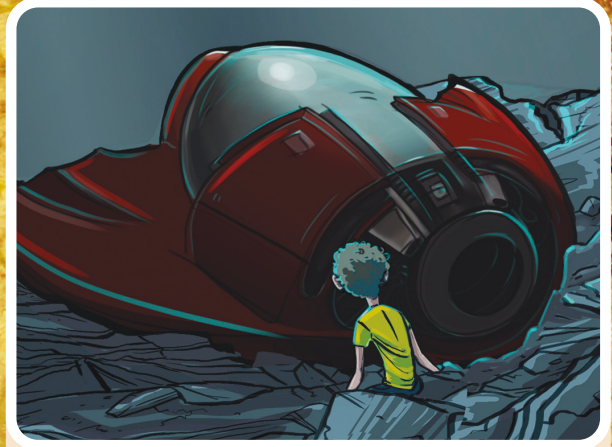
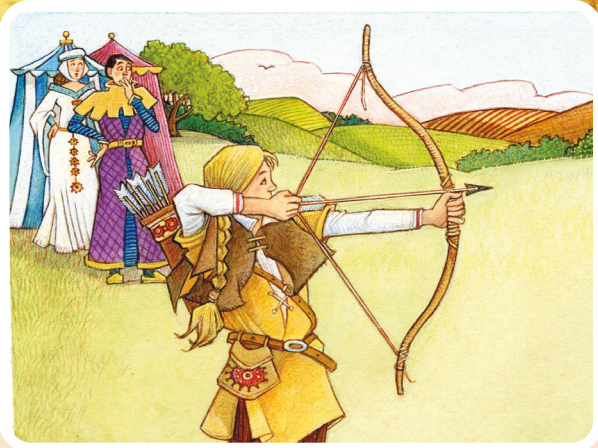




**A Life-changing
Game**



In the Cave



Longbow Girl

Reading Booklet

2025 key stage 2 English reading booklet

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Chess is a game for two players, who try to move their pieces across a board. The game is popular across the globe.



A Life-changing Game

Lots of children dream of becoming famous. Some want to be celebrated for their singing, dancing or acting, others for being athletes. This is the story of Phiona Mutesi, a girl who shot to international fame for doing something quite different: playing chess.

A challenging upbringing

Phiona's life used to be very different from how it is now. She grew up in a family which lived in Katwe, a very poor neighbourhood in a country called Uganda. At the age of nine, Phiona had to drop out of school, even though she was still unable to read or write, as her family could no longer afford to send her. She started selling maize and vegetables in a street market to support her family.

An intriguing game

One day in 2005, Phiona followed her brother Brian to see where he was going. Watching silently, out of view, Phiona saw that Brian had gone to a club where children had gathered to play a game with some small black and white pieces on a board. She was fascinated by what they were doing.

The game they were playing was chess. It was so unusual in Uganda at that time, there was no word for it in Phiona's language. Despite this, she was determined to play. She walked six kilometres every day to find out how. Within a year, it was clear that she had a special gift.





Coaching a champion

As with learning any new skill, you often need someone to teach you how to do it. In Phiona's case, her coach was a man called Robert Katende, who worked hard to get children interested in the game.

Robert hadn't always been dedicated to coaching chess. In fact, for a long time his passion lay with another game: football. A talented player himself, Robert coached the children of Katwe in football. But when he realised that some of the children had no desire to play football, he turned his attention to chess.

Robert spotted Phiona's potential in the game and put lots of time and effort into helping her improve. She played recklessly at first, too eager to win games as quickly as possible. But when Robert reminded her to play calmly and patiently, she changed her approach to playing the game, bringing her great success.

A roaring success

In 2007, at 11 years old, Phiona became Uganda's junior girls' champion. But Phiona's talent also took her far from home. She travelled to other countries to compete against some of the most experienced chess players in the world. In 2009, she took her first ever trip out of Uganda to attend a competition. She won and, just four years after first learning to play, became an international chess champion.

Watching her next move

Phiona gained fame very quickly. At one competition, she caught the attention of a journalist, who was so in awe of her talent that he wrote a book about her. He called the book *The Queen of Katwe*. A film of the same name was also made in 2016 to show the story of her life so far. Phiona accepted an opportunity to study at a university in the United States of America. She has already achieved great things and people are waiting in anticipation of what she will do next.



Tom and Geoff have fallen into a cave where Geoff sees something interesting...

In the Cave

Tom peered nervously into the darkness.

'It's just a rock. They're all rocks, you can...'

He stopped. The rock Geoff was pointing to was a different colour to those around it, and had a curiously regular shape. As they walked towards it, they could see that, whatever it was, it certainly wasn't a rock.

It was large, smooth, a dull red in colour and shaped rather like a small boat. The front was pointed in a smooth upward curve that reminded Tom of the nose of a dolphin.

'It's got writing on it.' He leaned forward to brush away the dust with his sleeve. On the upper surface, someone had painted a series of letters in gold, but before he could make out what they were, Geoff called him.

'Tom?'

There were two seats set into the centre of whatever it was, and Geoff was sitting in one of them. He was beckoning to Tom, and staring intently in front of him.

'What?'

Geoff pointed and Tom came round to look. On the surface in front of the seats, a green light glowed in the dark.

'What did you do?'

'I didn't do anything. It just came on.'

'It came on?'

'I just sat down and it came on.' Geoff pointed. 'Like that one.'

A small orange light had appeared beside the green one. A moment later it was joined by another. And another.



Silently, Tom climbed in to sit beside Geoff. They watched as the lights continued to flick on until they extended to cover the whole board in front of them and then spread along the panel that stretched between them to the floor.

At the same time, the boys became aware of a faint humming, an almost inaudible vibration that they felt rather than heard, finishing in a ping that reminded Tom of a microwave oven telling you the pizza was ready.

And that was that.

'Wow... ' Geoff reached out a hand. Directly in front of him were two horizontal handles and between them a circle of four large, blue lights arranged like the petals of a flower. 'I wonder what it is?'

'What?'

'This. What do you think it is?'

'It's...' Tom shrugged. 'Well, it's a machine.'

'Yes, but what's it for?' Geoff ran a finger cautiously over the surface of one of the lights. 'I wonder if we could find out.'

'What are you doing?'

'They're not just lights, are they?' Leaning forward, Geoff stared intently at the surface under his hand. 'They're buttons, you see? I reckon if you pushed one of these –'

'You can't do that!' Tom stared in horror at his friend. 'You don't know what'll happen!'

Geoff said nothing. Obviously they didn't know what would happen. It was why he wanted to push a button and find out. His finger still hovered over the group of blue lights.

'At least let's think about it first,' Tom pleaded.

'Think about it?'

'Just for a minute or two. It might help.'

Reluctantly, Geoff sat back and thought about it. But the more he thought, the more it struck him that you could think forever and still not know anything. There was only one way to really *know*.

Longbow Girl

This story is set in the past. Merry Owen is a young girl who loves archery. Here, she is taking part in a competition against a group of adult archers who have never met her before. She has to shoot an arrow into a target of black and white circles on a board. There are two rounds in the competition.

Merry stepped forward. She was dimly aware of applause, of jeers, of shouts, but nothing intruded above the roaring of blood in her ears. She positioned herself behind the line, rolled her shoulders and took a few deep breaths.

‘We’re all ready when you are,’ said the marshal, as if it were a great joke.

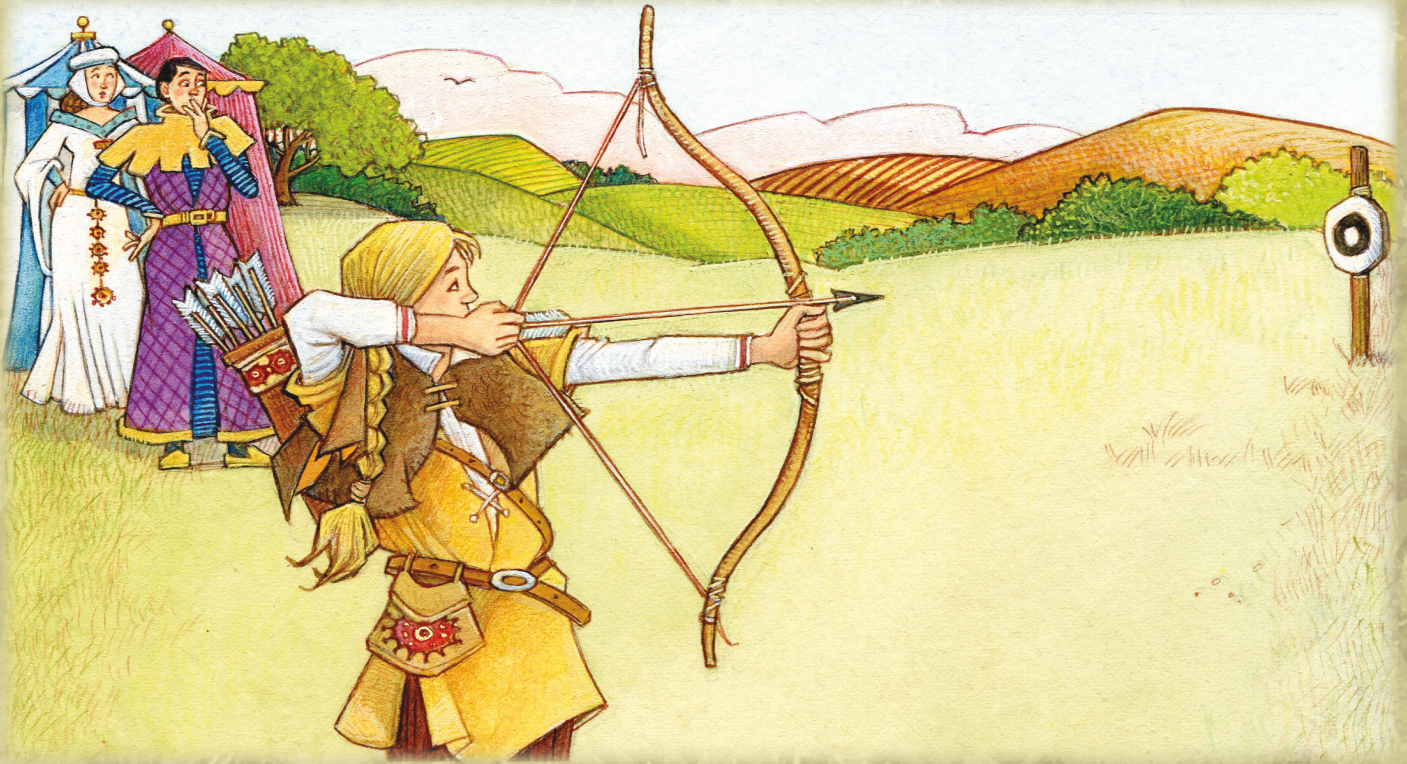
Merry selected an arrow, eyed her target. She felt a cool focus flood her veins.

‘Ready your bow!’ cried the marshal.

Merry took her stance, then, listening to the commands of the marshal, she nocked* her arrow, bent from her waist, marked the target, drew back her bow and loosed. The crowd had fallen silent. The only sound she could hear was the whisper of her bowstring and the hiss of her arrow. It seemed to take long seconds to fly home to its target. Merry saw it hit and lodge in the black ring, just left of the white centre.

* nock: to place an arrow against the string of the bow





She chose another arrow, let fly. It lodged in the black ring again, just to the right of the white centre. Then she took out her third arrow, aimed, loosed. Inner white! She was sure of it.

She turned, walked back from the line as the crowd, which had been stunned into silence, started to clap. She didn't smile. Not yet. She just stood and waited. She was aware of the marshal staring at her, mouth hanging open, revealing stumps of discoloured teeth. She just looked at the mountains rising behind the castle, tried to keep at bay the noise and the attention.

'Well!' stated the marshal. His voice came out high-pitched. He cleared his throat and started again. 'Well...it would appear that Merry Owen will go through to round two.'

More noise from the crowd.

Merry walked forward to retrieve her arrows. She passed the marshal. He looked at her with sheer surprise.

'In round two,' he declared for her benefit, 'we move ten yards back and each competitor will take turns so that we might better enjoy the spectacle. So we might better appreciate their skills.'

The atmosphere became even more charged. The men glanced at each other, each thinking, it seemed to Merry, of the ten gold coins, of the fortune awaiting the winner. But for her, there was even more at stake than a purse of gold.

The ten other competitors all took their turns. The clear winner so far had two arrows in the black ring and one in the inner white.

Then it was Merry's turn. She walked forward. The crowd cheered. The men watched. Gone was the air of ridicule, amusement or pity directed her way.

She waited till it fell quiet, then chose her first arrow. She nocked it, drew back her bow to its fullest extension. She needed all its power now to make the extra distance and to maintain accuracy. She felt and sensed the almost unbearable tension in the wood. Please don't break, she prayed silently. Please give me just a few shots more. She let out her breath, loosed the arrow. The bow held strong. The arrow flew to the target. Black circle.

Second arrow. She had to do better. No thinking, no worrying, just instinct and skill. She heard the ancient commands, in her head, in her body and somewhere deep inside that must have been her soul. She pulled in a breath, released it smoothly as she loosed the arrow, as she watched it home in. Inner white! She felt the first flush of euphoria, pushed it down, selected her third and final arrow. She let it fly. Closed her eye, breathed, waited. The crowd roared. She opened her eye, looked at the target. Even from this distance she could see: dead centre of the inner white.

Only then did she smile.

The marshal hurried up to the target, eyed the arrows and smiled back.

'We have an outright winner,' he declared. 'With one first circle and two golds, Merry Owen wins!'

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Key stage 2 English reading Reading booklet

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2025 national curriculum tests

Key stage 2

English reading

Reading answer booklet

First name						
Middle name						
Last name						
Date of birth	Day		Month		Year	
School name						
DfE number						



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Instructions

Questions and answers

You have 1 hour to complete this test, answering the questions in the answer booklet. Read one text and answer the questions about that text before moving on to read the next text. There are three texts and three sets of questions.

In this booklet, there are different types of question for you to answer in different ways. The space for your answer shows you what type of answer is needed. Write your answer in the space provided. Do not write over any barcodes.

Short answers

Some questions are followed by a short line or box. This shows that you only need to write a word or a few words in your answer.

Several line answers

Some questions are followed by a few lines. This gives you space to write more words or a sentence or two.

Longer answers

Some questions are followed by more answer lines. This shows that a longer, more detailed answer is needed. You can write in full sentences if you want to.

Selected answers

For some questions you do not need to write anything at all and you should tick, draw lines to or circle your answer. Read the instructions carefully so that you know how to answer the question.

Marks

The number under each line at the side of the page tells you the number of marks available for each question.

As this is a reading test, you must use the information in the texts to help you to answer the questions. When a question includes a page or a paragraph reference, you should refer to the text on that page or in that paragraph to help you with your answer.

You have 1 hour to read the texts in the reading booklet and answer the questions in this booklet.



**Questions 1 – 13 are about *A Life-changing Game*
(pages 4–5)**

1 How did Phiona make money for her family?

1 mark

2 *An intriguing game*

Which word is closest in meaning to *intriguing*?

Tick **one**.

exciting

popular

challenging

interesting

1 mark

3 How can you tell that people in Uganda were **not** familiar with chess?

1 mark



4Read the sections: ***A challenging upbringing*** and ***An intriguing game***.Tick one box in each row to show whether each statement is **true** or **false**.

	True	False
Phiona left school once she had learnt to read.		
Phiona grew up in a place called Katwe.		
Phiona discovered chess before her brother.		
Phiona walked six kilometres a day to learn about chess.		

2 marks

5

Look at page 5.

According to the text, what is it important to have when learning something new?

1 mark



6 Look at the section: ***Coaching a champion.***

Find and **copy one** word which tells us that Robert was enthusiastic about football.

1 mark

7 Look at the section: ***Coaching a champion.***

Why did Robert start teaching chess?

1 mark

8 Look at the section: ***Coaching a champion.***

Why did Phiona play carelessly when she started playing chess?

1 mark



9

Read the paragraph beginning: *Robert spotted Phiona's potential...*

Find and **copy one** word which tells us Phiona did well in chess.

1 mark

10

Look at the section: ***A roaring success.***

Phiona's skills in chess took her abroad. Why?

1 mark

11

Look the section: ***A roaring success.***

How long had Phiona been playing chess when she won her first international competition?

1 mark



12Look at the section: ***Watching her next move.***Phiona ***caught the attention*** of a journalist...

This means that...

Tick **one**.

Phiona recognised the journalist.

a journalist noticed Phiona.

Phiona became a journalist.

a journalist interviewed Phiona.

1 mark**13**

Look at the whole text.

Complete the table below with the year in which each event happened.

	Year
Phiona discovered chess.	
Phiona left her home country for the first time.	
A film telling Phiona's story was released.	

1 mark

**Questions 14–27 are about *In the Cave*
(pages 6–7)**

14 'It's just a rock. They're all rocks, you can...'

What made Tom realise that what he was looking at wasn't actually a rock?

Write **two** things.

1. _____

2. _____

2 marks

15 Read the paragraph beginning: *He stopped...*

This paragraph creates a sense of...

Tick **one**.

certainty.

relief.

mystery.

panic.

1 mark



16

What stopped Tom from working out what the writing was?

_____ **1 mark**

17

Look at page 6.

He was **beckoning** to Tom, and staring intently in front of him.

Which word is closest in meaning to *beckoning*?

Tick **one**.

signalling

reacting

replying

walking

_____ **1 mark**



18

Look at page 6.

He was beckoning to Tom, and staring intently in front of him.

What was Geoff staring at?

1 mark

19

'I just sat down and it came on.'

What was Geoff trying to do when he said this?

Tick **one**.

pretend nothing is happening

boast about what he has done

tease Tom about the lights

refuse to take the blame

1 mark



20

Read the paragraph beginning: *Silently, Tom climbed in...* to the paragraph ending: *...'I wonder what it is?'*

How does the text show that the object might be a machine?

Write **two** ways.

1. _____

2. _____

2 marks

21

Look at page 7.

And that was that.

What does this sentence suggest?

Tick **one**.

The boys couldn't escape.

The boys were disappointed.

The object had gone silent.

The object could cook food.

1 mark



22

'It's...' Tom shrugged. 'Well, it's a machine.'

Why did Tom shrug?

1 mark

23

Number the events 1 – 4 to show the order in which they happened in the text.

Geoff realised the lights were buttons.

Orange lights began to switch on across the panel.

Geoff noticed a green light on the surface.

The object started making noises.

1 mark



24

Look at page 7.

How did Geoff work out that the lights were buttons?

Write **one** way.

1 mark**25**

Look at the whole text.

Tick **one** box in each row to show what the text tells you about the lights.

	Yes	No
where they are placed		
what colour they are		
how many did not work		
what they are used for		

1 mark

26

What impressions do you get of Tom's and Geoff's personalities?

Write **one** impression for **each** boy, using evidence from the text to support each answer.

	Impression	Evidence
Tom		<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Geoff		<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

3 marks

27

Look at page 7.

Reluctantly, Geoff sat back and thought about it.

What does this suggest about the way Geoff felt?

Tick **one**.

He wanted to think about it.

He was worried about the button.

He didn't agree with Tom.

He had decided to press the button.

1 mark



**Questions 28–40 are about *Longbow Girl*
(pages 8–10)**

28 Read the first paragraph beginning: *Merry stepped forward...*

How did Merry try to prepare herself for her turn?

Write **one** way.

1 mark

29 Read the paragraph beginning: *Merry took her stance...*

The crowd had fallen silent.

Why was the crowd silent?

1 mark

30 *It seemed to take long seconds to fly home to its target.*

Why did Merry feel as though her arrow took a while to reach the target?

Tick **one**.

She really wanted to know the result.

She was not strong enough.

The crowd was starting to feel worried.

The bow was too old to shoot well.

1 mark

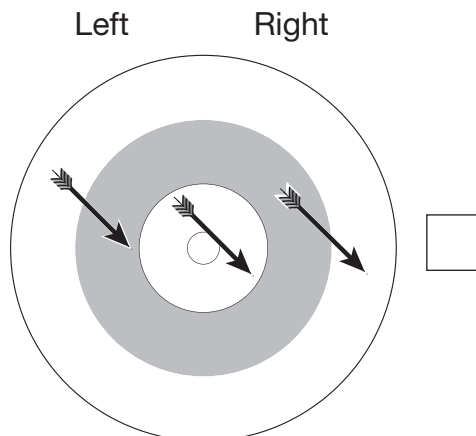
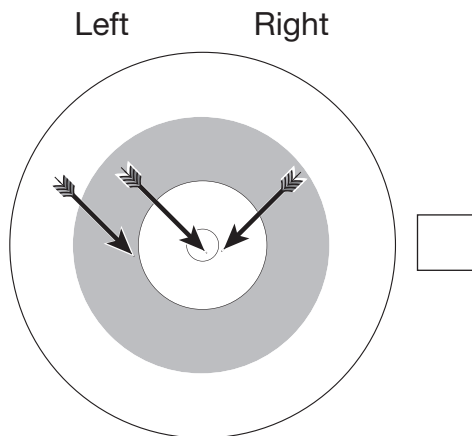
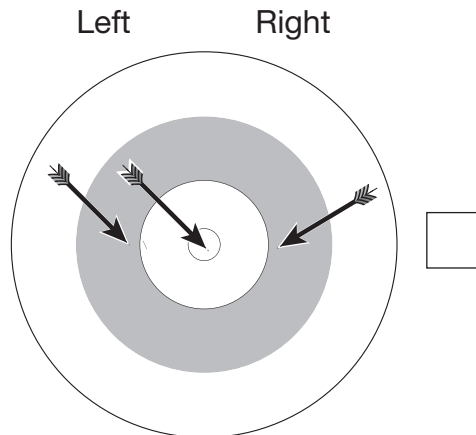
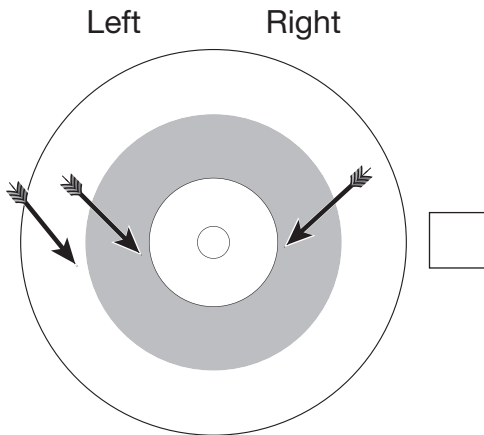


31

Read the paragraph beginning: *Merry took her stance...* to the paragraph ending: *...She was sure of it.*

Which target shows where Merry's arrows landed in the **first round** of the competition?

Tick **one**.



1 mark



32

She turned, walked back from the line as the crowd, which had been stunned into silence, started to clap.

Why was the crowd *stunned*?

1 mark

33

Read the paragraph beginning: *She turned...*

Merry did not smile straight away.

Why not?

1 mark



34

Look at page 9.

Write **two** pieces of evidence that show the marshal was shocked by Merry's first round.

1. _____

2. _____

2 marks

35

Read the paragraph beginning: *'In round two, ...'*

(a) In what way was round two different from the first round?

Write **one** way.

1 mark

(b) Why were the rules changed after the first round?

Write **one** reason.

1 mark



36

Read the paragraph beginning: *She waited till...*

What made Merry worry that her bow might be close to breaking?

1 mark

37

Look at page 10.

Only then did she smile.

Why was Merry happy at this point in the text?

Write **two** reasons.

1. _____

2. _____

2 marks



38

Merry won the competition because she was an experienced archer.

How can you tell that she was experienced?

Write **two** ways, using evidence from the text to support each answer.

An example has been done for you.

Reason	Evidence
She had the strength to do it.	She was able to pull the bow back to its fullest extension.
<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

_____ **3 marks**



39

How can you tell that the marshal had changed his opinion of Merry by the end of the story?

1 mark

40

'We have an **outright** winner,' he declared.

Which of the following is closest in meaning to *outright*?

Tick **one**.

lucky

predictable

disappointing

clear

1 mark





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Key stage 2 English reading Reading answer booklet

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