



Literacy Connects

A Content Literacy Newsletter from Regional Professional Development Program-Issue L



Text Dependent Questions

The CCSS for reading strongly focus on students gathering evidence, knowledge, and insight from what they read. In fact, eighty to ninety percent of the reading standards in each grade require text dependent analysis, as well as the new assessments being released by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). As the name suggests, a text dependent question specifically asks a question that can only be answered by referring explicitly back to the text being read. It does not rely on any particular background information extraneous to the text nor depend on students having other experiences or knowledge; instead it privileges the text itself and the student's ability to extract meaning from what they actually read. According to achievethecore.org in its "Guide to Creating Questions for Close Analytic Reading," effective text-dependent questions should ask students to do at least one of the following tasks:

- Analyze paragraphs on a sentence by sentence basis and sentences on a word basis to determine the role played by individual paragraphs, sentences, phrases, or words
- Investigate how meaning can be altered by changing key words and why an author may have chosen one word over another
- Prove each argument in persuasive text, each idea in informational text, each key detail in literacy text, and observe how these build to a whole
- Examine how shifts in the direction of an argument or explanation are achieved and the impact of those shifts
- Question why authors choose to begin and end how and where they do
- Note and assess patterns of writing and what they achieve
- Consider what the text leaves uncertain or unstated

While there is no set process for generating a complete and coherent body of text dependent questions for a text, the following is a good guide that will help generate a core series of questions for a close reading of any given text:

- **Step One:** Identify the core understandings and key ideas in the text—start by identifying the key points needed to understand the whole of the text and the purpose for reading the text before constructing questions
- **Step Two:** Start small to build confidence—opening questions should help orient students to the text and be specific enough to help build comprehension
- **Step Three:** Target vocabulary and text structure—locate key text structures and the most powerful academic words in the text that are connected to the key ideas and understandings, and craft questions that illuminate these connections
- **Step Four:** Tackle tough sections head-on—find the sections that will present the greatest difficulty and craft questions that support students in mastering these sections
- **Step Five:** Create coherent sequences of text dependent questions—the sequence of questions should build toward more coherent understanding and analysis to ensure that students learn to stay focused on the text to bring them to a gradual understanding of its meaning
- **Step Six:** Identify the standards that are being addressed in the series of questions and decide if other standards are appropriate. Create additional questions that exercise the related standards.
- **Step Seven:** Create the culminating assessment—develop a culminating activity around the key ideas or understandings identified earlier that reflects (a) mastery of one or more of the standards, (b) involves writing, and (c) is structured to be completed by students independently.

Go to [Literacy Connects Resources](#) for a list of text dependent question stems and close reading units published by the Student Achievement Partners

Visit the RPDP website (www.rpdp.net) for a complete selection of *Literacy Connects*.