



Responding to Literature

1. Where and when does the story take place? How do you know? If the story took place somewhere else or in a different time, how would it be changed?
2. What incident, problem, conflict, or situation does the author use to get the story started?
3. What does the author do to create suspense, to make you want to read on to find out what happens?
4. Trace the main events of the story. Could you change their order or leave any of them out? Why or why not?
5. Think of a different ending to the story. How would the rest of the story have to be changed to fit the new ending?
6. Did the story end the way you expected it to? What clues did the author offer to prepare you to expect this ending? Did you recognize these clues as important to the story as you were first reading it?
7. Who is the main character of the story? What kind of person is the character? How do you know?
8. Are there any characters who changed in some way during the story? If they changed, how are they different? What changed them? Did it seem believable?
9. Some characters play small but important roles in a story. Name such a character. Why is this character necessary for the story?
10. Who is the teller of the story? How would the story change if someone else in the book or an outside narrator told the story?
11. Does the story as a whole create a certain mood or feeling. What is the mood? How is it created?
12. Did you have strong feeling as you read the story? What makes you think of them as you read the story?
13. What are the main ideas behind the story? What makes you think of them as you read the story?
14. Is this story like any other story you have read or watched? Why?
15. Think about the characters in the story. Are any of them the same type of character that you have met in other stories?
16. What idea or ideas does this story make you think about? How does the author get you to think about this?
17. Do any particular feelings come across in this story? Does the story actually make you think about what it's like to feel that way? How does the author do this?
18. Is there any character that you know more about than any of the others? Who is this character, and what kind of person is he or she? How does the author reveal the character to you? What words would you use to describe the main character's feeling in this book?
19. Are there characters other than the main character who are important to the story? Who are they? Why are they important?
20. Is there anything that seems to make this particular author's unique and different? If so, what?

21. Did you notice any particular patterns in the form of this book? If you are reading this book in more than one sitting, are there natural points at which to break off your reading? If so, what are these?
22. Were there any clues that the author built into the story that helped you to anticipate the outcome? If so, what were they? Did you think these clues were important when you read them?
23. Does the story language seem natural for the intent of the story and for the various speakers?
24. Every writer creates a make-believe work and peoples it with characters. Even where the world is far different from your own, how does the author make the story seem possible or probable?
25. What questions would you ask if the author were here? Which would be the most important question? How do you think the author might answer it?

(From Harste, Short, and Burke, 1988, pp. 300-301)

Open-Ended Questions for Nonfiction

Dorsey Hammond of Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan, suggests five basic questions to ask with informational articles. Students first brainstorm what they already know about the subject, predict possibilities, and raise questions about what they want to find out. Then they read the selection.

1. Did we find the answer to our questions?
2. What questions do we still need to find out about?
3. What else did you learn that you didn't know?
4. What was the most surprising or interesting thing you learned?
5. What have you learned by reading this that you didn't know before?

Teachers, of course, add their own questions to these basic questions.



Ways to Talk About Books

Sue Hill and Students

South Australian C.A.E. (Magill Campus)

FANTASY STORIES

1. Is the world in which the story is set similar to our world?
2. What are the differences?
3. What special traits or powers do the characters have that we do not?
4. Do the characters possess these powers at the beginning of the story? If not, how do they discover them?
5. Are there two opposing forces in the story? If so, what are they?
6. What are the problems faced by the main characters?
7. How do they solve these problems?
8. How has the author made the story believable?
9. If you had been part of the story, how might you have used your one special power to resolve the conflict?
10. Did you enjoy this fantasy?

MYSTERY STORIES

1. What was the actual mystery or crime in the novel?
2. Could you identify with any of the characters in the book?
3. Was there a motive for the mystery or crime? If so, what was the motive and which characters stood to benefit?
4. Was there a motive for the mystery or crime? If so, in what way?
5. What clues did the author give you to help solve the mystery?
6. Did the author do anything to throw you off the track?
7. How was the mystery solved, and by whom?
8. Were you satisfied with the ending? Please explain your answer.
9. Do you think you could plan your own mystery story similar to the one in the book?
10. Did you solve the mystery before it was solved in the story? How did you do it?
11. Were there questions still unanswered at the end of the story?
12. How did the author build up suspense in the story?

SCHOOL STORIES

1. Do you ever feel like any of the children in this story?
2. In what ways is your school life like that in the book?

3. What do you notice about the groups of friends in your school and in the school in the book?
4. What different sorts of things do children learn in school and out of school?
5. Which children in the book enjoy school the most?
6. Why do you think this is so?
7. How believable is school life in the story, e.g., are the teachers really like that?
8. Was there a conflict in this story? If so, between whom and why?

FAMILY STORIES

1. Who are the main characters in the story?
2. What problems do these characters face and how do they solve them?
3. What is your favorite moment in the story?
4. How and why is the life of this family similar or different to your own family life? Give your reasons?
5. Is there anyone in this family who is a bit like you? Why?

BIOGRAPHY

1. Who is the main character of the novel? What sort of person is he/she?
2. Is he/she the author?
3. Where, and in what period of time, is the novel set?
4. Which part of the main character's life is the novel about?
5. What were some of the main events in the life of the main characters?
6. In what way did the main events affect him or her?
7. To what extent was the author in control of these events?
8. Try to place yourself in the character's position. Would you have reacted in the same way to particular events, or would you do things differently? Why?
9. If given the chance to write your own life story, what things would you tell?
10. How would you tell your story?

ADVENTURE STORIES

1. Is there a crime or wrong-doing that starts the action of the book? Who does it?
2. Is there one main character in the story?
3. Why is this person the main character?
4. What sorts of problems occur? How do the characters solve them?
5. Where and when does the adventure happen?
6. Are there any animals in the story? Are they important in the adventure? How?
7. Do adults have an important part? What role do adults play?
8. Does anyone get punished or caught for something he or she has done wrong?

9. How does this happen?
10. Does the adventure turn out well in the end?
11. Did the adventure end the way you expected?
12. Would you like to have an adventure like the one in the story?