

The Common Core Classroom



Shift 4: Text-Based Answers

In week 12, we are continuing to explore shift #4. A text-dependent question specifically asks a question that **can only be answered by referring explicitly back to the text being read**. It does not rely on any particular background information extraneous to the text nor depend on students having other experiences or knowledge; instead it privileges the *text itself and what students can extract from what is before them*.

By implementing shift #4 (text-based answers), you are also implementing one of the best instructional strategies to implement shift #2 (text complexity). **Shift #2 and shift #4 are a great way of starting your transition into the Common Core State Standards.**

Ask yourself these simple questions:

- 1) Do you use the textbook or scholarly articles multiple times throughout the week in your class as a means of teaching content?
- 2) Do your students refer to the text during discussions?
- 3) Do your questions require students to **evaluate** and **synthesis** the text? Or do you simply ask “right-there” questions (e.g. write down the definition)?

Important Thoughts to Think About:

- More instructional time spent outside the text means less time inside the text.
- Departing from the text in classroom discussion privileges only those who already have experience with the topic.
- It is easier to talk about our experiences than to analyze the text—especially for students reluctant to engage with reading.

Three Types of Text-Dependent Questions:

- Questions that assess themes and central ideals.
- Questions that assess knowledge of vocabulary.
- Questions that assess syntax and structure.

Vocabulary and Text Dependent Questions

From “Hot and Cold Summer” - 5th grade fictional text

- “To *avoid* someone means to keep away from them so that you don’t have to see them and they don’t have to see you. How did the boys avoid meeting Bolivia at first?” (pg. 23)
- Re-read the last two paragraphs on page 39. Rory had a “strong *suspicion*”. What is a *suspicion*? What details in the story made Rory suspicious of Bolivia?

Syntax and Text Dependent Questions

- Syntax can predict student performance as much as vocabulary does.
- Questions and tasks addressing syntax are powerful.

Example:

Who are the members of the wolf pack? How many wolves are in the pack? To answer this, pay close attention to the use of **commas and semi-colons** in the last paragraph on pg. 377. The semi-colons separate or list each member in the pack.

Structure and Text Dependent Questions

Examples:

- “Look at the illustrations on page 31. Why did the illustrator include details like the power outlets in the walls?”
- “Dillard is careful to place opposing descriptions of the natural and man-made side-by-side. How does this juxtaposition fit with or challenge what we have already read? Why might she have chosen this point in the text for these descriptions?”

Culminating Tasks

- Should relate to core understanding and key ideas.
- A coherent sequence of text dependent questions will scaffold students toward successfully completing the culminating task.

Example:

“The title of this selection is ‘Because of Winn-Dixie.’ Using your answers from the questions above and class discussion, explain why this is an appropriate title for the selection. Be sure to clearly cite evidence from the text for each part of your answer.”

“Officer Buckle’s final safety tip is ‘ALWAYS STICK WITH YOUR BUDDY.’ How did he and Gloria each learn this lesson for themselves throughout the story?”

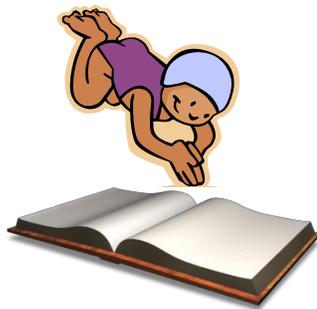
The next 3 pages contain writing prompts and a checklist for creating text-dependent questions.

Sources:

[achievethecore.org](http://www.achievethecore.org)

[Oregon Department of Ed.](http://www.oregon.gov/EDUCATION/Pages/default.aspx)

Tennessee Common Core



Prompts for Text Dependent Questions

(Source, in part: *Connecting Reading & Writing Through Authors Craft, The Reading Teacher*, Rickards & Hawes, Dec, 2006)

FICTION – CHARACTER ANALYSIS

- What do you know about (character)? What words does the author use to show you?
- What are (character's) strengths? Weaknesses? What words and phrases does the author use for each?
- How does the main character treat other characters? What evidence does the author include?
- How does the main character change throughout the story? What evidence does the author include?
- How does the author show each character's feelings?

FICTION ELEMENTS AND STRUCTURES

- How does the author help you learn about the setting (time, place, season)? What do you learn from the text? From the illustrations?
- How does the character react to the setting? How do you know?
- How does the setting change through the story? How do you know?
- How does the dialogue help you understand the interaction between characters?

FICTION ELEMENTS AND STRUCTURES

- An author usually does some research to help him/her write the text. What evidence of research do you find in this text?
- Can you tell if the story describes a particular culture? How do you know? Would the story be different if set in a different culture/setting?
- How does the sequence of events develop the story?
- Describe the major events of ____, in order.

AUTHOR'S WORD CHOICE

- What words or phrases grab your attention?
- What words or phrases tug at your heart?
- What beautiful language does the author use?
- What words (color, size, shape, material, proper names) help the author be specific?
- What strong verbs do you notice? How do they help you visualize the author's meaning?
- How do the author's words help develop sensory images?

GENERAL QUESTION PROMPTS

- How do you know?
- Explain your thinking.
- What is the evidence?
- What is the author's purpose? How do you know?
- What is the author's point of view? How do you know?
- The phrase ____ means ____.
- I think the author means ____ when he/she says ____.
- ____ is an example of ____.

GENERAL QUESTION PROMPTS

- What does the author want us to know about ____?
- What is the author's message to his/her readers?
- What ideas in the text support/validate ____?
- What do you learn from the illustrations?
- What do we know from the title and cover?
- What context clues tell you what (word) means?
- What do you notice about the author's use of punctuation?
- What does ____ mean? How do you know?

NONFICTION TEXT FEATURES

- What new information did you learn from the captions?
- Why did the author use (specific text feature) on this page?
- How does the author use ____ (table of contents, index, glossary, labeled diagram, heading, bold/underlined/italicized words) to help you gain information?
- What text structure(s) does this author use (question/answer, problem/solution, description, cause/effect, sequence, compare/contrast)? Why was this a good choice?

NONFICTION

- What did you learn after reading this ____ (sentence, paragraph, passage, page)?
- What is the most important point in this ____ (paragraph, passage, page, piece)? How do you know?
- What supporting details does the author include to help you learn about ____?
- What does the author think about ____?

AUTHOR'S WORD CHOICE

- How does the author use transition words (such as *first, last, suddenly, later*) to help you transition from sentence to sentence, paragraph to paragraph, and section to section?
- What comparisons (simile, metaphor, personification) do you notice in the text? How do they help you understand the text?
- What onomatopoeia, interjections, and alliteration does the author use? How does it support you as a reader?

Checklist for Evaluating Question Quality

Text Under Review (include page #s): _____

✓ if yes	Criteria:	Comments/Questions/Fixes (refer to specific questions!):
A. Text Dependent: These things must be true of every question in the set. When evaluating questions, discard all questions that get a “no” in Section A		
	A1. Does the student have to read the text to answer each question?	
	A2. Is it always clear to students that answering each question requires that they must use evidence from the text to support their claims? (Standard One should always be in play!)	
B. Important Considerations: These are design factors to keep in mind for the entire question and task set.		
	B1. Do students have an opportunity to practice speaking and listening while they work with these questions and tasks?	
	B2. Do questions include appropriate scaffolding so all students can understand what is being asked (Are the questions worded in such a way that all students can access them)?	
	B3. At tricky or key points in the text are there check-in questions for students to answer so that teachers can check on students’ understanding and use these sections to enhance reading proficiency?	
	B4. Do questions provide an opportunity for students to determine the meaning of academic vocabulary in context? When possible, do some of these questions explore some aspect of the text as well as important vocabulary?	
	B5. Does the mix of questions addressing syntax, vocabulary, structure and other inferences match the complexity of the text?	
C. Text Specific:		

	C1. Are the questions specific enough so they can only be answered by reference to this text?	
	C2. Are the inferences students are asked to make grounded logically in the text (Can they be answered with careful reading rather than background knowledge)?	
D. Organization of the Questions:		
	D1. Do the early questions in the sequence focus on specific phrases and sentences to support basic comprehension of the text and develop student confidence before moving on to more challenging tasks?	
	D2. Are the questions coherently sequenced? Do they build toward gradual understanding of the text's meaning?	
	D3. Do the questions stay focused on the text and only go beyond it to make other connections in extension activities <i>after</i> the text has been explored?	
	D4. If multiple texts/different media are under consideration, are students asked to examine each text closely before making connections among texts?	
E. Culminating Activity or Writing Prompt:		
	E1. Does the culminating task call on the knowledge and understanding acquired through the questions?	
	E2. Does the writing prompt in the culminating task demand that students write to the text and use evidence?	
	E3. Are the instructions to teacher and student clear about what must be performed to achieve proficiency?	
	E4. Is this a task worthy of the student and classroom time it will consume?	