

Let's look at the phases again, more closely examining the question types in each phase, and let's look at examples of questions that Mr. Taylor used with his fourth grade class.

Phase 1: What Does the Text Say?

General understanding questions cause students to attend to the major points in the text, such as the sequence of events, the story arc or important plot points, or the main claim and the evidence furnished. These are paired with *key detail questions* that drill down further, especially in exploring the relationship between the main ideas and the supporting details. These are often phrased as *who, what, when, where, why, how much, or how many* kinds of questions. The purpose of these key detail questions is not to quiz students on minutia, but rather to link the major idea of the piece to the details the author has furnished that directly support it.

The characteristics of a close reading discussed earlier are important precisely because they are *distributed* scaffolds, rather than frontloaded ones.

In his lesson with the fourth graders that opened this chapter, Mr. Taylor posed several text-dependent questions that built his students' foundational knowledge about what the text said. Therefore, his initial general understanding and key detail questions invited students to identify the main message:

- *Who is Casey?*
- *Where does the story take place?*
- *Who is telling the story?*
- *Describe Casey's character traits.*
- *How do you know the crowd is excited Casey's at bat?*
- *How was Casey feeling about the umpire calling strikes? How do you know?*

Phase 2: How Does the Text Work?

The next category of text-dependent questions involves the mechanics of the text. Questions about *vocabulary words and phrases* are essential because they provide students with opportunities to resolve the unknown. Such questions may be directed to the denotative meaning by prompting students to use their structural and contextual analysis

During close reading lessons in the intermediate grades, we discourage children from always raising their hands and waiting to be called on, as it makes us feel like traffic cops. We encourage them to speak directly to one another, not solely to us.

skills. Importantly, they can also include questions about the connotations of the word or phrase, including word relationships, idioms, adages, similes, and metaphors. Going deeper still, *text structure questions* ask students to locate the ways in which cause and effect, problem-solution, compare-contrast, temporal order, or extended description are used by the writer to maintain a logical flow in an expository piece. Within narrative text types, structures include story grammar, chapters, scenes, and stanzas. Poetic forms are also explored, and such devices include rhyme, meter, alliteration, and onomatopoeia. Vocabulary plays an important role here as well, especially in connecting signal and transitional words and phrases to the structures utilized. Text structure questions do not just zoom in on a few sentences. Text structures also unfold across paragraphs and passages, especially as they forward a plot, an explanation, or an opinion. Therefore, questions that cause students to apply literary analysis (e.g., of characterization, narration, and point of view) give students a chance to see text structures at play over a longer piece of text.

Finally, *author's craft questions* cause students to notice the writer's deliberate use of word choice, syntax, dialogue, and epilogues, and choice of genre to shape the message. These may include the ways in which the author uses text features such as illustrations, diagrams, and captions to convey information. For primary readers, answering these questions involves knowing about covers and title pages as well as text features such as headings and glossaries. In his close reading of *Casey at the Bat*, Mr. Taylor returned his fourth grade students to an examination of the structures used in the text:

- What does the author mean by the phrase, "Cooney died at first, and Barrows did the same"?
- What does the word stood mean in the phrase, "The score stood 4 to 2"?
- What makes this poem a narrative?
- The poet says "10,000 eyes were on him. . . ." How many people would that be in the stands? Is this hyperbole, or is it accurate?
- How does the mood shift from the beginning of the poem to the end?
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** Increase food costs.*

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- How does the figurative language help the reader visualize the hidden meaning?
- How does the author help us understand what "doffed his hat" means?
- How do the audience's "tongues applaud"?

Phase 3: What Does the Text Mean?

Are you tracing the trajectory of the questions? We began with discussion of the literal-level meaning of the text (general understanding and key detail questions), and then moved to examining the mechanics of the piece (vocabulary, text structure, and author's craft). This forms a solid foundation for the next category of questions, which involve the deep meaning of a text. In Phase 3, *author's purpose questions* probe the stated and hidden or subversive intentions of the author (but not all authors have such intentions) and the relationship the author has to the topic, especially questioning the author's credibility and expertise. Students in the elementary grades explore the author's use of reason and evidence to support information or opinions. Questions that invite *intertextual connections* foster the habit of thinking across texts to compare, contrast, and consider how different writers address similar themes and subjects.

Although vocabulary is conventionally addressed early on in a reading lesson, we prefer to allow it to gestate for a bit before examining words and phrases closely.

The text-dependent questions Mr. Taylor posed to his fourth grade students moved them toward deeper understanding:

- The character of Casey tells us a little bit about the difference between being confident and being too confident. Was Casey too confident? Why? What happened?
- What is the author saying about Flynn and Blake?
- Why does the author say, "The band is playing somewhere . . . but there is no joy tonight in Mudville"?
- What is the author's message? What does this all mean, really?

Phase 4: What Does the Text Inspire You to Do?

A final category of questions is reserved for encouraging students to move beyond the text at hand by taking action. These questions

These questions invite opinion with evidence and result in some task.

invite *opinion with evidence* and result in some task. They invite students to take a critical stance by examining power structures, considering alternate perspectives, and posing problems themselves that lead to action (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004). Such questions lead to teacher-directed or shared research or investigation, and are expressed through debate, presentations, or writing. In other words, students use the text as a platform for what will occur next. You'll recall from the opening scenario that Mr. Taylor had two tasks in mind for his fourth grade students. The first was to compose a response to the following prompt:

What happens when a hero lets you down? After reading the poem, write a response to the essential question in which you analyze the perspective of others. Be sure to use at least four examples from the text or other texts in order to support your position.

The progression of text-dependent questions used by Mr. Taylor and others featured throughout this book provide an added benefit, in that they afford teachers ongoing opportunities to check for understanding, make formative assessment decisions, and ensure that students engage in critical thinking. The Depth of Knowledge (DOK) framework (Webb, 2002) is a widely used method for gauging the rigor of thinking necessary to successfully perform a task. The four cognitive levels described in the framework are as follows:

Level 1: Recall and Recognition tasks

Level 2: Skills and Concepts tasks

Level 3: Strategic Thinking and Reasoning tasks

Level 4: Extended Thinking tasks

The DOK is used, for instance, to determine whether assessment questions address the full range of critical thinking. In addition, it is used to align instructional practices and curricular materials. The range of text-dependent questions described throughout this book have been developed to aid teachers in moving students systematically across a continuum of increasing complexity. Figure 1.7 further describes the relationship between DOK and text-dependent questions.