

## Proficient Readers and Writers . . .

### ask questions

#### Readers . . .

- generate questions before, during and after reading pertaining to the text's content, structure and language
- ask questions for different purposes including those that clarify their own developing meaning, make predictions and wonder about the choices the author made when writing

#### Writers . . .

- monitor their own progress by asking questions about the choices they are making in content, structure and word selection as compared to their initial writing plans
- compose in such a way that makes it possible for their audience to ask questions while they read
- ask questions about whether they are creating quality writing that has deep meaning, is well organized and meets their purpose and the needs of their readers

## Mathematicians . . .

- ask questions before, during and after doing a math problem
  - Could it be this?
  - What happens if?
  - How else could I do this?
  - Have I seen this problem before?
  - What does this mean?
- test theories/answers/their hypothesis by using different approaches to a problem
- question others to understand their own process and to clarify problems
- extend their own thinking by asking themselves questions they don't have an answer to

## Researchers . . .

- ask questions to narrow a search and find a topic
- ask questions to clarify meaning and purpose
- ask themselves
  - What are the most effective resources and how will I access them?
  - Do I have enough information?
  - Have I used a variety of sources?
  - What more do I need?
  - Does it make sense?
  - Have I told enough?
  - It is interesting and original thinking?
  - Does my writing have voice?

## Structures For Examining Questions

- Questions before, during and after reading
- Questions as a result of a first read, second read, etc.
- Question/answer relationships right there, think and search, you and the author, on your own
- Questions related to text structure
- Questions that have single answers vs. those that have many answers
- Questions that have simple answers vs. those that have complex answers
- Vocabulary that is related to questioning
- Patterns in our questioning
- Questions that effectively extend our comprehension vs. those that do not
- Connections between questioning, inferring, and schema

## Instructional Strategies For Examining Questioning

- tallying
- analyzing
- comparing and contrasting
- webbing
- sorting
- coding

# ASKING QUESTIONS WHILE YOU READ

**WHY** As a way of building and checking their personal meaning, proficient readers ask questions continually while they read. Some of these questions are *I wonder why's* directed at the author's choice of language, structure, or decision to include certain information. Others of these questions may be a way to clarify uncertainties the reader has encountered. Others still are predictive and work to nudge the reader on through the text. No matter what the purpose of the question, successful readers maintain a running line of questioning before, during and after their reading. In order to help less-successful readers begin this questioning pattern, we can create a scaffold in which they are more aware of the need to question and are more accountable for examining those questions and the questions' impact on their reading.

**WHAT** Any suitable narrative or expository text (preferably one which has natural breaks such as columns, paragraphs, pages, etc.)  
Bookmarks or post-it notes  
Paper to record questions

**HOW** Begin by demonstrating your own process of questioning by sharing an unfamiliar text and stopping at regular intervals to *think aloud* about the questions running through your head. At the end of the shared reading, describe how the process of questioning helps to support your making meaning from the text.

Invite the readers to try their hand at being aware of their questions. Provide readers with a copy of the text and come to an agreement about how often they should stop and record the questions in their heads (this can be done based on the way the text is divided or can be a function of time). Stopping places can be marked with a bookmark, a post-it note or a star if they can write on the text copies.

As the readers read the text, they will be recording their questions either on the text itself, in their response log, or on a sheet like the one below.

Once they have all had a chance to complete their reading, spend time discussing the types of questions the readers had in their heads. (The questions can be recorded and analyzed later for patterns and information that might lead to further instruction.) An important piece of this discussion is how the ongoing attention to their own questions supported the readers' comprehension of the text.

| Asking Questions While I Read                                    |  |
|--|--|
| STOP! page _____   |  |
| Question: _____  |  |
| _____  |  |
| _____  |  |
| Answer/Further Thoughts: _____                                   |  |
| _____  |  |
| _____  |  |
| Ways asking questions helped my reading and understanding: _____ |  |
| _____  |  |
| _____  |  |

developed by L. Conrad

## K-W-L: A TEACHING STRATEGY

**WHO** Benefits students reading nonfiction selections at any grade level, in any content area. This also helps students take charge of their learning and to pursue their own quest for knowledge.

**WHY** Many students have a difficult time reading expository texts. This strategy models for students the active thinking involved in reading for information.

This strategy also encourages students to call to mind relevant background knowledge they already possess that might be helpful in understanding what they read.

It further helps the student develop their own reasons for reading. By reading to answer personal questions, students' knowledge on a topic will increase. Personal involvement in reading may also encourage further research on a topic to find answers to individual questions.

**HOW** This is a three-step procedure. Step **K** refers to **What I Know**, Step **W** is **What I Want to Know**, and Step **L** is **What I Learned** (see K-W-L strategy sheet).

### Step K What I Know

This begins with group interaction and brainstorming. The teacher encourages students to volunteer any information they may have about the topic for reading. S/he records this information on the board or overhead projector. This brainstorming is meant to activate knowledge that will be useful for reading.

To deepen student thinking, the teacher may ask volunteers after they have made their contributions, *Where did you learn that?* or *How could you prove that?* This will make them think about the resources and substantiveness of their suggestions.

The second part of brainstorming is to look at the more general categories of information likely to be encountered when reading. Look at the list of ideas generated for What We Know. Try to help the students categorize any of the information. This will have to be modeled by the teacher until the students understand this procedure. These categories can be added to the K-W-L strategy sheet.

### Step W What I Want to Know

Before reading, the students write down on their strategy sheets the specific questions they are most interested in having answered as a result of the discussion. In this way, each student develops a personal commitment that will guide the reading. After this step, the children may read the selection in an appropriate manner.

### Step L What I Learned

During or after reading, the students are to write down what they learned while reading. They are to compare this column to determine if the article matched any of their personal concerns/questions in the middle column. If not, the teacher should suggest further reading to fulfill their desires to know. The group can share their new knowledge following the reading.

The teacher needs to make clear that learning shouldn't be framed around just what an author chooses to include but that it involves the identification of the learners questions and the search for authors or articles dealing with those questions.

Source: K-W-L: A teaching model that develops active reading of expository text. Donna M. Ogle, Reading Teacher, February 1986, p. 564-570.

| <b>K-W-L Strategy Sheet</b> |                              |                         |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>K</b> What I Know        | <b>W</b> What I Want to Know | <b>L</b> What I Learned |
|                             |                              |                         |

Categories of information we expect to use:

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.
- E.
- F.
- G.

# DATA CHARTS

- WHO** This strategy is for students who have trouble recording and organizing information from several sources into notes usable for a report or other expository writing.
- WHY** Many children, despite instruction in outlining and use of note cards, still copy verbatim information from their sources. They seem to lack the concept of what a report truly is, as well as to understand how to extract from their sources material suitable for and relevant to their own purposes. They have trouble comparing and contrasting information from the various sources, and emerging with a piece of writing that reflects a composite of their research and of their own perspectives on it. Using this structured approach helps bridge the gap between the information in the sources and that presented in the students work, and gives the children a viable strategy with which to manage the volumes of material they encounter.
- WHAT** Using a worksheet marked off into a grid, the teacher helps the children record information from a variety of sources for comparison, contrast, and assimilation into a report.
- HOW** The teacher distributes the worksheets divided by vertical and horizontal lines into approximately nine to twelve cells. Using an overhead transparency like the worksheets, s/he introduces to the class the topic for the report and writes it at the top of the transparency. (The topic for the initial lesson should be narrow and easy to research.) The teacher then identifies about three appropriate sources and records titles and authors in the first column of the grid always beginning with ME as the first source as a way of surfacing background knowledge about the topic being researched. Next, s/he explains that the report should consist of about one paragraph on each of two or three questions, and writes as headings these questions in the second, third, and fourth columns. The children are to respond to each question by recording in brief notes or sentences information in the appropriate cell. (The teacher may wish to fill in the information from the first source as an illustration of how the chart is to look.)
- When the charts are complete, the teacher asks the class to glance down the first column of information to identify facts upon which all the sources agree. These common facts are then summarized in a sentence and written at the bottom of the column; this sentence can often serve as a topic sentence in the report itself. Other facts can also be organized into sentences and recorded in the Summary cell. These facts are the basis for the other information in the paragraph. The topic sentence can be viewed as a hypothesis and confirmed or contradicted through further research. When the information in the columns has been summarized and checked for accuracy, the children are

ready to begin writing their reports. Each Summary section should prove useful in furthering understanding of topic sentences and elaborating details within a paragraph.

**HOW ELSE** When the children are able to write their reports with less assistance, they may decide upon the headings and sources for themselves. In that way, they have more ownership of both process and product. Further, they may utilize sources of information such as pictures, graphs, and diagrams and fit their findings into the appropriate cells.

Students may also be given complex charts suitable for more elaborate topics. Children researching the same or similar topics with numerous headings can easily compare their findings when the information is entered on a Data Chart. The material is well organized, and predicting and determining patterns within the information becomes less difficult.

from Gary R. McKenzie, Language Arts, October 1979

| Figure 1                                       |                   |                           |
|--|-------------------|---------------------------|
|  | What is an igloo? | How are igloos furnished? |
| <i>Seasons of The Eskimo</i><br>Bremmer, Fred  |                   |                           |
| Igloo<br><i>World Book Encyclopedia</i>        |                   |                           |
| <i>An Eskimo Family</i><br>Silver-Burdette Co. |                   |                           |
| Summary  |                   |                           |

| Figure 2<br>Culture Study Comparison Chart<br>(Name of Culture) |         |      |          |                |          |            |
|---|---------|------|----------|----------------|----------|------------|
|   | Housing | Food | Clothing | Transportation | Religion | Government |
| Source  |         |      |          |                |          |            |
|   |         |      |          |                |          |            |
|   |         |      |          |                |          |            |
|   |         |      |          |                |          |            |
|   |         |      |          |                |          |            |
| Predict   |         |      |          |                |          |            |



# HUSH A BYE

PAT THOMAS-MACKINNON

Mother may I  
Blow my horn?  
I can do it.

Hush-a-bye, hush-a-bye . . .

Put her in a pumpkin shell;  
There she ll keep very well.

Mother may I  
Go fill the pail by myself?  
I can do it.

Hush-a-bye, hush-a-bye . . .

I m the King of the castle;  
You re the dirty rascal.

Mother may I  
Move out of the shoe?  
I can do it.

Hush-a-bye, hush-a-bye . . .

Along came a spider and sat down beside her  
And frightened Miss Muffet away.

Mother may I  
Trade my lamb for a goat?

Hush-a-bye, hush-a-bye . . .

He had ten thousand men . . .  
He marched them up to the top of the hill,  
And marched them down again.

Mother may I  
Forget his pieces and put myself back together?

Fly away, fly away, fly away home . . .

Forget Bobby Shaftoe?  
Sleep forever and forget?  
Ignore the poison apple?  
Pull the sword from the stone?  
Leave the sheep to wander?

Hush-a-bye, hush-a-bye . . .