

Using Higher-Order Questions in Reading

Summary: Most teachers are familiar with Bloom’s taxonomy, which details different levels of questions that promote different levels of thinking. But what is the most effective way to implement higher-order questioning in your literacy block? In an article for *The Reading Teacher*, two University of Minnesota faculty members discuss how to best make this happen.

Practical Applications

The authors give several practical tips for implementing higher-order questioning, having students respond both verbally and/or in writing:

- At first, “when teachers ask higher order questions, they may find that the questions are difficult for students to answer or that students only give one- or two-word answers. The teacher could then respond by modeling how to give a higher-order response.”
- Giving students support on these types of questions is critical. Probing follow-up questions such as “Please tell me more about that” can help draw out responses from reluctant students. Providing sentence stems (“I followed my dream when...”) can be of particular help for English Language Learners.
- Working with other teachers can be an important way to prepare to utilize higher-order questions. For instance, the authors detail a school where during weekly grade-level meetings, teachers would brainstorm a list of high-order questions for the common texts that their students were reading. Teachers also worked together to come up with a rubric for assessing and analyzing in the team how well students were responding. Cross-grade study groups are also an option.
- Plan well: “Think of questions that relate to the theme or author’s message and write two or three higher order questions related to that theme. For example, if the picture book or novel you are reading deals with the issue of friendship, you could ask questions such as: “What do you like to do with your friends? What happens when your friends don’t want to do what you want to do? Can we still be friends with people who like different things than we do? Why or why not?” Also plan prompts for follow-up questions.
- Don’t give up or get discouraged – it can take considerable time for students to get strong at responding to higher-order questions, but they will get there.

Conclusion and Citation

Higher-order questioning in reading requires preparation both for the types of questions you will ask and also how you will follow up those questions. Doing this effectively opens new levels of thinking for students and new ways for them to engage with text.

Peterson, D. & Taylor, B. “Using Higher-Order Questioning to Accelerate Students’ Growth in Reading.” *The Reading Teacher*, 65.5, pp. 295-304 (2012).
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