

Questions to Support Comprehension of Fiction

Personal and Textual Connections

- ❖ How does the story make you feel?
- ❖ Have you ever had similar experiences?
- ❖ Does the book remind you of another book?
- ❖ Do any of the characters remind you of someone in your life?
- ❖ How is this story like any other story you know?
- ❖ How are the characters, setting, and problems like those in other stories you have read?
- ❖ How are the characters, setting, and problems connected to your life?
- ❖ Were you reminded of anything in your own life?
- ❖ What does this story make you think or wonder about?
- ❖ What surprised you?

Setting

- ❖ Where and when does the story take place?
- ❖ Where else could the story take place?
- ❖ Could the setting be a real place that exists in our time?
- ❖ Is the place important to the story? How?
- ❖ What words did the author use to describe the place?
- ❖ What can you hear, see, feel, or smell as you read?
- ❖ How important is the place or time to the story?
- ❖ How much time passes in the story?
- ❖ In another time or place, how would the story change?
- ❖ How did the author control the passing of time?
- ❖ How is the setting like another place you know?
- ❖ Does the season or the time affect the characters or the plot of the story?

Characters

- ❖ Are there any powerful characters in the story? What makes them that way?
- ❖ Who is the most interesting character? Why?
- ❖ Who is the most important character? Why?
- ❖ What character is the fairest? Why?
- ❖ Who is the bravest character? Why?
- ❖ Which character taught you the most?
- ❖ Who else could be in the story?
- ❖ What choices did a character have?
- ❖ How does the author/illustrator reveal the character? (Look at what the character does, thinks, or says; or what others say *about* the character.)
- ❖ How does one of the characters change? Why?
- ❖ Which characters change and which don't? How is character change important in the story?
- ❖ Who is a character that plays a small role? Why is this character necessary in the story?
- ❖ What did you learn from one character in the story?
- ❖ How did characters feel about one another? Why?
- ❖ Are the characters believable? Why or why not?

Questions to Support Comprehension of Fiction (continued)

Plot

- ❖ How did the author begin the story to engage the reader?
- ❖ What is the story problem? How do you think it will be solved?
- ❖ What challenges do the characters encounter and how do they deal with them?
- ❖ What choices did the characters have?
- ❖ How does a character's actions affect other people in the story?
- ❖ What was the most important part of the story?
- ❖ How would you describe the story shape? (linear, triangular, circular; for example, home-adventure-home)
- ❖ What is the high point of the story?
- ❖ What are the important events in the story?
- ❖ What is the order of events in the story? (for example, series of sequential events, letter or diary, record, flashback)
- ❖ Could the order of events be changed or could any of the events be left out?
- ❖ Were you able to predict the story ending?
- ❖ How did the story end?
- ❖ If you were the author, would you have ended it in any different way? How?
- ❖ What clues did the author give to allow the reader to predict the ending?
- ❖ What lesson does this story teach about life?
- ❖ What do you think will happen next in the story?
- ❖ What do you think will happen next for the characters after the story ends?
- ❖ Do you think the story really could have happened?
- ❖ How does the author provide information or details to make the story seem realistic?
- ❖ How does the author help you feel that you are really there [in both realistic stories and fantasy]?
- ❖ How was the story resolved?
- ❖ What two or three sentences summarize the whole story?
- ❖ Make a sketch or picture of an event in the book.
- ❖ What are the most important events of the story?
- ❖ Do you have any unanswered questions about the story?

Theme

- ❖ What is the author's message?
- ❖ What is the story really about?
- ❖ Do you think the title is appropriate for the story?
- ❖ What does the story mean to you?
- ❖ Why did the author write this story?

Perspective

- ❖ Who tells the story? Is this the best person to tell it? Why?
- ❖ Whose point of view is used in the story?
- ❖ What other voices could tell the story?
- ❖ How would the story be different if told through another character's eyes?

Questions to Support Comprehension of Fiction (continued)

Language

- ❖ What are some interesting words, phrases, or sentences?
- ❖ Are there words that were used to create a feeling or picture in your mind?
- ❖ Where did the author describe something well?
- ❖ What images did the writing evoke? How did the author use language to evoke images?
- ❖ What were some of the strongest words the author used?
- ❖ How did the author begin/end the story?
- ❖ Was any of the language especially interesting, vivid, or surprising?

Illustrations

- ❖ What do the illustrations add to the story?
- ❖ How important are the illustrations?
- ❖ What is the role of illustrations in conveying the meaning of the story?
- ❖ What is your favorite illustration? Why did you choose it?
- ❖ Could you picture what was happening when there was no illustration?

Author/Illustrator

- ❖ Would you read other books by this author? Why or why not?
- ❖ Have you read other books by this illustrator? How is this text similar to or different from others the artist has illustrated?
- ❖ What other books does this book make you want to read?
- ❖ Why do you think this particular author wrote this book?
- ❖ What did the author have to know to write this book?
- ❖ What did the author do to interest the reader or pull the reader into the text?
- ❖ Did the author keep you interested? How or why?
- ❖ How is this book like other books by this author?
- ❖ Why do you think the author began/ended the story this way?
- ❖ Why did the author choose the title? Would you choose the same one?

Genre

- ❖ What is the genre? How did you know?
- ❖ Is this text a good example of this genre? Why?
- ❖ How is this book like other books you've read in this genre?
- ❖ What do you find difficult about reading books in this genre?

Figure 17-6. Questions to Support Comprehension of Fiction (continued)

question, student answer, and so on. Your goal is to ask questions and make comments that spark discussion among the students. You want them to ask questions—to generate an intellectual excitement that pushes the conversation into new territory. The questions are merely a light scaffold that helps students examine texts in new ways.

If you find your discussions seems more like interrogations, you might:

- ❑ Evaluate your questions to be sure they are genuine.
- ❑ Think about the number of questions you are asking; one or two well-selected questions that open up the discussion or shed new light on the text are sufficient.
- ❑ Intersperse questions with comments that model open-ended response so that students can “piggy back” on your comments (e.g., *I wonder . . . I’m thinking about . . .*).

Questions to Support Comprehension of Nonfiction

Personal and Textual Connections

- ❖ What do you already know about this topic?
- ❖ How does this [book, article, topic] remind you of other texts you have read?
- ❖ What have you experienced in your life that helps you understand this topic?
- ❖ Does this text provide useful information for you personally?
- ❖ What is your interest in this topic?
- ❖ What experiences or life circumstances led you to read about this topic?
- ❖ How does the information in this text fit with what you already know?

Content

- ❖ Why is this topic important [socially, scientifically, and practically]?
- ❖ What perspective does the author take on this topic?
- ❖ What part of the topic has the author chosen to present in the text?
- ❖ What are some of the most important words related to the topic, and what do they mean?
- ❖ What are some of the most important ideas related to this topic?
- ❖ Were there parts of the book you didn't understand? What puzzled you? What questions do you still have?
- ❖ Is the topic covered adequately?
- ❖ Are different viewpoints presented on the topic?
- ❖ Does the author explain how facts were arrived at?
- ❖ What did you learn about this topic?
- ❖ What does this text make you want to learn more about?

Accuracy and Authenticity

- ❖ Is the information up-to-date?
- ❖ Is sufficient evidence provided to support what the author says?
- ❖ How has the author established the authenticity of the text?
- ❖ Are the illustrations authentic?
- ❖ Are the facts and information in this text consistent with other sources?
- ❖ Is all important information included? Was important information missing?
- ❖ Does the author make a clear distinction between fact and opinion?
- ❖ Has the author presented information to accurately represent people and places—without stereotypes or omissions?
- ❖ Has the author been fair?
- ❖ Do facts and information support the author's general statements?
- ❖ Did the author present an objective point of view?
- ❖ Is there any information that could be misleading?
- ❖ Have any groups been omitted from the [history, record of scientific progress]?

Style

- ❖ How has the author made this topic readable?
- ❖ How has the author made this topic interesting?
- ❖ How has the author made it easy for you to find information?

Text Structure/Organization

- ❖ What are the ways the author presents information on this topic?

Figure 17-7. Questions to Support Comprehension of Nonfiction

Questions to Support Comprehension of Nonfiction (continued)

Text Structure/Organization

- ❖ What are the ways the author presents information on this topic?
- ❖ How is information organized [by topic, in time, by contrasting ideas, etc.]?
- ❖ Is the information presented clearly?

Text Features/Illustrations/Format

- ❖ What does the title tell you about this text?
- ❖ How do headings and subheadings help you find information in this text?
- ❖ What information is provided through illustrations [drawings, diagrams, maps, charts, etc.]?
- ❖ Does the text have reference aides such as table of contents, index, bibliography, glossary, and appendices? Are they easy to use? How are they helping you?
- ❖ Are the illustrations clear and understandable? Are they easy to interpret?
- ❖ Are the illustrations explained by labels, legends, and captions when needed?
- ❖ Does the total format of the text help you understand the topic better?

Author

- ❖ What qualifications does the author have to write this text?
- ❖ How does the author use experiences and/or knowledge to do a good job of providing information?
- ❖ What is the author's perspective or stance toward the topic?
- ❖ What has the author said that makes you question the accuracy of the information?

Figure 17-7. Questions to Support Comprehension of Nonfiction (continued)

Questions to Support Comprehension of Biography

Note: Many questions suitable for discussion of narrative texts and informational texts are also appropriate for biography. The follow questions are specific to biography.

Personal and Textual Connections

- ❖ What do you already know about the subject of this biography?
- ❖ What does the story of this person's life make you think or wonder about?
- ❖ What surprised you about this person?
- ❖ How does this person's life story remind you of your own life or the lives of people you know?
- ❖ What do you know about the period of history in which this person lived?
- ❖ Does this person's life remind you of other biographies you have read or of fiction texts?
- ❖ How is the person in the biography like people you know?
- ❖ How are this person's problems like the problems of people in other biographies or fiction books you have read?

Setting

- ❖ How important is the setting [place, time in history, and other events taking place at the time] to the subject's life or accomplishments?
- ❖ How does the author include details that help you understand the subject?

Figure 17-8. Questions to Support Comprehension of Biography

Questions to Support Comprehension of Biography (continued)

- ❖ Does the setting change over the person's life?
- ❖ Is the information about the setting authentic and consistent with history?
- ❖ How did the author write about the setting to make it authentic?

Structure or Organization

- ❖ At what point in the person's life did the author begin the biography?
- ❖ How did the author organize the telling of the events of the person's life (chronological, under topics, etc.)?
- ❖ How did the author use dialogue, flashbacks, foreshadowing, and other ways of organizing text to make this person's life interesting?
- ❖ If dialogue is invented to make the text interesting, how well does it work?
- ❖ How did the author use anecdotes, original documents, eyewitness accounts, and interviews to make the person's life interesting?
- ❖ Are the events depicted for the subject's life believable and consistent with other information about the time period?

Events

- ❖ What were the important events in the subject's life?
- ❖ What were the challenges faced by the person?
- ❖ What were the important actions the person took?
- ❖ How did the subject's actions affect others?

Author

- ❖ Why did this author choose this subject?
- ❖ How did the author go about getting to know the subject?
- ❖ What research or other action did the author take to make the biography authentic?
- ❖ What did the author have to know to write this biography?

Theme

- ❖ What was the author trying to say by writing about this person?
- ❖ Why did the author think this subject was important?
- ❖ What was the most important thing about the subject of this biography?
- ❖ Are different points of view on the times or events presented in an objective way?
- ❖ What insights does the book provide into today's problems and issues?

Subject

- ❖ What does the character look like?
- ❖ What kind of person is the subject?
- ❖ Is the subject living now or did the subject live in past history?
- ❖ How does what the subject says inform you?
- ❖ What do others say about the subject?
- ❖ Does the subject change over the biography? How and why?
- ❖ How do the subject's actions reflect the times in which he or she lived?