Question-Answer Relationships

Purpose

Question-Answer Relationships (QARS) was developed by Raphael (1982) as a procedure for enhancing students' ability to answer comprehension questions by giving them a systematic means for analyzing task demands of different question probes.

Rationale

Raphael generated a strategy whereby readers are encouraged to analyze the task demands of questions prior to answering them. The system she devised for students to use involves having students identify three types of questions: text explicit or "right there," text implicit or "think and search" and scriptable or "on my own." This system was based upon a taxonomy suggested by Pearson and Johnson (1978) in which comprehension responses were described as follows: text explicit if the information to be used for the most appropriate response is stated explicitly in the text; text implicit if the response information is located in the text but requires the integration of textual material; and script implicit if the response information is located in the reader's knowledge base.

Raphael applies four principles of instruction to help readers analyze the task demands of questions: (1) give immediate feedback; (2) progress from shorter to longer texts; (3) begin with questions for which the task demand is more straightforward to questions that require the use of multiple sources; and (4) develop independence by beginning with group learning experiences and progressing to individual and independent activities.

Description of the Procedure

At the heart of QARS is having the student identify the response demands of various questions (either "right there," "think and search," or "on my own"), then, use a knowledge of the response demands to generate an answer.

Initial use of the format entails having students circle the QAR strategy they will use. During this initial period, a student's response to a question is less important than the student's assessment of the task demands. In other words, it would be okay if the reader generated a wrong answer, but correctly identified the task demands. Later, when students move to determining and writing in the answer, the actual answer the reader generates, becomes important.

Lesson 1. The first lesson in intended to introduce students to the task demands of different questions and to provide some initial practice at identifying task demands in conjunction with answering questions. The teacher would explain:

We are going to talk about different types of questions and the best way to answer them. Sometimes your workbook or I give questions that ask for information you can find quite easily in the book. Other times you won't find the answer there. I will describe three kinds of questions: "Right There," "Think Search," and "On My On." Each type can be figured out by deciding where you get the information for the answer. We call this a Question-Answer Relationship, or QAR for short" (Raphael, 1984).

Initially the teacher discusses the difference between text-based and knowledge-based responses. Following the introduction, practice with short passages of two or three sentences. In the first stage, give students passages to read with questions for which the answer, as well as the QARs, are identified. During this stage, discuss the type of QAR each question represents. In the second stage, give students passages, questions, and responses to these questions and have students generate as a group the QAR for each. Finally, in the third stage, have students determine the QARs and respond with answers.

Lesson 2. The purpose of the second lesson is to provide the students with review and further guided practice as they read slightly longer passages (75 to 150 words). The teacher begins the lesson with a review of each QAR category and then some guided practice with five questions that require different responses with a passage of approximately 75 to 150 words. The students do the first passage as a group, then, they are given feedback after they finish the second passage independently. As the students proceed with subsequent passages, give the students' feedback, as well as having them justify their answer to the question and their choice of a QAR. Also the teacher explains why an answer is acceptable on the grounds of both accuracy and strategy.

Lesson 3. Extend the QAR task to a passage approximately the length of a short story selection. Divide the selection into four sections and generate two questions of each of the three types (a total of six questions) for each section. The first section is completed in conjunction with reviewing the strategy; students complete the remaining three sections independently, prior to acquiring feedback.

Lesson 4. For the fourth lesson, use material typically found in the classroom – a basal story or a social studies or science chapter. Give the students the passage as a single unit with six questions from each QAR category. The students read the passage, determine the QAR for each question, and answer them.
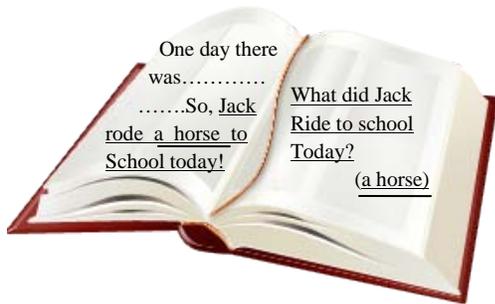
Maintaining QARs. To maintain the use of QARs, Raphael recommends this strategy should be reviewed weekly.

Tierney, R.J., Readence, J.E., Dishner, E.K. (1990). Reading strategies and practices: A compendium. Needham Heights: MA

Illustrations to Explain QARs to Students

In the Book QARs

One day there was…………
…….So, Jack rode a horse to School today!

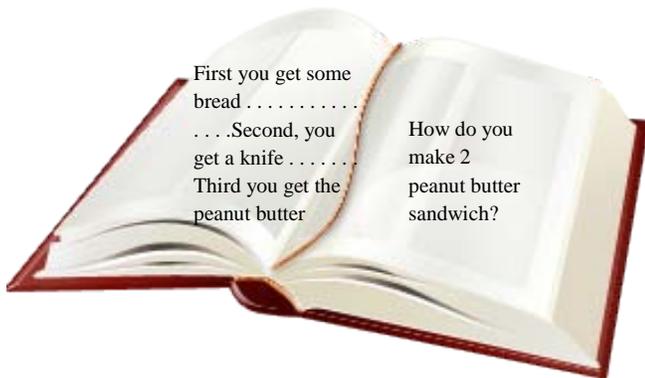What did Jack Ride to school Today?

(a horse)

Right There
The answer is in the text, usually easy to find. The words used to make up the question and words used to answer the question are **Right there** in the same sentence

First you get some bread . . . . .Second, you get a knife . . . . Third you get the peanut butter

How do you make 2 peanut butter sandwich?

Think and Search
(Putting It Together)
The answer is in the story, but you need to put together different story parts to find it. Words for the question and words for the answer are not found in the same sentence. They come from different parts of the text.
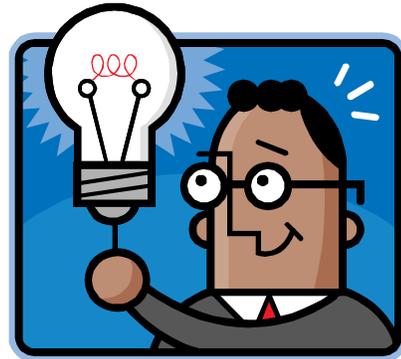
In My Head QARs

Author and You
The answer is *not* in the story. You need to think about what you already know, what the author tells you in the text, and how it fits together.

On My Own
The answer is not in the story. You can even answer the question without reading the story. You need to use your own experience.