Close Reading and Text-dependent Questions

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“Read like a detective. Write like a reporter.”

—David Coleman
“Anyway, the fascinating thing was that I read in National Geographic that there are more people alive now than have died in all of human history. In other words, if everyone wanted to play Hamlet once, they couldn’t, because there aren’t enough skulls!”
—Foer, Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close (2005), p. 3

Assessing Texts

- Quantitative measures
- Qualitative values
- Task and Reader considerations
Simply assigning hard books will not ensure that students learn at high levels!
Levels of Meaning and Purpose

- Density and complexity
- Figurative language
- Purpose
Levels of Meaning and Purpose

*Is it about talking animals, or the USSR?*

*Is it entertainment, or political satire?*

*Is it straightforward, or ambiguous?*

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**Structure**

- Genre
- Organization
- Narration
- Text features and graphics
**Structure**

*Changes in narration, point of view*

*Changes in font signal narration changes*

*Complex themes*

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**Language Conventions**

- Standard English and variations
- Register
Language Conventions

Non-standard English usage

“Out in the hottest, dustiest part of town is an orphanage run by a female person nasty enough to scare night into day. She goes by the name of Mrs. Sump, though I doubt there ever was a Mr. Sump on accounta she looks like somethin’ the cat drug in and the dog wouldn’t eat.”

(Stanley, 1996, p. 2)

Knowledge Demands

• Background knowledge
• Prior knowledge
• Cultural knowledge
• Vocabulary
Knowledge Demands

Domain-specific vocabulary
(radioactive, acidity, procedure, vaccination)

Background knowledge
(diseases, safety risks, scientific experimentation)

Creating a Close Reading
Use a short passage.

Creating a Close Reading

Use a short passage.

Re-reading

Creating a Close Reading
Creating a Close Reading

Use a short passage
Re-reading
“Read with a pencil”

Text-dependent questions
Use a short passage for close reading.

Re-reading with a pencil:

“Read with a pencil”

Text-dependent questions:

Give students the chance to struggle a bit.

Creating a Close Reading
Text-dependent Questions

• Answered through close reading
• Evidence comes from text, not information from outside sources
• Understanding beyond basic facts
• Not recall!

Which of the following questions require students to read the text closely?

1. If you were present at the signing of the Declaration of Independence, what would you do?
2. What are the reasons listed in the preamble for supporting their argument to separate from Great Britain?
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2. What are the reasons listed in the preamble for supporting their argument to separate from Great Britain?
General Understandings

• Overall view
• Sequence of information
• Story arc
• Main claim and evidence
• Gist of passage

General Understandings in Kindergarten

Retell the story in order using the words *beginning, middle, and end.*
Key Details

• Search for nuances in meaning
• Determine importance of ideas
• Find supporting details that support main ideas
• Answers who, what, when, where, why, how much, or how many.

Key Details in Kindergarten

• How long did it take to go from a hatched egg to a butterfly?
• What is one food that gave him a stomachache? What is one food that did not him a stomachache?
It took more than 3 weeks. He ate for one week, and then “he stayed inside [his cocoon] for more than two weeks.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foods that did not give him a stomachache</th>
<th>Foods that gave him a stomachache</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Apples</td>
<td>• Chocolate cake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pears</td>
<td>• Ice cream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Plums</td>
<td>• Pickle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strawberries</td>
<td>• Swiss cheese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Oranges</td>
<td>• Salami</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Green leaf</td>
<td>• Lollipop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Cherry pie</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sausage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Cupcake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Watermelon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vocabulary and Text Structure

- Bridges literal and inferential meanings
- Denotation
- Connotation
- Shades of meaning
- Figurative language
- How organization contributes to meaning

Vocabulary in Kindergarten

How does the author help us to understand what cocoon means?
There is an illustration of the cocoon, and a sentence that reads, “He built a small house, called a cocoon, around himself.”

**Author’s Purpose**

- **Genre:** Entertain? Explain? Inform? Persuade?
- **Point of view:** First-person, third-person limited, omniscient, unreliable narrator
- **Critical Literacy:** Whose story is *not* represented?
Author’s Purpose in Kindergarten

Who tells the story—the narrator or the caterpillar?

A narrator tells the story, because he uses the words *he* and *his*. If it was the caterpillar, he would say *I* and *my*. 
Inferences

Probe each argument in persuasive text, each idea in informational text, each key detail in literary text, and observe how these build to a whole.

Inferences in Kindergarten

The title of the book is *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. How do we know he is hungry?
The caterpillar ate food every day “but he was still hungry.” On Saturday he ate so much food he got a stomachache! Then he was “a big, fat caterpillar” so he could build a cocoon and turn into a butterfly.

Opinions, Arguments, and Intertextual Connections

• Author’s opinion and reasoning (K-5)
• Claims
• Evidence
• Counterclaims
• Ethos, Pathos, Logos
• Rhetoric

*Links to other texts throughout the grades*
Opinions and Intertextual Connections in Kindergarten

**Narrative**
Is this a happy story or a sad one? How do you know?

**Informational**
How are these two books similar? How are they different?

Progression of Text-dependent Questions

- Standards
  - 8 & 9
  - 3 & 7
  - 6
  - 4 & 5
  - 2
  - 1

- General Understandings
- Key Details
- Vocab & Text Structure
- Author’s Purpose
- Inferences
- Across texts
- Entire text
- Segments
- Paragraph
- Sentence
- Word