

Inquiry Method

Questioning - pt 1

What is “Comprehension”?

What is “comprehension”?

Why is it important?

When do you need to comprehend things?

A Secret

I'm letting you in on a secret—a method of reading that often isn't taught until college, and sometimes not even then.

This method of reading focuses on questioning. Smart questioning.

Questioning is such a powerful tool, that a man 2400 years ago was put to death because this is the way he taught.

He questioned the rulers of his city on how they ran the city. This bothered the rulers, so to get him out of their hair, they put him to death.

His name was Socrates.



Comprehension

Comprehension in reading means understanding what the author wants us to **think about**, **feel** or **learn** about ourselves, people in general, or the way the world is or should be.

In fictional pieces, the characters' **attitudes**, **behaviors**, **thoughts** and **motives** (reasons why they do things) are what should be focused on—those are the things that will help us know what **we** should think about.

Questioning

- What is the purpose of questions?
- Is there such a thing as a “dumb” question?
- When do you usually have to answer questions at school?
- What kinds of questions do you usually have to answer?

Questioning for Comprehension (Meaning)

Questioning is a good strategy for comprehending a piece because...

- it slows the reader down long enough to use other good reading comprehension strategies as well.
- it makes the meaning clear by focusing on parts that are hard to understand.
- it helps figure out the author's purpose by focusing on important parts.
- it help us get off the surface and into the meat of the material.
- it prompts us to research and find out more.

An Unspoken Hunger

by Terry Tempest Williams

It is an unspoken hunger we deflect with knives—one avocado between us, cut neatly in half, twisted then separated from the large wooden pit. With the green fleshy boats in hand, we slice vertical strips from one end to the other. Vegetable planks. We smother the avocado with salsa, hot chilies at noon in the desert. We look at each other and smile, eating avocados with sharp silver blades, risking the blood of our tongues repeatedly.

1. (from *Stories from the Field*)

An Unspoken Hunger

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Where would you start in figuring out what this author was talking about?

What questions do you have about this piece of writing?

An Unspoken Hunger

your questions

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An Unspoken Hunger

some of Mr. C's questions

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Remember, we are trying to figure out why the author wrote this.

What does “it” refer to?

What kind of hunger - is this *really* about avocados or eating?

How can hunger be unspoken?

How can “it” or “hunger” be deflected with knives?

Who is “us” and “we”—who is she with?

Why “salsa” “hot chilies” at “noon” in the “desert”—that’s a lot of hot, isn’t it?

Why eat avocados with knives and risk cutting themselves?

Why so many words that deal with sharp things or cutting?

An Unspoken Hunger

your questions

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Two Categories of Questions

Some kinds of questions are better at helping us comprehend than others.

1. **Simple Questions** - are **not** helpful in comprehending
 - have simple answers (takes a few words to state)
 - are limiting (find an answer and move on)
 - focuses on objects/things
2. **Complex Questions** - **are** helpful in comprehending
 - have layered answers (takes paragraphs to explain)
 - are unlimited (can lead you to think of more questions)
 - focuses on ideas

Comprehension in reading means understanding what the author wants us to **think about** or **learn** about **ourselves**, **people in general**, or the **way the world is** or **should be**. Complex questions help us find these types of meaning.

Four Types of Questions

Simple Questions (In the Piece)

1. Fact
 - Right There
 - Think and Search
2. Guess

Complex Question (In My Head)

3. Evaluative
 - On My Own
4. Interpretive
 - Author and Me

Factual Questions

Right There & Think and Search

Fact

- **Right There** - usually short, quick answers (57 pigs; the Roman Empire; flagella; etc.)
- **Think and Search** - takes a bit of work gathering all of the “right there” answers and putting them in a summary, explanation, comparison, etc..

Questions of fact have correct answers that can be found directly in the piece. (When dealing with fictional material it may not be “true” information, but you can look in the story and find the “correct” answer.)

- Factual questions **don't** help us specifically *understand* the *meaning* of the piece any better.
- You do more looking than thinking to answer a factual question.
- Factual questions check to see if you can **find** or **remember** *details* from a story.
- These are the types of questions you are usually asked on tests.

The Rich Man and the Shoemaker

by Jean de La Fontaine

Once upon a time there lived a poor but cheerful shoemaker. He was so happy he sang all day long. The children loved to stand around his window to listen to him.

Next door to the shoemaker lived a rich man. He used to sit up all night to count his gold. In the morning he went to bed, but he could not sleep because of the sound of the shoemaker's singing. One day he thought of a way of stopping the singing. He wrote a letter to the shoemaker asking him to come by.

The shoemaker went at once, and to his surprise the rich man gave him a bag of gold.

When he got home, the shoemaker opened the bag. He had never seen so much money before! He sat down at his bench and began, carefully, to count it. The children watched through the window.

There was so much there that the shoemaker was afraid to let it out of his sight. So he took it to bed with him. But he could not sleep because he was worrying about it. So he got out of bed and went to hide it in the attic, but he was not sure if that was a good place.

Very early in the morning he got up and brought his gold down from the attic. He had decided to hide it up the chimney instead.

But after breakfast he thought it would be safer in the chicken house. So he hid it there.

But he was still uneasy, and in a little while he dug a hole in the garden and buried his bag of gold in it.

It was no use trying to work. He was too worried about the safety of his gold. And as for singing, he was too miserable to sing a note. He could not sleep, or work, or sing—and, worst of all, the children no longer came to see him.

At last the shoemaker felt so unhappy that he seized his bag of gold and ran next door to the rich man.

“Please take back your gold,” he said. “Worrying about it is making me ill, and I have lost all my friends. I would rather be a poor shoemaker, as I was before.”

And so the shoemaker was happy again and sang all day at his work.

Shoemaker... Factual Questions

1. The shoemaker was so happy he did what all day?
2. Who lived next door to the shoemaker?
3. What did the rich man give to the shoemaker?

Factual Questions - Your Turn

Write three factual questions about the story.

1. ?
2. ?
3. ?

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And so the shoemaker was happy again and sang all day at his work.

Factual Questions - Your Turn

Write three factual questions about the story.

1. ?
2. ?
3. ?

Guess Questions

2) **Guess** - These types of questions could have any answer with no way of knowing if the answer is true or false.

- Guess questions have answers **based on opinion**.
- Guess questions do **not** help us understand the piece better.
- Guess questions lead us away from understanding the piece because we are distracted with unnecessary things.

Shoemaker... Guess Questions

1. What color was the shoemaker's hair?
2. Where did the rich man work?
3. What were the names of the kids who watched and listened to the shoemaker?

Guess Questions - Your Turn

Write three guess questions about the story.

1. ?
2. ?
3. ?

Guess Questions

1. 2) **Guess** - These types of questions could have any answer with no way of knowing if the answer is true or false.
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Evaluative Questions

On My Own

Comprehension in reading means understanding what the author wants us to **think about**, **feel** or **learn** about **ourselves**, **people in general**, or **the way the world is or should be**.

In fictional pieces, the **characters' attitudes, behaviors, thoughts** and **motives** (reasons why they do things) are what should be focused on—those are the things that will help us know what **we** should think about.

Complex questions help us focus on those things.

Evaluative Questions specifically help us do this by comparing the **characters' attitudes, behaviors, thoughts** and **motives** to our own **knowledge, beliefs, values** or **experiences** of life, to decide if we agree with the author's point of view.

Evaluative Questions

On My Own

Evaluative Questions...

- do help us understand the piece better.
- have answers **based on the reader's schema** of the way the world **really** works (not just unsupported opinions).
 - The answers can be supported from real experiences.
- are important because they help us relate the experiences of the piece to our own life and the real world.

Evaluative Questions

On My Own

Things to look for when finding evaluative questions:

- Focus on the characters'
 - attitudes
 - behaviors
 - thoughts
 - motives
- and then ask yourself if any of those four things you might find help us learn about
 - ourselves
 - people in general (how they do/should behave)
 - the way the world is
 - the way the world should be

Shoemaker... Evaluative Questions

When the shoemaker received the letter from the rich man, why did the shoemaker go “at once”?

Go to the bottom of your paper and label it “Evaluative Question” and then write your RARE answer to the above question.

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Shoemaker... Evaluative Questions

When the shoemaker received the letter from the rich man, why did the shoemaker go “at once”?

Go to the bottom of your paper and label it “Evaluative Question” and then write your answer to the above question.

Let’s check this evaluative question.

- The question focuses on **which** character’s **attitudes, behaviors, thoughts** or **motives**?
- What does the question help us learn about **ourselves, people in general, the way the world is, or the way the world should be**?

See how a complex question gets the reader to think a lot more in-depth about the writing compared to a fact question?

Evaluative Questions - Your Turn

Below your answer from the last question you answered, **write one evaluative question about the story.**

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Evaluative Questions

On My Own

Let's check *your* evaluative question.

Does your question

- focus on the characters'
 - attitudes
 - behaviors
 - thoughts
 - motives
- does your question help us learn about
 - ourselves
 - people in general (how they do/should behave)
 - the way the world is
 - the way the world should be

Evaluative Questions

On My Own

Comprehension in reading means understanding what the author wants us to **think about** or **learn** about **ourselves, people in general, or the way the world is or should be.**

Evaluative Questions help us do this by comparing something in the piece to our own knowledge, values or experiences of life, to decide if we agree with the author's point of view.

- Evaluative questions **do** help us understand the piece better.
- Evaluative questions have answers **based on the reader's schema** of the way the world **really** works (not just unsupported opinions).
 - The answers can be supported from real experiences.
- Evaluative questions are important because they help us relate the experiences of the piece to our own life and the real world.