

# Comprehension Strategy: Questioning

adapted by Ginger Weincek 2005

## A. INTRODUCING “I WONDERS.....”

### 1. Modeled

- “I wonder.....”
- Teacher does the work/kids watch and listen.
- Read to a stopping point and say, “*I’m wondering.....*” or “*I wonder.....*”
- Ask students to report back what they saw you doing (stopping the reading along the way to “wonder”) and heard you saying (“*I wonder.../I’m wondering*”).
- Just “wonder”- answering comes much later!!!!
- Do this over and over and over and over with different texts/different genre.
- After doing this many times, casually bring into your language these statements:
  1. “**BEFORE** I even begin this book I am going to do some wondering.”
  2. “*Let’s see.... The title is \_\_\_\_\_ . I’m wondering.....*” (this is mostly a prediction when it is done before reading)
  3. “*When I look at the picture on the cover I see \_\_\_\_\_ and I’m wondering.....*”
  4. “*Careful readers **WONDER BEFORE** they even begin reading.*”

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  5. Then do your “I wonders.....” **DURING** the reading as before.
  6. Once in a while explicitly say that “*Careful readers **WONDER DURING** the story/text.*”

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  7. At the end of each text say, “*Now that I’ve **finished** the book I need to think what I am still wondering. Hmmm. I’m wondering .....*”
  8. Tell them “*A careful reader does not just put the book down and get another book. He/she wonders more about the text.*”
  9. Model **AFTER** “*I wonders.....*” for them.

### 2. Shared-step 1

- Choose text that you and the students will “wonder” through together.
- Work in your gathering area- up close with you.
- YOU are the reader.
- Continue the metacognitive talk throughout the questioning study. Always sharing with them what YOU are doing/thinking as a questioning reader.
- Before you start the book, show them the cover and say, “*What are you wondering?*”
- Call on about 4-5 students. Do not comment on any of their wonders. Accept them all.
- Begin the text.
- Read to a stopping point and say, “*What are you wondering?*”
- Take several volunteers to share whole group.

- Do this **VERBALLY** many times with many text pieces.
- Begin to use **TURN AND TALK** at the stopping points.
- Say, “*TURN AND TALK and say what you are each wondering.*”
- Choose several groups to share back **ONE** thing they were wondering.
- Ask if anyone has anything **DIFFERENT** they are wondering.
- Remember to do **AFTER** reading “I wonders....”.
- If your students want to “answer” or figure out the “I wonders” you need to tell them “*RIGHT NOW we are not going to worry about the answers. We are just going to enjoy what we are wondering.*” **DO NOT** engage in the figuring it out talk.

### 3. Shared-step 2

- Once you feel your students are comfortable with **BEFORE, DURING, and AFTER** “I wonders.....” then model writing down the “I wonders”.
- **YOU** continue to be the reader.
- The very first time you introduce writing “I wonders”, tell the kids “*Today I want you to watch and see what I am doing THIS time because it will be different than before.*”
- Remember to do this **BEFORE, DURING, and AFTER** reading.
- Read to a stopping point and put the book down, write your “I wonder” on a post it note (consider making an enlarged version with yellow construction paper), and then read it to the group.
- Continue reading on and writing what you are wondering- each on a different post it note.
- Do this with 2-3 different text pieces over several days time.

### 4. Shared-step 3

- Choose a book and find 4 good stopping points for **during** reading “I wonders”.
- Have students bring a clipboard to the gathering area with 6 post-its in place and a pencil. Teach them that the post its are in order from top row to bottom row #1-6. They don’t need to number them unless you feel it will help organize them.
- Tell them “*Today YOU will be writing down YOUR “I wonders” when I tell you.*”
- Spelling does not count. **TELL THEM THIS!!!!** It is the thinking we are striving for.
- Show them the cover and have them write down **ONE before** “I wonders” – each on it’s own post it. (post it number 1)
- You read a text piece and stop at a stopping point and say, “Write what you are wondering.”
- Give them time to write each time you stop. For the younger kids this will take a while but usually they are very invested and serious.
- You can have some sharing back during this stage, but don’t take too much time doing that. Focus on the quiet writing of “I wonders...”

- At the end of the book have them write one **after** “I wonder”.
- Do this 2-3 days.
- Consider using the “I wonder.....” worksheet (attached) as a next step.

## 5. Small Group Instruction

- Work with students continuing the “I wonder” practice.
- You will be the reader.
- Have them wonder verbally and in writing.

## 6. Independent Practice

- Depending on your students you can ask them to write “I wonders” on post its as they are reading during Independent Reading.
- I suggest having them do 3-5 post its
- They can meet with a partner to share one “I wonder” post it at the end of Independent Reading or share some during your whole group share.

## B. THICK/THIN QUESTIONS

Your next step is to start helping your students think more deeply when wondering.

1. Do a mini lesson on the two types of questions: thick and thin.

Tell them a **THIN question** is one that can be answered with a “clap”.

-for example “I wonder if the cat is the main character?” (yes)

-“I wonder if the boy is lost?” (yes)

-“I wonder when it will rain?” (the next day)

-“I wonder if Petey will save the mice?” (yes)

- thin questions are literal (characters name, setting, fact from story, etc)
- THIN questions are important but they do not lead to more thinking and discussion.

Tell them a **THICK question** is not easily answered.

- Tend to be why or how questions.
- More thinking is needed to answer the question.
- May need to talk with others about the answer.

2. Put up two sheets of chart paper. One labeled THICK at the top and the other one labeled THIN.

- Choose a new text piece and have the students write their “I wonders...” on post it notes.
- When you are done have them talk together at their table groups (or with you) to decide if the “I wonder...” is THIN or THICK.
- Place on the chart paper.

- You pull some off and discuss why a post it is THIN. If someone put a THIN post it on the THICK chart paper help them understand why it is NOT THICK and move it to the THIN chart. Actually CLAP the answer for the THIN “I wonders..” and wave your hands around to show THICK “I wonders...” Have them do the hand motions with you to emphasize the difference.
  - Read a post it and let the class decide if it is a THIN or THICK “I wonder....”
3. Read another book and have them do their “I wonders..” and then place them on the chart paper just like before. Afterwards you decide if they are understanding this and are writing MORE THICK “I wonders....” That is what you are striving for.
  4. SAVE one round of “I wonders..” to be used for a future lesson.

## **C. ANSWERED/UNANSWERED**

### **1. Step 1**

Help them decide if their “I wonders...” were answered in the text or not.

1. Go back to a story that you already read and have saved the post its from.
2. Make two new chart papers: ANSWERED and UNANSWERED
3. As a group go through the post its and decide if the “I wonder...” was answered in the text or not.
4. Go back to the text for the EVIDENCE (use this word with the kids. The place in the text- words or pictures, give the answer.
5. Write an “A” if it was answered and the page number with the evidence at the bottom of the post it and stick it the ANSWERED chart paper.
6. Write an “Un” if it was NOT answered in the text and stick it on the UNANSWERED chart paper.
7. Do this with all the post its for a familiar story.
8. \*\*\*SAVE these post its again for further use.

### **2. Step 2**

1. After doing this together with a familiar story, choose a new text piece and have them be prepared to write their “I wonders....” on post its.
2. Before you start the story teach them to “listen for the signal that goes off in their head as you read further into the story and one of their “I wonders...” is answered.
3. You can model this for them:
  - Read to an “I wonder....” and share it with them.
  - Continue reading on and when your “I wonder....” Is answered, make a big deal that you saw a light bulb start flashing in your brain or you heard a sound signaling the answer is there (whatever works for YOU!)

- Explicitly teach them that they have to be listening for that signal to go off which will help them catch the answer to their “I wonder....”
  - Reread the evidence from the text that answers your “I wonder....”
  - Write an “A” for answered and the page number from the text where the “I wonder...” was answered at the bottom of your post it.
  - With the older kids you can even have them write the answer on the bottom of the post it.
4. Begin the story with everyone writing down a **before** “I wonder” and then continue reading the text, stopping at good places to wonder.
  5. If you notice anyone having a visual/physical signal going off (like a body reaction) you should stop and point that out to the class. *“Sandi, I think I just saw your body show me that your signal just went off. I saw your head jerk and your eyes got real big. Did your signal just go off telling you that one of your “I wonders...” was just answered in the text?”* Have that child share what happened inside. This continues the metacognitive work we ALWAYS want to reinforce and encourage. What is it that they are doing INSIDE to catch their thinking???
  6. Have them write an “A” on their post it if their “I wonder....” was answered along the way. Doing it in a shared setting will not always allow them to write the page number with the evidence. But you could take the time to do that with a few post its to reinforce that we need to have the evidence from the text when an “I wonder.....” is answered.
  7. At the end of the story be sure to make time for the students to write one **after** reading “I wonder....”
  8. Any post its that were not answered in the text would be coded “Un”.
  9. Call several kids at a time and have them place their post its on the ANSWERED or UNANSWERED chart papers.
  10. Always look over a few of these to point out good examples of THICK “I wonders..”.
  11. Do this for 2-3 more text pieces.

### 3. Step 3

1. Depending on your class, you may want to give them a common text piece and have them do their “I wonders...” independently.
2. Have them code their post its “A” with evidence (page number or answer) or “Un”.
3. When done place them on the ANSWERED or UNANSWERED chart paper.
4. Discuss some good examples.

#### **4. Step 4**

1. At the independent level you can encourage them to keep track of their “I wonders...” by sticking them at the exact place they wondered something in their text.
2. If when they are reading on, they come to an answer for an “I wonder...” they then MOVE the post it note to the answer place in the text, code the post it with an “A” and write the answer or page number.
3. This teaches them that when we wonder through a text it keeps us engaged with the text because we want to read on to see if our questions are answered or not.

Next you would begin your strategy study on Inferring.

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