

EXPOSITION

How to Ask Literature Questions

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The common approach to literature in many classrooms is to give the child a worksheet with a number of questions about the text. But, whose questions are they?

Giving a child a set of questions that he did not ask, nor was even thinking about, sets an unnecessarily arduous task before him and actually leads him away from contemplative reading toward cold analysis.

An alternative approach to literature is to guide the child toward asking his or her own questions before introducing questions not asked by the child.

As the parent/teacher, the point is to work from the perceptive level of your child. By setting questions in front of your child before the child has even spoken, you gain no idea what your child gleaned from the story. Rather, you frustrate, discourage, and induce anxiety upon your child.

Once you draw out the perceptions your child acquired from the story, then you are able to assess and ask the appropriate questions that will form a link from your child's understanding to the story.

Always begin by asking your child to name two or three characters. He will always select (1) the characters that he remembers, and (2) the characters that he is most interested in.

Second, have your child list three to five things each actor/character did.

Third, pick one actor and select one action done by that actor.

Fourth, take the actor and the action and frame them in as a question beginning with the word "should."

This question is crucial because it marks the difference between looking for an answer in the unfamiliar territory of the story as opposed to drawing an answer from the child's own moral character. Here you are able to assess your child's moral development from the answer they give to this simple question.

For example, we can look at *Charlotte's Web*:

Name three characters from *Charlotte's Web*.

- Wilbur
- Charlotte
- Templeton

List three things each character did.

- Wilbur: talked, cried, asked for help
- Charlotte: talked, spun a web, helped Wilbur
- Templeton: ate, brought Charlotte words, complained

Pick one character.

- Charlotte

Pick one action.

- Helped Wilbur

Now, should Charlotte have helped Wilbur?