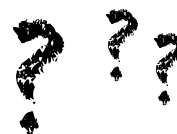


## How to Ask Great Questions about a Text



\* Before writing your question, start with **a sentence that establishes context**. What part(s) of the text are you talking about? What background information do you want your peers to consider as they think about and answer your question? Is there something in the text that has caused you to ask this question? This first sentence might also be an integrated quote or several quotes from multiple parts of the text.



### Ask questions about the stylistic choices the author makes

#### Setting

- A major setting in the book is \_\_\_\_\_. In what ways does this setting share similar traits to name of character?
- In what ways does the setting influence the main character's beliefs / opinions / perspective about \_\_\_\_\_?
- In what ways does the setting show the values of name of character?
  
- **Sample:** In what ways does the setting of Tucson, Arizona and especially her place of work, Jesus is Lord Used Tires, influence Taylor's developing awareness of a world very different from Pittman County where she grew up?
- **Sample:** In Edgar Allen Poe's short story, "The Fall of the House of Usher," what ways is the appearance of the interior of the house share similar traits to the mental state of the owners?

**Character Names** (if the character's name sounds like or is similar to an animal, object, place, trait or quality or is a well known name from a famous piece of literature like Greek mythology, Shakespeare, the *Bible*, etc.)

- The name \_\_\_\_\_ has the word \_\_\_\_\_ in it which brings to mind connotations like \_\_\_\_\_. Why might the author have wanted the reader to associate this character with this word? (**Sample:** The name Holden has the word hold in it. How might this word relate to his character?)
- In what ways do you think name of character is similar to the traits of \_\_\_\_\_ (the name of the animal, idea, object, place, etc. the character is named after)?
  
- **Sample:** The name Turtle brings to mind a hard shell and hiding. In what ways might these same qualities apply to Turtle and why?

#### Imagery

- In the scene where \_\_\_\_\_ how does imagery used to describe \_\_\_\_\_ help develop a theme about \_\_\_\_\_ (racism, independence, individuality, etc.)?

**Sample:** In a scene where Mattie takes Taylor, Estevan and Esperanza hiking after the first rain, how does the imagery used to describe the desert help develop a theme about resiliency and growth?

#### Symbols – look for recurring images, objects, etc.

- The (name an object, image, animal, event, action, phrase, etc. from the text) has been seen or talked about several times. For example, (describe the scenes it appears in, what is said about it or how it is described). What do you think object, animal, image, place, etc. might represent?

**Sample:** Turtle's doll has been mentioned several times and when Taylor takes her to the lake with Estevan and Esperanza, she plays with it in the dirt and begins to bury it. What do you think this might represent?

## Structure of the Text

- When (describe the situation & setting) , why do you think the author left out / did not show / ends the chapter by \_\_\_\_\_ ?
- After (describe the situation & setting) , why do you think the author jumps forward to or flashes back to \_\_\_\_\_ ?

## Title of the Book / Chapter Titles

- What is the significance of the chapter titled “ \_\_\_\_\_ ” and how does it relate to \_\_\_\_\_ ?

**Sample:** In his memoir, Elie Wiesel mentions studying the Kabbalah with Moishe the Beadle at night when he is a boy, then later he describes a vivid, painful memory of being on a train traveling through the night listening to Madame Schächter scream; and finally, when he arrives to Birkenau, he describes the flaming pits in the darkness where children and babies are being burned. What do you think the title means so far given these references?

## The Author's Attitude (Tone)

- What is the author's attitude about \_\_\_\_\_? How can you tell? How does this compare to your own point of view?
- What is the author's attitude about name of character 's choice to \_\_\_\_\_ and how do you know?

## Point of View

- Why does the author tell story from the different points of view of Names of Characters?
- Why does the author tell the story from the point of view of a (13-year old boy, a young Native American male, a teen mother, etc.) ?
- How would the story be different if told from the point of view of \_\_\_\_\_? What effect might this have on how the reader feels about \_\_\_\_\_?

## Unique or Unusual Punctuation & Grammar

- Why does the author write in all lower case letters, use no punctuation, etc.?
- In the scene where describe the setting, situation and characters involved, why does the author/ speaker trail off indicated by an ellipsis?

**Author's Word Choice** - Record a line with powerful meaning on your paper with the page # and the question below

- How would the meaning of this sentence change if the author had substituted the word “word from quote” with a similar word like \_\_\_\_\_? What are the connotations of word #1 and how are they different from the connotations of word #2? How do these differences affect the tone (author's attitude) or mood of this scene?

**Sample:** When Elie reflects on his first night at a concentration camp and all the horrific things he saw, he says, “Never shall I forget.” How would the meaning of this sentence change if the author had substituted the word “shall” with a similar word like “can” to read “Never can I forget”? How do these differences affect the tone?

## **Ask questions about characters & their relationships**

**Character Motivation** (Remember to focus on what the text does NOT tell us)

- Even though the text does not say, what can we infer about why name of character \_\_\_\_\_?
- When (describe the situation and setting), what motivates name of character to \_\_\_\_\_ instead of \_\_\_\_\_?
- After (describe the events leading up to this point), why might name of character want to \_\_\_\_\_?
- Why would someone (describe a choice or decision a character from your book is faced with or makes)?

□ **Sample:** Why did Juliet take the drugs to fake her death instead of just running away?

## Fears and Desires

- Do you think Name of Character is motivated to \_\_\_\_\_ more by his/her fear of \_\_\_\_\_ or fear of \_\_\_\_\_? Why?
- While it appears Name of Character 's greatest fear is \_\_\_\_\_, what is Name of Character really afraid of?

## Identity

- How do you think Name of Character's (gender, race, religion, economic status, social class, age, marital status, sexual identity, etc.) influences how he/she thinks about \_\_\_\_\_?
- Why does Name of Character most identify with those who are (shy, outgoing, oppressed, honest, outcasts, unique, underdogs, rebellious, innocent, naive, older, etc.)?

## Characters Lying to Themselves

- When (describe the situation & setting) do you believe Character's Name when he/she says, "quote here" (#)? Why or why not?
- In what ways do you believe Name of Character is lying to himself / herself about \_\_\_\_\_? Why?

## Self-Destructive Behavior or Poor Self-Esteem

- Why does Name of Character choose to \_\_\_\_\_ when this decision / behavior could result in \_\_\_\_\_?
- Why does Name of Character continue to \_\_\_\_\_ when it causes / will cause \_\_\_\_\_?
- In what ways does Name of Character put up with being \_\_\_\_\_ (objectified, treated with disrespect, treated unfairly, bullied, etc.)? Why does he/she accept or allow this treatment?

## Characters Growth or Change

- Previously, Name of Character \_\_\_\_\_ but now \_\_\_\_\_. What has caused this change?
- In what ways is Name of Character transforming from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_?
- In what ways has Name of Character's belief about \_\_\_\_\_ changed from the beginning of the book?

## Mental / Emotional State

- In what ways has the traumatic event of \_\_\_\_\_ caused Name of Character to \_\_\_\_\_?
- In what ways has the loss of \_\_\_\_\_ affected name of character?
- How has being \_\_\_\_\_ (sick, weak, near starvation, mistreated, abused, bullied, depressed, etc.) affected name of character's mindset about \_\_\_\_\_?

## Evaluate Character Choices

- When (describe situation & setting), do you think name of character's decision to \_\_\_\_\_ will add to his / her problems or help resolve them? How or why?

## Character Relationships

- Which character - name of character or name of character - has more influence on name of character? Why?
- Which character - name of character or name of character - has more influence on name of character's decision to \_\_\_\_\_?

**Evaluate a Character's Strengths & Weaknesses** (Example of character flaws: over confident, arrogant, self-centered, jealous, overly critical or negative, greedy, power-hungry, weak minded, heartless, controlling, fearful, mean spirited, self absorbed, self doubt, self conscious, stubborn, reckless, etc.)

- What is a significant but not obvious flaw or trait of the character name here and why? What problems have occurred / will occur because of this trait?
- In what ways is Name of Character a leader? In what ways will name of character have to change to become a better leader?

## Evaluate Unhealthy Relationships

- In what ways is name of character's relationship with \_\_\_\_\_ an unhealthy one? Why would name of character continue to stay in this relationship?
- Why does name of character continue to stay in a relationship with name of character when he/she \_\_\_\_\_?

## Values

- Do you think the author / name of character values (peace, equality, tolerance, trust, material wealth, status, justice, fairness, appearances, family, power, etc.)? How do you know?

## Ethical Choices & Responsibilities

- Was it morally acceptable for name of character to have \_\_\_\_\_ when (describe speaker, setting and situation)? What circumstances would have made name of character's choice more or less justifiable ethically?
- What is our ethical responsibility when (describe a situation, choice or event from the text) occurs? How should name of character have responded to this situation?

**Sample:** Was it morally acceptable for Taylor to have kept the baby instead of turning it over to the authorities when she had no home, no job and no support?

**Bias** (unfairly being against or favoring an idea or people which is not based on logical reasons)

- In what ways do you think name of character is bias or has blind spots about \_\_\_\_\_?
- In what ways does name of character's mental state affect his/her belief that / ideas about \_\_\_\_\_?
- In what ways does name of character dislike / distrust \_\_\_\_\_ for no apparent reason?
- In the scene when \_\_\_\_\_, in what ways is the narrator not a reliable witness to the events he/she describes?

## Stereotypes

- In what ways does the character name here as a (male, female, teen, old person, mother, father, homosexual, Latino, African American, person living in poverty, person without much education, etc.) add to / disprove the stereotype that \_\_\_\_\_?
- **Sample:** In what ways did Kingsolver as a white woman not consider the Native American community when she wrote *The Bean Trees*? What stereotypes might Native Americans be concerned with in this book?

## Compare & Contrast Characters

- Why do you think name of character is / chooses \_\_\_\_\_ while name of character is / chooses \_\_\_\_\_?
- How do you think name of character and name of character are similar? In what ways are they different? Is there evidence in the text that suggests the reasons for these similarities and/or differences?
- What causes name of character to be \_\_\_\_\_ while name of character is \_\_\_\_\_?

## Social Class

- What advantages / privileges does Name of Character have and in what ways is he/she aware or unaware of this? Are there ways this character takes advantage of his/her status at the expense of others that are not obvious?

## Evaluate Responsibility / Blame

- Who is more responsible for \_\_\_\_\_ - name of character OR name of character, ?
- Which character, name of character OR name of character, is more to blame for \_\_\_\_\_?

**Sample:** Which character, Friar Lawrence or the Nurse, is more to blame for Romeo and Juliet's suicides?

## Power

- In what ways does Name of Character, Group, Political Party or Organization have more \_\_\_\_\_ (power, status, money, influence, rights, resources, etc.) than \_\_\_\_\_? Has this character / group / political party / organization used his / her / their (power, status, money, influence, rights, resources, etc.) responsibly and are there ways in which he / she / they has/have not?

## Gender Roles

- Set in \_\_\_\_\_ (a mid-western small town in the 1950's, the Elizabethan era, World War 2 Germany, a futuristic society ruled by an authoritarian government, etc.), how does the text represent the experience of \_\_\_\_\_ (women, men vs. women, teen girls vs. teen boys, mothers vs. fathers, etc)?
- **Sample:** Set in Elizabethan times, how does the play *Romeo and Juliet* represent the female experience during this era?