The Explorer by Katherine Rundell

Year 5 and 6

Reasons for selection and synopsis

From his seat in the tiny aeroplane, Fred watches as the mysteries of the Amazon jungle pass by below him. He has always dreamed of becoming an explorer, of making history and of reading his name amongst the lists of great discoveries. If only he could land and look about him.

As the plane crashes into the canopy, Fred is suddenly left without a choice. He and the three other children may be alive, but the jungle is a vast, untamed place. With no hope of rescue, the chance of getting home feels impossibly small.

Except, it seems, someone has been there before them.

Hailed as Rundell's greatest adventure yet, The Explorer is a relatable and fast paced adventure with brilliant messages for children. It's a wonderful complement for an Amazon topic.

Before reading...

Ask the children to look at the front cover. What do you think the book will be about? What things can you see on the front cover?

What sort of story will it be? Who might enjoy it?

Now read the blurb – were any of your predictions correct?

What is an explorer? What do we know about them?

Reading Vipers

Vocabulary

nfer

Predict

Explain

Retrieve

Sequence or Summarise



The following questions are designed as prompts only – allow the children to come up with their own questions and ideas. They will be much more engaged this way!

Flight	
Vocabulary	What does 'grimacing' mean?
	What phrases on Page 3 show that the pilot isn't well?
Infer	Why won't the girl look out of the window?
	Why is Fred concentrating so much?
	What happens to the pilot?
Predict	Read to the end of the chapter. Predict what happens next.
Explain	Explain why Katherine Rundell leaves the chapter on a cliffhanger.
Retrieve	Where are they flying?
	How many people are on the plane?
	What does the pilot look like?
Summarise	Summarise this chapter in ten words or less.
Writing opportunity	Write the next 200 words of the story.

The Green Dark	
Vocabulary	What word on Page 8 means 'get rid of'?
	What does 'pell-mell' mean?
	'Her face was all geometry' – explain this phrase.
Infer	Why is Fred running?
	'The fire called back in response' – what does this mean?
	Did the passengers of the plane know each other? How do you know?
Predict	What might 'The Green Dark' be?
	Predict what the children will do when they wake up.
Explain	How does Katherine Rundell show that the children are scared?
Retrieve	What has happened to the plane?
	What does Fred throw? Why does he throw it?
	What are the other children's names?
	Why do they need to find shelter?

	Why does Max scream?
Summarise	Summarise your impressions of Fred, Con and Max. Use three words for each.

The Den	
Vocabulary	What phrase on Page 22 shows that there were lots of flowers?
	What's a word on Page 24 that is synonymous with 'doesn't make sense'?
	Find a word on Page 28 that means 'with great detail/care'.
Infer	Why's Fred's watch broken?
	What does the existence of the den prove?
	Why won't Lila let Max look in the den?
	Why does Fred touch the gourd 'gingerly'?
	Why doesn't Con want to sleep in the den?
Predict	Read up to 'Max was missing'. Predict where Max might have gone.
	Read to the end of the chapter. Predict whether anyone will come back.
Explain	Read up to 'Manaus ourselves' on Page 23. Whose plan do you agree with? Why?
Retrieve	How does Fred try to stop Max from crying?
	What is wrong with Fred's mints?
	How old is Max?
	Why does Con want to go back to the plane?
	Where were Con, Lila and Max headed on the plane?
Summarise	Summarise Con and Max's thoughts on the den in three words for each character.
Writing Opportunity	Write a balanced argument about whether the children should stay in the den. Use evidence from the chapter.

The River	
Vocabulary	What phrase on Page 35 shows pride?
	What does 'brusquely' mean?
	Find a word on Page 42 that means 'confused'.
Infer	What might be the significance of a river?
	Why is Fred weaving leaves through the roof?
	What surprises Fred about Con?
	Why do the children panic in the river?
	Why does Fred turn his trousers into shorts?
Predict	Read up to 'I've found the river!' Predict what happens next.
	Read to the end of the chapter and predict what happens next.
Explain	Explain why you think Katherine Rundell chooses to omit the children's ages.
Retrieve	What illness does Fred have?
	Why was Fred in Brazil?
	Why do the children follow the ants?
	How does Con mark the way back? Why do they need to leave a trail?
	What's a caiman?
	Why can't Lila swim?
Summarise	Summarise your impressions of Fred's dad in two words.
Writing Opportunity	Write a fact file about piranhas or caiman.

Food (Almost)	
Vocabulary	What phrase on Page 52 shows that Fred is getting angry?
	What does 'sceptical' mean?
Infer	Why is everyone silent when Fred suggests eating insects?
	Why won't Fred let Max chase Lila?
	Why does everyone make Fred eat the insect?
	Why isn't Fred grateful for the food?
Predict	Predict what might happen in this chapter, based on the title.
Explain	Explain why Con is dubious about frying grubs.
Retrieve	Why does Con think it's a bad idea for Fred to test the berries?
	Who was the Amazon explorer that Fred read about?
	Why did Lila nearly get expelled?
	What does Lila bring back?
Summarise	Summarise your impressions of Lila from this chapter, in five words.
Writing Opportunity	Write the segment where Lila goes off and finds the cocoa pods, from her perspective.

Fire	
Vocabulary	What word on Page 60 shows you that Con feels a bit sorry for Fred?
	What is 'proprietorial pride'?
	Find a word on Page 65 that means 'huge'.
Infer	Why might the wood have dried so quickly?
	Why does Fred feel like crying?
	Why does Max slap at his ribs?
Predict	Look at the picture at the start of the chapter. Can you predict how the children might try to start a fire?
Explain	Explain the joke 'lavo-tree'.
Retrieve	Why are the other children dubious about Fred's ability to start a fire?
	Why is the watch so special to Fred?
	What does Fred serve the pancakes on?
Summarise	Summarise the meal time in twenty words or less.

The Raft	
Vocabulary	What is a raft?
	Find a word on Page 67 that means 'you have to do it'.
	Find a word on Page 76 that shows that Max didn't particularly want to go back to the clearing.
Infer	How does Katherine Rundell show you that Fred had a nightmare?
	Why do you think Con doesn't want to build the raft?
	Why is Max wailing on Page 73?
	Why is Fred so proud of the raft?
Predict	Predict what might happen based on the title of the chapter.
	Read to the end of the chapter. Predict what happens next.
Explain	Explain why Con eventually joins in with building the raft.
	Explain why the children suddenly crucially need to use the lavo-tree.

Retrieve	Whose idea was it to build a raft? Why?
	Why was it not a good night's sleep?
	Why doesn't Lila think a smoke signal is a good idea?
	How do they cut the wood?
Summarise	Summarise Con's actions and emotions in this chapter with a five-word journey.

	Maiden Voyage	
Vocabulary	What is a 'maiden voyage'?	
	Find a phrase that shows that Fred couldn't wait to get going.	
	What word on Page 81 shows that Con isn't convinced by the raft?	
	What does 'undulating' mean?	
Infer	Why is Lila cross with Fred?	
	Why does Fred need a pole?	
	Why might the birds in England look dressed for a job interview?	
	Why does Con start smiling?	
	Why is Fred more interested in his discovery than Con?	
Predict	Predict what might happen on the maiden voyage.	
	Read up to 'it's a silver box'. Predict what might be in the water.	
Explain	Explain how Katherine Rundell shows tension in the eel scene.	
Retrieve	Who gets on the raft second?	
	Why were Lila's knuckles pale?	
	What skill does Con reveal she has?	
	What does Fred find in the water?	
Summarise	Summarise the maiden voyage in thirty words or less.	

Sardines	
Vocabulary	What does 'coax' mean?
	What are tendrils?
	Find a phrase on Page 92 that shows Fred is nervous.
Infer	Why is the jutting branch so perfect?
	Why does Fred blow on the fire?
	Why does Fred give the termite nest a wide berth?
	Why does Con scream at Fred?
Predict	Predict the significance of the sardine tin.
	Read up to 'scraped against his arm' on Page 98. Predict what the scraping was.
Explain	Explain how you can tell Lila is sensible?
Retrieve	How do they stop the boat?
	Why is Fred excited about the sardine tin?
	Why do they need wood?
	What does Fred find in the woods?
Summarise	Summarise Fred's feelings when he found the pineapples, in three words.

	Abacaxi	
Vocabulary	What word on Page 103 means 'suddenly'	
	What phrase on Page 105 shows that Max ate the pineapple?	
	What word on Page 112 means 'as if he were in charge'?	
Infer	Why is Lila so upset with Max?	
	Why does Lila chase the vultures away?	
	What animal was being stood over by the vultures, away from the tree?	
	How does Lila react to the sloth?	
Predict	Read the first two pages. Where might Max be?	
Explain	Explain the impact of never fully explaining that the second sloth was the dead mother sloth.	
Retrieve	What did Fred dream of?	
	What does Fred assume has taken Max?	
	Where was Max?	
	Where did Max put the pineapple?	
	What animal did they rescue from the tree?	
	What do they name the sloth? What does that name mean?	
Summarise	Summarise the finding of the sloth in thirty words or less.	

	The Monkeys and the Bees
Vocabulary	What phrase on Page 118 shows that Max was walking with a purpose?
	What does 'sceptically' mean?
	Which phrase on Page 127 conveys Fred's annoyance?
	What phrase on Page 127 shows Con's fear?
	What does 'tenacious' mean?
Infer	Why do you think Max finds it hard to follow the instructions?
	Why is it hard to keep up with the monkeys?
	Why do the monkeys cover their hands with ants?
	Why does Fred feel guilty when he rubs his hands together?
	Why do Fred's ears grow red?
Predict	Predict from the title, what might happen in this chapter.
	Read the first paragraph. Predict the significance of the scrap of paper.
	Read up to 'there's something else' on Page 131. Predict what the something else is.
	Read to the end of the chapter. Predict what the X will be.
Explain	Explain why Katherine Rundell has chosen to use an X on the map, instead of just telling the reader what is there.
Retrieve	Why does Max get so angry with Lila?
	Why doesn't Fred like sitting still and quietly?
	Why are they staying so quiet?
1	How many monkeys showed up?
	What did the monkeys do with the ants?
	What is Lila's main concern about the bees?
	What does Fred find by the beehive?
	What's inside the tobacco tin?
	How does Fred mark the map?
Summarise	Summarise how Fred and Con found the map, in twenty-five words or less.
Writing Opportunity	Rewrite the finding of the map, from the perspective of Con.

	Con
Vocabulary	What does 'poring' mean? Is it the same 'pouring' as the rain?
	What phrase means 'thought about it' on Page 145?
	What does 'non-committal' mean?
Infer	Why does Con's skin go red and white?
	Why does Con's aunt send her to convent school?
	Why do you think Con agrees to go?
Predict	Why might this chapter be called Con?
	Predict what will happen when they look for the map.
Explain	Explain the impact of having a chapter that tells you more about a particular character.
Retrieve	Why was everyone shivering?
	What happened to Con's parents?
Summarise	Summarise your impressions of Con from this chapter, in 3 words.

	Smoke
Vocabulary	What word on Page 153 means 'crying quietly'?
	What does 'coaxing' mean?
	What's an 'eddy of water'?
Infer	How do you know Max ate too many bananas?
	Why can't Max jump into the water?
	Why is it so hard for Fred to get Max to the raft?
	How did the clearing burn down?
	Why does losing the map not matter?
	Why does the sky turn pink?
	Why isn't the river a great place to be at night time?
Predict	Predict what will happen in the chapter, based off the title.
Explain	Explain what happened to the map.
Retrieve	Before reading, where have we already seen smoke in the story?
	What is on fire?
	Where did Max go?
Summarise	Summarise the events of this chapter in forty or less words.
Writing Opportunity	Write a diary entry about the days events, from the perspective of Lila.

	On The River
Vocabulary	What does 'moor' mean?
	Find a word that means 'arrogantly' on Page 170.
	What does sprightly mean?
Infer	What makes Con smile?
	Why does Fred wave a stick in front of himself?
	Why do you think Lila's face transforms when she realises it's a dolphin?
	Why do you think Fred got into the water with the dolphins?
	How can you tell Lila is scared on Page 172?
	Why was travelling through the weeds so hard?
Predict	Predict what's coming next.
Explain	Why does Katherine Rundell choose to leave this chapter on a cliffhanger?
Retrieve	What do you call a group of explorers?
	What does Max think he sees in the river? Why is this impossible?
	What food do they find to eat?
Summarise	Summarise each child's emotions on the journey, using two words per child.

	At The Top Of The Cliff
Vocabulary	What's a cliff?
	What is 'foliage'?
	What phrase on Page 179 shows Lila's terror?
	Find a word on Page 181 that means 'upward climb'.
Infer	Why wouldn't Max be able to climb the cliff?
	Why won't Lila let Fred go on his own?
	What does Con do when she reaches the top of the cliff? Why?
Predict	Predict what will happen from the title of the chapter.
	At the end of the chapter, predict what happens next.
Explain	Why do you think the author and illustrator chose to make the first double page of this chapter black?
Retrieve	How was the cliff marked on the map?
	How tall was the cliff?
	Why does Max cry?
	What did they find at the top of the cliff?
Summarise	Summarise your thoughts at the end of the chapter in three words.
Writing Opportunity	Write the next chapter of the story.

	The Ruined City
Vocabulary	Why do you think the title refers to the city as 'ruined'?
	What does 'children are just undercooked adults' mean?
	What word on Page 195 means 'beautiful'?
Infer	How do you think the children feel?
	Why does Max cry so much?
	What happens with Max and the ostrich?
	Why does Con think the man should cook for them?
	Why won't Max give the knife back?
Predict	Predict what will happen when you have read the whole chapter.
Explain	Why do you think Katherine Rundell is choosing to reveal very little about this character?
Retrieve	Why does Fred say Max is crying?
	What is the man holding?
	Who does the man have with him?
	What does the man give the children to hunt?
	Why does Max say the man is an explorer?
Summarise	Summarise your feelings about the man, using no more than five words.

	The Explorer
Vocabulary	What phrase on Page 207 shows Lila's excitement?
	What does contemptuous mean?
	What phrase on Page 221 shows that Lila doesn't particularly want to agree with Fred?
Infer	Why does the explorer bring mangos?
	Read up to 'lie to him' on Page 208. Why might the explorer not want anyone to know about his island?
	Why does Fred want to tell everyone about the city?
	Why are the other children angry with Fred?
	Why does Con tell Fred that she hopes he chokes on his bird?
	Why don't they take Max to look behind the vines?
	Why do none of the children speak at the end?
Predict	Predict who or what this chapter will be about.
	Read up to 'I think we should go and look' on Page 217. The explorer was very clear that the children mustn't go in. Predict if they will, and what will happen if they do.
Explain	What effect does it have on the reader, to keep what is behind the vines a secret?
Retrieve	Why won't the passers by be very useful to the children?
	How long does it take to get to Manaus from the village?
	How does the explorer react when Fred says he won't keep the secret?
	What does the explorer drop on the floor?
	What does the explorer threaten to do when the children try to investigate the vines?
Summarise	Summarise the explorer's personality in five words or less.
Writing	Rewrite the end of the chapter, from the perspective of the explorer.
Opportunity	Rewrite the end of the chapter, but the explorer doesn't wake up and the children see what is behind the vines.

	The Trap
Vocabulary	What phrase on Page 227 shows that Fred doesn't particularly want to apologise?
	What does 'ruthlessly' mean?
	What phrase on Page 236 is synonymous with 'speed up'?
Infer	Why does the explorer want to show Fred how to set a trap?
	What does the explorer use a knife for?
	Why can't Fred grow a beard?
	On Page 234, where has Fred seen that loop before?
Predict	Predict what 'the trap' might be.
	Predict what the trap might catch.
Explain	Explain why Fred so desperately wants to tell the story to the newspapers.
Retrieve	Why does Fred feel so bad?
	What could Fred see in the explorer's expression?
	What is the explorer's hammock made from?
	How did the explorer know it was Fred?
	Why doesn't the explorer need to leave a trail?
	What type of trap do they set?
Summarise	Summarise why the explorer doesn't want people to know about his village, in twenty-five words or less.

	Tarantulas
Vocabulary	What does 'conspiratorially' mean?
	What does 'impassive' mean?
	What word on Page 261 means 'unmistakeably'?
	What does 'incredulous' mean?
Infer	Why are the other children angry at Fred?
	Why might the explorer have a 'wolfish' smile? What does this mean?
Predict	Predict what might happen, based off the title 'tarantulas' and all preceding events.
Explain	Read Page 256 again. What might Katherine Rundell be trying to reveal to us on this page?
Retrieve	How does the explorer kill the snake?
	What does the explorer recommend you do if you see a snake?
	What is in the nest?
	What is Max's reaction to potentially eating spiders?
	What's the Latin name for a goliath tarantula?
	Why do the spiders squeak when cooked?
	Who eats the first spider?
Summarise	Summarise your thoughts on eating spiders, in a full sentence of no more than twenty words.

	Twice-Fried Oiseau Spectacle
Vocabulary	What does 'oiseau' mean? What language is it?
	What is a spectactle?
	What is a conclave?
	What word on Page 266 means quickly?
	What word on Page 272 means 'definitely'?
Infer	Why does Lila suggest cooking for the man?
	What might the scream have been?
	What might the explorer be reminiscing about when he says he has forgotten how kind children can be?
	What's in the coconuts?
	Why do the explorer's eyes become misty?
Predict	Read up to 'but I am glad to have made the wager' on Page 277. First explain what a wager is. Now predict what said wager might have been.
Explain	Explain why Katherine Rundell doesn't reveal all the information about the explorer at once.
	Explain how Katherine Rundell elicits sympathy from the reader.
Retrieve	Where did the scream come from?
	What do the children cook for the explorer?
	What does the explorer say the food tastes like?
	What does the explorer feed to the children?
	Why do the children tiptoe back to the fire?
Summarise	Summarise your impressions of the explorer in this chapter, using no more than three words.

	Fishing In The Dark
Vocabulary	What word on Page 282 means 'outraged'?
	What word on page 289 means quickly?
	What does opaque mean?
Infer	What would make fishing in the dark difficult?
	Why have the intestines become so unpleasant?
	Why doesn't Lila wants to look behind the vines?
	Why is the explorer embarrassed about being seen to be kind?
	Why do they need to take fire?
	Why is Fred wary about giving Max the torch?
	What has the explorer been doing all day?
	Why does Fred shift uncomfortably on page 300?
	Why would it be awkward to catch a piranha with your hands?
Predict	Predict what might happen based on the title of the chapter.
	Read up to 'I'm fixing the thing I broke' on page 296. Predict what the man does in the forest.
	Read up to 'move faster' on page 306. Predict what happens next.
Explain	Explain why they need to go fishing in the dark?
	Explain why the explorer tries to tell Fred his relationship with his dad is not as simple as it seems.
Retrieve	What does the explorer say they need for their spears?
	When will they go fishing?
	What does Fred go searching for?
	What does Lila check the sloth's stomach for?
	What does Lila use to dry the sloth's hair?
	What do big eyes mean?
	What type of fish does Fred catch?
	How did the explorer's son die?
	Why do they have to leave the lake?

Summarise	Summarise the messages that the explorer gave to Fred in less than 25
	words.

The Vow	
Vocabulary	What is a vow?
	What word on page 312 means brave?
Infer	Why do you think nobody wanted to sleep that night?
	How can you tell Lila was in pain?
	Why don't they want Max to have a tattoo?
Predict	Based on the title of the chapter, predict what this chapter will be about.
	Predict whether the children will actually being to keep the city a secret.
Explain	Why has Fred come round to the idea of keeping the city a secret?
Retrieve	What does Lila suggest they do to gain the explorer's trust?
	What are the children used to chat to each other?
Summarise	Summarise the vow the children made in 10 words or less.

Explorer School	
Vocabulary	What does a disdain mean?
	What does dubiously mean?
	What word on page 319 means inexperienced?
	What phrase on page 322 shows you that the explorer does not like hearing the words 'thank you'?
Infer	How can you tell the children are tired?
	Why is the explorer holding an explorer school?
	The Explorer is keeping watch of the children. What does this now tell you about his character?

Predict	Predict what Explorer School might be.
Explain	Explain why Fred is relieved to be leaving.
Retrieve	How long have the children been lost for?
	Why doesn't Fred want to wake Max up early?
	Why will they need to tie Max to the raft?
	Why do children need to wear netting over their eyes?
	What were they eating?
Summarise	Summarise how the explorer has changed over the course of the book. Don't use more than 30 words.

Stuck In The Mud	
Vocabulary	What phrase on page 331 shows that Con is enjoying herself?
Infer	Why do you think Con hasn't played many games at school?
Predict	Predict what might happen in this chapter, based on the title.
	At the end of the chapter, predict what happens next.
Explain	Why do you think Katherine Rundell chooses to include this short chapter where the children play a game?
Retrieve	Why could Fred barely see his own hand?
	What did the explorer leave?
	What game do they decide to play?
Summarise	Summarise the children's feelings in this chapter using no more than five words.
Writing	Write about the game of stuck in the mud as if it were a real sporting event
Opportunity	in a newspaper.

Max	
Vocabulary	What words and phrases on page 335 show you that Max is very sick?
Infer	Why does Lila feel like she needs the explorer?
	Why does the explorer's anger subside so quickly?
	What does the explorer mean when he says 'not another'?
Predict	Bearing the last line of the previous chapter, predict what might happen in this chapter. Also take the title into consideration.
	Read line one. Predict what might happen.
	Predict how they're going to fly.
Explain	Explain how Katherine Rundell creates tension in this chapter.
Retrieve	Where was Max?
	Why does the explorer need a branch?
	What has bitten Max?
Summarise	Summarise the emotions felt in this chapter in five words.

Behind The Vines	
Vocabulary	What does impenetrable mean?
	What does adequate mean?
Infer	Did the explorer lie about the aeroplane?
	Why does one of the children have to fly the plane?
	Why would Lila not be a good pilot?
Predict	Predict what will be behind the vines.
	Predict why Lila gasped.
Explain	Explain why Fred is nervous about flying the plane.
Retrieve	How did the vines get there?
	What colour is the aeroplane?
Summarise	Summarise Fred's feelings in this chapter, in no more than twenty words.
Writing Opportunity	Rewrite this chapter from the perspective of the explorer.

The Green Sky	
Vocabulary	What word on page 349 means stiff?
	What is altitude?
	What phrase on page 354 shows that the explorer is excited?
	What phrase on page 358 shows that the jungle is beautiful?
	What phrase on page 360 shows that the explorer is upset?
Infer	What was the roaring the children had heard?
	Why can Fred barely move his body?
	Why does everything look so green?
	Widespread so nervous about landing?
Predict	Predict what the green sky might be.
	Predict whether Fred will be able to fly Max out of the jungle.
Explain	Explain why Katherine Rundell has made the explorer be kind in the second half of the book.
Retrieve	Why did they have to cut all the vines down?
	Why does the man want Fred to burn the plane?
	What colour is the joystick?
	What is Fred's first piloting mistake?
	Why do they need to avoid hitting birds?
	What is the Explorer say that pilots never swear?
Summarise	Choose three words to summarise Fred's feelings when he's flying the plane.

Waiting For Dawn	
Vocabulary	What is dawn?
	What sentence on Page 368 shows that the explorer has full confidence in Fred?
	What does 'defiant' mean?
Infer	Why do they need to set off sooner than expected?
	Why are Lila's eyes red?
	Why does Con want to stay?
	Why is Con annoyed at Fred initially? Why does she stop being annoyed at him?
Predict	Predict why they might be waiting for dawn.
	Predict whether Con will change her mind about leaving.
Explain	The explorer says he forgot things he shouldn't have. Explain what these are, and why he has remembered them.
Retrieve	Where does the explorer suggest they land?
	Why is the explorer offended at being called John Franklin?
	Why does Con want to speak to the explorer alone?
Summarise	Summarise Con and Fred's reasons for not wanting to leave the island, using twenty words for each.

Flight Home	
Vocabulary	What does gaunt mean?
Infer	Why does the explorer refuse to take Baca?
	'The explorer swallowed'. Why?
Predict	Predict what will happen on the flight.
Explain	Why has Katherine Rundell waited until this point to reveal ages?
	Explain the effect of never revealing who the explorer is.
Retrieve	How old is Lila?
	What time does she wake Fred up?

Summarise	Summarise the explorer's feelings here in five words.
Writing Opportunity	Write memoirs of the children's time in the jungle, from the perspective of the explorer.

Another Kind Of Exploring	
Vocabulary	What word on Page 385 means 'masses'?
Infer	Why did they burn the plane?
	Who tiptoes into the hospital room?
Predict	Before reading, predict where/if they will land the plane.
Explain	How do you think Fred is feeling at the start of this chapter? Why?
	How did you feel when Fred was reunited with his father? Why?
Retrieve	Where did they land?
	What smell now always means something to Fred?
Summarise	Summarise the various parents and children being reunited, using a sentence for each.