

Asking Questions Mini-Lessons

Lesson Designer: Jennifer Jones
based on Debbie Miller's *Reading with Meaning*

Overall Focus: Children everywhere have a natural curiosity about the world, fostering this curiosity, encouraging their wonderings and showing them how asking questions deepens their comprehension is our task at hand.

Week 1: Focus - Good reader and writers ask questions before, during and after to help them understand the text better.

Day 1: Model the strategy with an adult text you are currently reading or (suggestion, use *Charlie Anderson*) with sticky notes, so children can see your questions, read and think aloud all the way through, reading and asking questions before, during and after you read. Set them up for the next 5-6 weeks, tell them what you will be covering and get thinking about questions.

Day 2: Debrief and think aloud about the read-aloud and think aloud that you did yesterday. Go back and re-read a few pages and show students how and why you asked those questions to help you understand the text better. Tell them that you will ask them to do the same thing over the next few weeks. During independent reading time today, they will write down one question on a sticky note they have at any time in their reading.

Day 3: Ask, "What is a question?" and "What is not a question?" (A story, an answer). Ask, "what is questioning?"

- Never ending wondering
- Things you grapple with
- The stuff that rattles around in your head and you want to pin down
- Being three years old and asking, "Why? Why? Why?"

Make class chart of brainstormed ideas.

Day 4: "Thoughtful readers ask questions not only as they read, but also before and after reading. Use *Grandfather Twilight*, or other anchor text. Write down questions students have B, D, and A and make chart to code corresponding questions. Title chart Asking Questions Before, During and After We Read *Grandfather's Twilight*.

Day 5: "How does asking questions help you become a better reader?" (Wait, and wait, . . .) Begin chart, or have it ready, titled "Thinking About Questioning" (RWM, pg. 127)

3 part chart

- What do we know about asking questions?
- How does asking questions help the reader?
- How do readers figure out the answers to their questions?

(And add things to it during your weeks of study.)

On this day, also say, "Readers ask questions for many reasons."

- clarify meaning
- speculate about text yet to be read
- determine author's style, intent, content, or format.
- focus attention on specific components of the text.
- locate a specific answer in the text

During SSRB, ask student to write down one reason why they might ask a question in their reading.

Week 2: Practice "Asking Questions" with Pictures, Poems and Familiar Stories using Reciprocal Teaching

Day 1: Teach Picture This! Activity from Reciprocal Teaching. Using a large print or picture with no words, or a book jacket or no book inside, tell students to come up with a question based on the picture beginning with the following words: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? Do Day 1 as a whole group lesson taking ideas from the students.

Day 2: Whole Group Practice with Questions in the Margin (Reciprocal Teaching). Teacher and students read and discuss a big poster of a familiar nursery rhyme, and ask questions to be sticky noted to the side margins. Students may practice this in their SSRB.

Day 3: Small Groups will again do Questions in the Margin with different familiar posters of familiar nursery rhymes or familiar poems, (Why did Jack and Jill need water? Why was Jack wearing a crown?) to practice asking questions.

Day 4: Give students copies of familiar rhymes or poems and students will work in pairs to write questions in the margins. (Either directly or with sticky notes.) Students can share their work with other pairs of students. Introduce the activity called Paired Questioning, where the language is, "I see a _____. I wonder_____." (Write this on chart paper so the kids can refer to the languaging.) Students can start off doing it on paper and then move to doing it out loud or start off doing out loud and move to paper, although a paper component is not really part of Paired Questioning. You can do it if you want to reinforce the language.

Day 5: Read a popular Fairy Tale like *Cinderella* or *The Three Little Pigs*. When finished, have students sit eye to eye and knee to knee to generate three questions about the tale. Then do Hot Seat for the main character, get willing volunteers who understand what they are to do.

****Directions for Hot Seat: Find 3 willing volunteers to will play, act and answer questions as if they were "Cinderella" or a familiar main character from a book. Then ask 2 to step out of the room, while 1 of them sit in the Hot Seat while children in the audience ask them questions relevant to their story and

circumstances. For example, if a child was in the Hot Seat being Cinderella, an audience child might ask, "What was your life like after you married the prince? or Why didn't you take a watch to the ball?" Then the child playing Cinderella would give real "made up" answers for the questions. You may have to show them first by modeling. (You don't want to end up with a lot of "I don't know's." Then repeat the activity with the other 2 kids immediately following, asking the same questions, and compare answers in the end.

Week 3-Readers ask questions to clarify, while doing a week long author study of Eve Bunting. Pull these books ahead of time, *How Many Days to America?*, *The Wall*, *The Wednesday Surprise*, *The Dandelion*.

Day 1-"When something does not make sense, good readers ask questions while they read. They do not keep reading something that sounds wrong or does not make sense. Asking questions as you read, makes a good reader stop and think and search for a fix-up strategy right away that is going to make it sound right." Practice reading something wrong and use the strategy card to reinforce. Read *How Many Days to America?* And use sticky notes to code strategies used.

Day 2-When good readers don't understand something they've read, even when it might make sense and sound right, they stop and clarify. They may go back and re-read, but asking questions helps a good reader understand. If you're at a confusing spot, the paragraph before the spot can give you the answer. Today you will partner read and at the end of each page your partner will ask you a clarifying question about something you read and you need to be able to answer them. Read *The Wall* and use sticky notes to write questions.

Day 3-More partner reading practice, asking clarifying questions about a word or a phrase that is not clear. "What is an abdomen?" "Why do they have three body parts?" Readers use connections, their schema and background knowledge to find possible answers answers to their questions. Read *The Wednesday Surprise*, and make connection sheet to help find answers to their questions.

Day 4-In groups of four, students will work together on the same text, reading it together, practicing using the cue card tent, and asking clarifying questions about each page of the book, non-fiction works best. Read *Dandelion* and create pictures to help answer questions. Asking and clarifying questions helps me stop reading long enough to see pictures in my mind. Ask a question --) make a picture.

Day 5 - Refer to thinking About Questioning Chart and ask, "Can we determine this author's style from these four books? Also ask, " Do these books remind us of other books we know or have read?" And, "Do they in turn help us predict? Wonder what the author was thinking when she wrote the book. Have children make a Venn Diagram with 2 of Eve Bunting's books to compare and contrast aspect of style, setting, mood, problem/solution, etc.

Week 4 - Readers ask questions even when the answers are not always easy to find.

Day 1: Re-read *Charlie Anderson* with questions aloud, but have questions also written on chart paper, so you are ready to code them as follows (STW,p.84):

- Why is the book called Charlie Anderson?-A
- Who is the cat in the yard?-A
- Why was the door open just a crack?
- Do cats really like French fries?
- Where does the cat go every morning?-A
- Are these girls twins?
- Does Sarah get jealous that he likes Elizabeth's bed best?
- Why did he get fatter and fatter every day?-A
- Did they miss Charlie when they went to their dad's on the weekends?
- Do they like their dad's house better?
- Why didn't Charlie come home one night?-A
- Is he going to be all right?-A
- How come Anderson looks just like Charlie?-A
- Which family does Charlie like better?

Day2: Categorize Questions. Using the questions from *Charlie Anderson* code and re-code them based on the following system.

- Questions that are answered in the text - T
- Questions that are answered from someone's background knowledge or schema - BK
- Questions whose answers can be inferred from the text - I
- Questions that can be answered by further discussion and talking together - D
- Questions that require further research from an outside source - OS
- Questions that signal confusion - Huh?

Have students pick one book from their book bin that already has question sticky notes in it, and have students go back and code sticky notes in their bin books.

Day 3, 4 and 5: Read and re-read *The Lotus Seed*, thinking out loud and making connections to *How Many Days to America?* As students have questions, demonstrate that while some answers could be found right in the text, some answers would require us to infer or consult an outside source to find the answer. Record children's questions before, during and after reading. Day 3,4, and 5, work through them, re-reading the text, and thinking aloud, about how we answered many of them, coding questions, with T, I and OS.

Week 5 - Focus: Aaaahhhh...when answers to intriguing questions are not found in the text and not easy to infer...then what do we do?

Day 1: Read *All I See* by Cynthia Rylant. Reading, Thinking Aloud, Asking Questions, Making a List of Questions (like *Amelia's Road* chart on page 5 of RWM)

Day 2: Decide on a "Burning Question." A burning question is one where the answer is not in the text and cannot easily be inferred, therefore the author leaves the answer up to the reader's interpretation. Use a question web to record interpretations of a burning question. (like the one on page 132, RWM)

Day 3: Read *Monarch Butterflies* by Gail Gibbons or another content area related book by Gail Gibbons, and let students work in pairs to create a Team Question Web. (STW, p. 93)

Day 4-5: Read a non-fiction science text, ask questions, find answers in an outside source and make a question/answer construction model like the tornado example on page 100 of RWM. Add to the Thinking About Questioning chart. Encourage children to make questioning webs at home to help them understand something better.

-by Jennifer Jones
Grade 1

Literature titles and texts used are attached below

Books & Texts Used

Ranger Rick Magazine
Nursery Rhymes and Fairytales
Charlie Anderson
Grandfather Twilight
How Many Days to America?
The Wall
The Wednesday Surprise
The Dandelion
The Lotus Seed
All I See
Amelia's Road
Monarch Butterflies

Reading with Meaning by Debbie Miller
Strategies that Work by Harvey and Goudvis

Mini Lessons inspired by Reading with Meaning and Strategies That Work