruction of strategies before, during, and after reading in order to develop readers who actively engage with the text and develop metacognitive knowledge and awareness. Prior to reading, good readers ask questions of the text and themselves: What is this text about? What do I already know about the topic? What questions do I have for this text? How is this text organized? How is it like other texts I have read? What do I predict about this text? During reading, students continue to question and make connections, monitoring their reading and correcting their reading when meaning breaks down. Research has also shown that comprehension improves when teachers question and prompt students during reading. After reading, teachers guide students to discuss ideas and synthesize information, and then have them independently apply what they have learned.

Duke and Pearson discuss effective practices for developing comprehension. (2002)

Taylor, Graves, and Van den Broek discuss questioning during reading. (1998)

X-Zone

- X explicitly teaches key comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading
- X provides prompts and questions for teachers to ask during reading
- X provides support for developing metacognitive awareness throughout the lesson.

The Importance of Nonfiction

We read a large amount of nonfiction text in our daily lives: at home, at work, in the community. It is important that students are familiar with nonfiction text and know how to understand and evaluate nonfiction information. Yet, fiction texts have provided the bulk of reading instruction for primary students. This has been due partly to the lack of good nonfiction material for instruction in the past, and partly to a mistaken belief that young children cannot handle nonfiction text as well as fiction text. By the time students reach fourth grade, they find themselves reading mostly nonfiction, but many of these students lack the skills they need to critically analyze nonfiction texts.

“If we include more informational text in early schooling, we put children in a better position to handle the reading and writing demands of their later schooling.”

(Duke and Bennett-Armistead, 2003)

NONFICTION IN X-ZONE

The books students read in the *X-Zone* program are high-interest, nonfiction texts. Most of the books are informational texts, which is the type of nonfiction text students are more likely to find in their textbooks and on standardized tests.

X-Zone also provides supportive access features that teachers can use to teach students how to read nonfiction texts.

1. **Questions on the covers** of the books stimulate interest in the topic and generate predictions from readers.



2. **The table of contents** is set up to clearly show students the main headings and subheadings. This helps students organize the information as they read and helps them determine main ideas and supporting details.



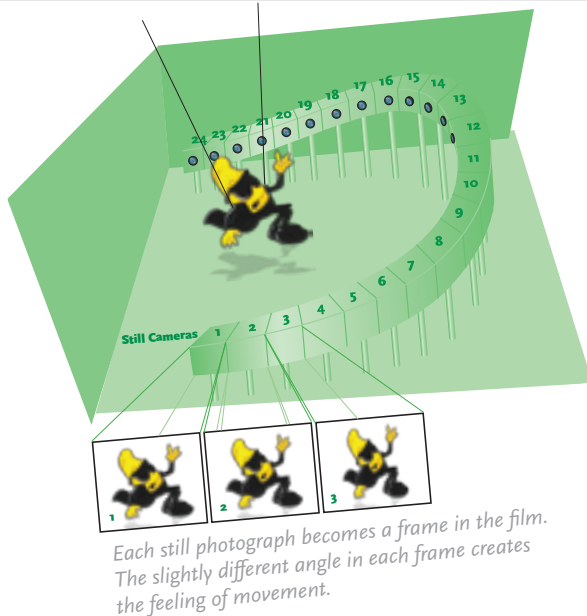
Contents	
TO THE MAX.....	2
Taking Sports to the Extreme.....	2
WILD WATER.....	4
Extreme Summer.....	4
STREET STUNTS.....	6
Street Skating.....	6
Vert Skating.....	8
BMX Riding.....	10
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What is an ollie? PAGE 6

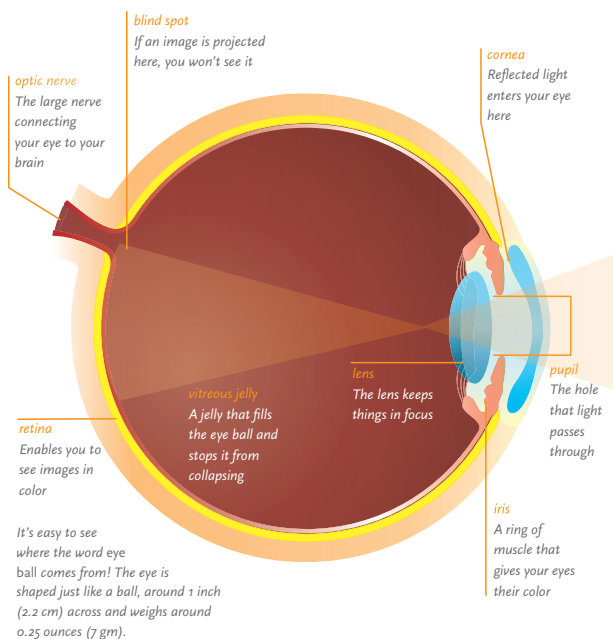
What are the Planet X World Games? PAGE 20

Who were the first bungee jumpers? PAGE 24

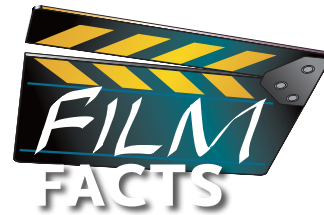
3. **The critter character** interacts with readers, sometimes clarifying information, sometimes adding information, and sometimes posing questions that stimulate students to think about their reading.



5. The books provide opportunities for students to **read diagrams**.



4. **Sidebars and breakout boxes** provide interesting information about the topic.



Did you know that Jabba the Hutt's Rancor beast in *Return of the Jedi* was stop-motion?

6. **Charts** such as this one show students how nonfiction information can be organized.

COUNTRY	INTERNAL	EXTERNAL
	These networks look after their people's safety inside their country	These networks look after their people's safety in other countries.
 United Kingdom	M15 Military Intelligence, Section 5	M16 Military Intelligence, Section 6
 United States of America	FBI The Federal Bureau of Investigation	CIA Central Intelligence Agency
 Russia	FSB Internal Security Service	SVR Foreign Intelligence Service



Assessment and Grouping of Students

ASSESSMENT BEFORE READING

A major component of a successful reading experience is selection of text that is appropriately leveled, keeping in mind the skills that readers already have and those skills in which they need more practice. To be at an instructional level, the student must be able to read 90–94 percent of the words. Teachers can use informal observations of students along with an Assessment of Reading Behavior to determine appropriate reading levels.

Once students have been placed in a level, it is important for teachers to continually monitor students' reading behavior through observation as the students interact with the books. It is important to keep in mind that the high-interest nature of the topics may mean that students can read at a higher level than they would ordinarily read for lower interest topics. *X-Zone* materials are leveled using criteria that evaluate book features, text features, illustration features, and language and sentence features. A color band on the back cover indicates the reading stage and a letter represents the level within that stage.



ASSESSMENT DURING AND AFTER READING

As students interact with the text, teachers can use informal assessment to monitor whether students are applying the strategies they need. There are opportunities during the lesson for students to voice their ideas, discuss their understanding of the metacognitive strategies, and describe the strategies they are using. In addition to informal observation of reading behavior during reading and discussion, teachers can also use the completed graphic organizers to assess how

well students can apply the focus skill. There is also a reading quiz at the end of each book that assesses students' literal understanding of the text. These quiz questions can be used as practice for some types of standardized testing.

GROUPING STUDENTS

X-Zone recommends small-group instruction with leveled texts to enhance students' interest in reading and growth in efficient reading strategies. Readers can be grouped in several ways, the most common being grouped by reading level. Another way to group students is by common skill needs. The strategies developed through the books and lessons are outlined in a chart (see pages 14–15) that makes it easy for teachers to select the books and lessons they need to teach a particular skill. Teachers may also wish to group their students by interest, since the topics in this program are of particularly high interest to this age group. However students are grouped, the lessons are set up to provide interaction between teacher and students, students and other students, and students and the text in order to facilitate the development of effective reading strategies.

CD Activities for Extended Practice



To further skills practice, the *X-Zone* CD contains carefully structured activities to extend students' contact with new words and vocabulary and comprehension concepts. Each activity is designed with reluctant readers in mind, focuses on high-interest themes, and contains audio support and positive reinforcement. The CD software captures student results and transfers them to the teacher application for review.



X-Zone Lesson Plan Features

1. **Metacognitive Strategies:** Each lesson plan focuses on a specific metacognitive strategy. Strategies include making connections, visualizing, making predictions, and self-questioning. These strategies are modeled before reading, and students are encouraged to use the strategies before and during reading and to reflect on them after reading.
2. **Comprehension Strategies:** Each lesson focuses on a specific comprehension strategy or skill which is modeled, guided, and practiced after reading. Skills include identifying main ideas, summarizing, drawing conclusions, understanding question/answer relationships, sequencing, organizing information, comparing/contrasting, identifying cause/effect.
3. **Focus Vocabulary Skill:** Each lesson focuses on one vocabulary strategy that is introduced prior to reading and practiced during and after reading. Vocabulary skills include structural analysis skills such as prefixes, suffixes, compound words; context clues; functions of words, such as time/order words, describing words, verb tense.
4. **Lists example words** that can be used for instruction.
5. **Graphic Organizer:** the graphic organizers support the explicit teaching of either the metacognitive strategies or the after reading comprehension strategies. PDF copies of each graphic organizer as well as a generic, blank version of each one are available on the *X-Zone* CD.

Nature's Look-Alikes

Compare and Contrast

Directions: Use the book to find characteristics of each animal. Some characteristics will apply to both animals and some will apply to only one animal. When you have listed the characteristics, use a highlighter pen to mark those that appear in both columns, which will leave the differences. Then use your chart to tell a partner how the two animals are different.

Features of Animal 1:

Features of Animal 2:

1

2

3

4

5

Nature's Look-Alikes

FOCUS STRATEGIES

Metacognitive Skill
Making Connections: Prior Knowledge

Good readers think about what they already know about a topic and make connections between what they know and new information in the text. This strategy makes them more active, involved readers and increases their understanding of the text. Some students need to be shown the cognitively active process; good readers utilize it to fit ideas into the model. As you preview the book with students, they interact with the text. As you preview the book with students, use a think-aloud to model how you relate information in the book to your personal experience and knowledge.

Comprehension Skill
Compare and Contrast

When students compare and contrast text information as they read, they make meaning from the text. Students can learn to look for words that signal comparisons such as *similar to*, *same as*, and *like*. Words that signal differences such as *unlike* and *different from* and *besides* help them to look for signal words. Students can learn to look for and include features of what is being compared. If students have difficulty understanding what is involved in making comparisons, model making comparisons between two everyday objects, such as a pen and a pencil, before modeling how to make comparisons about text. State again that they understand that to compare they need to see how things are alike, and to contrast they need to see how things are different.

Vocabulary Skill
Context Clues

Students will be better able to understand what they read if they are aware of how the context can help them figure out meanings of unfamiliar words. They need to be aware of word clues, such as *an called this means*, *in like*, etc., that indicate new vocabulary is being introduced or described. They also need to be aware that words can be defined over several sentences or paragraphs. There are different types of context clues that students can learn to look for: examples, descriptions, comparisons, and direct definitions of the word.

Focus Vocabulary Skill: Context Clues

Context words	Context clues	Page
examples	definition (see)	2
comparisons	definition (this means)	4
descriptions	paragraph description	6
examples	definition (see)	10
comparisons	definition (see)	12
descriptions	paragraph description	14
examples	definition (see)	16
comparisons	definition (see)	18
descriptions	paragraph description	20

SUMMARY

There are alligators and crocodiles alike and how are they different? In a book like *Nature's Look-Alikes*, you can find out how animals such as tigers and giraffes, whose appearances in every animal, are actually quite different animals.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Understand that reading is an active process requiring the reader to make connections between prior knowledge and new information.
- Look closely at animals in order to compare them.
- Use context clues to read unfamiliar vocabulary.

ASSESSMENT

- Note whether students can make connections between what they already know about the animals in the book and the new information in the text.
- Monitor students' responses and review their completed graphic organizers to determine whether they can list characteristics of the different animals and then note the similarities and differences. Note whether they can independently compare and contrast as they read the rest of the book.
- Note whether students can use context clues to figure out meanings of unfamiliar words.
- Use the quiz at the back of the book to assess students' understanding of the text.

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6. **Metacognitive strategy** is introduced and modeled. Research shows that the use of good teacher think-alouds is effective for developing understanding.
7. **Vocabulary strategy** is modeled.
8. **Students read to apply** metacognitive, comprehension, and vocabulary strategies. Research has shown that effective teacher questioning and prompting develops reader understanding.
9. **Students reflect** on how using metacognitive strategies helped them read the text. This enhances metacognitive awareness.
10. **Focus comprehension skill** is modeled, practiced, and applied.
11. Further practice is provided for **developing vocabulary skill**.
12. **Suggestions** are provided for applying the lesson to further independent reading of the book.

X-Zone Skills Chart

LEVEL	TITLE	METACOGNITIVE STRATEGY	COMPREHENSION STRATEGY	FOCUS VOCABULARY SKILL
N	Animals Talk Back	Make, Revise, Confirm Predictions	Organize	Compound Words
N	Car Crazy	Making Connections to Prior Knowledge	Organize	Prefixes
N	It's a Wild Ride!	Make, Revise, Confirm Predictions	Main Ideas and Details	Adjectives
N	Nature's Look-Alikes	Make, Revise, Confirm Predictions	Compare and Contrast	Context Clues
N	Ready, Set, Go!	Self-Questioning	Summarize	Suffixes
N	Sharks—Monsters or Misunderstood?	Make, Revise, Confirm Predictions	Summarize	Suffixes
N	You Live There!	Self-Questioning	Compare and Contrast	Synonyms
N	You're a Star!	Make, Revise, Confirm Predictions	Sequence Events and Information	Time, Order, Place Words
O	Animals at Work	Make, Revise, Confirm Predictions	Draw Conclusions	Adverbs
O	Desert Safari	Making Connections to Prior Knowledge	Sequence Events and Information	Verb Tense
O	Going Batty	Self-Questioning	Cause and Effect	Time, Order, Place Words
O	Hanging Out Together	Make, Revise, Confirm Predictions	Summarize	Compound Words
O	Make 'em Laugh	Visualizing	Draw Conclusions	Adjectives
O	Snakes Alive!	Visualizing	Sequence Events and Information	Compound Words
O	There's No Place Like Home	Visualizing	Organize	Adjectives
O	You Ate That?	Self-Questioning	Q & A Relationships	Context Clues
P	Amazing Plants	Visualizing	Cause and Effect	Context Clues
P	In Your Dreams	Make, Revise, Confirm Predictions	Q & A Relationships	Suffixes
P	It's About Time	Make, Revise, Confirm Predictions	Summarize	Verb Tense
P	So You Want to Be an Astronaut?	Making Connections to Prior Knowledge	Q & A Relationships	Suffixes
P	Space Stations Cities of the Future?	Make, Revise, Confirm Predictions	Q & A Relationships	Verb Tense
P	Sun Struck	Self-questioning	Main Ideas and Details	Prefixes
P	Under the Streets	Making Connections to Prior Knowledge	Main Ideas and Details	Compound Words
P	Who's for Dinner?	Making Connections to Prior Knowledge	Sequence Events and Information	Context Clues

LEVEL	TITLE	METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES	COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES	FOCUS VOCABULARY SKILL
Q	Discover the Deep	Self-Questioning	Summarize	Context Clues
Q	Eye See	Self-Questioning	Cause and Effect	Context Clues
Q	Famous Structures	Make, Revise, Confirm Predictions	Draw Conclusions	Synonyms
Q	Made for Speed	Self-Questioning	Q & A Relationships	Suffixes
Q	Poles Apart	Self-Questioning	Compare and Contrast	Multiple Meanings
Q	The Secret World Of Mini Beasts	Self-Questioning	Cause and Effect	Context Clues
Q	Special Effects	Making Connections to Prior Knowledge	Organize	Origins and Derivations of Words
Q	Stormy Weather	Making Connections to Prior Knowledge	Cause and Effect	Adjectives
R	Autos with Attitude	Making Connections to Prior Knowledge	Sequence	Compound Words
R	Great Escapes	Make, Revise, Confirm Predictions	Summarize	Suffixes
R	Mysteries	Make, Revise, Confirm Predictions	Summarize	Adjectives
R	On Safari	Making Connections to Prior Knowledge	Sequence	Multiple Meanings
R	On the Job	Make, Revise, Confirm Predictions	Q & A Relationships	Suffixes
R	Robots	Making Connections to Prior Knowledge	Main Ideas and Details	Adjectives
R	The Spying Game	Making Connections to Prior Knowledge	Main Ideas and Details	Verb Tense
R	Weird and Wacky Festivals	Make, Revise, Confirm Predictions	Organize	Suffixes
S	The Beat Goes On	Making Connections to Prior Knowledge	Sequence	Verb Tense
S	Daredevils and Show-offs	Making Connections to Prior Knowledge	Point of View	Suffixes
S	Giants of the Sea	Self-Questioning	Main Ideas and Details	Context Clues
S	Mummies	Make, Revise, Confirm Predictions	Compare and Contrast	Origins and Derivations of Words
S	Pirates	Self-Questioning	Summarize	Prefixes
S	Survival!	Making Connections to Prior Knowledge	Point of View	Adverbs
S	To the Max	Making Connections to Prior Knowledge	Compare and Contrast	Compound Words
S	Who Invented That?	Self-Questioning	Organize	Origins and Derivations of Words

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