

F. Sample Questions by Dimension

In choosing/constructing questions for a reading assessment, realize that some of these questions will produce narrower responses, that is, responses that don't address all of the descriptors of a given dimension. If you assign more questions, you may be able to get thorough, scorable responses. However, fewer questions that are broader in scope might be less time-consuming to score. Deliberate the trade-offs to strike a balance that will work for you and your students.

Also note that these questions vary in sophistication as far as the type of responses expected from the student. Questions should be chosen and phrased carefully to give students every opportunity to perform well on the assessment.

Sample Comprehension Questions:

*The first dimension, **Comprehension**, includes literal, inferential and evaluative comprehension. Students demonstrate a competent understanding of the selection, its main ideas (themes) and draw reasonable conclusions about symbols, relationships, patterns and their meanings. Objective items (multiple choice, matching, true/false) are one way to determine a student's literal comprehension of a selection. Short answer items (e.g., identifying the meaning of specific symbols in a novel or play) may also be used. Essay questions that relate to plot and/or character development, ask for predictions of what might happen next if the story were to continue, or that draw forth conclusions about the meaning of a selection would be scored on this dimension.*

Informative and Literary Texts:

Discuss the themes and main ideas of the selection.

Draw a cartoon which shows the main ideas or plot of the story.

All selections relate ideas and themes that are different to different people. What themes or ideas might a reader gain from this piece that may not be obvious to all?

Identify what you feel to be the author's purpose. What specific events or ideas helped you discover this purpose?

If you were to ask the author the most important details he/she wanted you to get from this selection, what do you think he or she would say?

What did you learn about _____ from this selection? What information/facts led you to that conclusion?

Place the ideas/events in sequential order.

What is the importance of the _____ in the selection?

What message is the author hoping to convey in this selection?

Trace the main events. Could you change their order or leave any of them out? Why or why not?

Did you notice any particular patterns in the form of this selection? If you are reading this selection in more than one sitting, are there natural points at which to break off your reading?

If so, what are these?

What clues did the author build into the piece that helped you to predict the outcome? What were they and how were they important to the selection?

Literary Texts:

Who is/are the main characters? Explain their roles in society, family, etc.

What are the relationships between the characters?

Map different elements of the story (plot, setting, characters, timeline).

What is the future of the situation or the character?

Comprehension includes understanding the thoughts and feelings of characters. Discuss how the character felt during the story.

How did _____ change?

If this piece were to have a sequel, what do you think would happen next? Write your answer on what would logically occur based on what has happened so far.

What does the poem, etc. say to you? (What is the main idea?)

Where and when does the story take place? How do you know?

Did the story end the way you expected it to? What clues did the author offer to prepare you to expect this ending?

Do any characters change during the story? If they do, how are they different? What changed them? Did it seem believable?

Sample Extending Understanding Questions:

*The second dimension, **Extending Understanding**, asks that students relate the selection to their own background, knowledge, and experiences or to other texts, experiences, issues or events in the community or world at large. This dimension would best be assessed through an open-ended prompt. Students often need to be encouraged to go beyond connections that are primarily literal (plot, characters, setting) to connections that are more subtle (those that relate to themes or symbols.)*

Informative and Literary Texts:

How is this text similar to other selections in terms of theme/main idea/purpose/detail.

Discuss a time you met a similar challenge, were in a similar situation, or had a similar relationship, etc. Be sure to go beyond the obvious.

Discuss other stories, texts, movies, that you thought of in reading this piece. Be specific in explaining the relationship.

What (community, state, national, global, historical, political, social, cultural) issues did you think of during or after reading this piece?

What from your personal experience can you relate this selection to? This could be a book, a movie, an incident from your own life or something you've heard or read about.

Literary Texts:

Identify aspects of the story that tell you what time period it takes place in. Discuss any evidence you can find that this time period had different attitudes or social customs than your own.

Tell about a movie, book, or actual event with a similar theme. Explain how they are similar or related.

Does this selection make you think of something else you have read, experienced, or know about? Explain.

Compare/Contrast (the main character/theme/etc.) with another main character/theme/etc. that you have read or seen.

How is this story like any other story you have read or watched? Compare the two.

Think about the characters in the story. How are any of them the same type of character that you have met in other stories?

Sample Reading Critically: Text Analysis Questions:

*The third dimension, **Reading Critically: Text Analysis**, is where students are asked to take a critical stance, standing apart from the text, to make supported judgments. This could include suggesting more than one interpretation of the text or supporting or challenging the author's assumptions, perspectives, claims or style. Additionally, students might be asked to suggest what the author could have included, omitted or changed. This dimension would best be assessed through an open-ended prompt.*

Informative and Literary Texts:

How does the author move the main idea or theme along? Cite specific examples from the text. The author is coming to our school soon. What suggestions would you make to him/her to improve the story? What comments would you make to him/her about how well you liked the story? Include details.

Authors work with words. Look back at the story and how this author used words to make you see, feel, and understand the message. (For example: Identify a phrase, why you included it, and why it is effective.)

Is the message the author is trying to convey accurate, fair, appropriate? Discuss this using specific examples.

How effectively did the author of the selection use word choice and writing style to increase the impact of the selection? Were there any specific passages that particularly appealed to you or that you found weak?

If the author were to ask you what the main strengths and weaknesses were of this selection, what would you tell him/her?

An author has a wide choice of settings, word choices, etc. that can be used to convey his/her point of view. Discuss some stylistic choices made in this selection. How do these decisions impact the story?

Choose two descriptive passages from the selection. Copy the passages and tell why you selected them.

What makes this particular author's work unique? Give examples from the selection.

This author uses language that is very (formal, technical, informal, full of slang). Explain how well these word choices help you understand the message and whether they enhance or detract from the effectiveness of the selection.

What was your immediate response to this selection after reading the opening paragraph? What did the author do to capture your attention? How well did it work?

The author presents a large amount of information in this selection. How did the organization of this information help or hurt your understanding?

This selection contains several (pictures, charts, graphs, illustrations). Explain how these added or detracted from the selection's overall effectiveness.

The authors of persuasive pieces such as this use a variety of means to support their arguments. How well did this author choose statistics, anecdotes, emotional appeals or other means of support? Were you persuaded? Why or why not?

Journalists and other authors make an effort to seem completely unbiased. Is this author complete objective, or is s/he trying to promote a certain position in this selection? Support your analysis by providing quotes.

This author clearly supports (Ballot Measure X). Compare and contrast how s/he presents arguments in support of this position. How does s/he make her/his position more attractive than the opposing position?

Literary Texts:

Who is the main character in the story? What kind of person is the character? How does the author reveal the character to you?

Some characters play small but important roles in a story. Name such a character. Why is this character necessary for the story?

How did the author cause you to feel about the character, situation, theme? The author chose specific literary elements on purpose. Did he/she do a good job? Discuss your thoughts using specific examples.

How does the author create a "mood?" How does the mood contribute to the story's impact?

Which of the characters seemed most like a "real person" to you? What was it about the character that made him/her seem so believable? Were there any characters that you felt were weakly described or acted in a way that seemed unrealistic?

If the author changed the setting, time, characters how would it affect the story? What was the author's purpose in writing this story? How do you know?

What does the author do to create suspense, to make you want to read on to find out what happens?

Did the selection end the way you expected it to? What clues did the author offer to prepare you to expect this ending?

How does the author reveal the main character(s) to you?

Who is the narrator of the story? How would the story change if the author had someone else in the book or an outside narrator tell the story?

Writers sometimes create a make-believe world and people it with characters. Even where the world is far different from your own, how does the author make the selection seem possible or probable?

Sample Reading Critically: Context Analysis Questions:
(assessed at CAM Level pending State Board of Education action)

*The fourth dimension, **Reading Critically: Context Analysis**, asks that the reader consider the external influences that led to the creation of a work: the author’s life experiences, and the influences that social and historical perspectives might have had on the work’s theme. This dimension would best be assessed through an open-ended prompt.*

Informative and Literary Texts:

Authors often write pieces that are a “product of their time.” How is this true of this author or piece?

The author lived during a time when . . . What evidence can you find of his/her being influenced by his/her life experiences?

Discuss the social implications of the major ideas presented in this work.

How does your understanding of the historical context of this piece affect your understanding of the main idea or theme?

In what ways have social, political, or cultural perspectives influenced this work?

In what ways does the theme or main idea express a universal perspective or belief?

What did the story/selection tell you about the author and her/his way of looking at life?

What evidence can you find that events in the author’s own life influenced the content, themes or stylistic decisions contained in this selection?

This selection contains themes/messages that reflect the beliefs that were common when the selection was written. What are some of these beliefs and how might they be different if the selection had been written today?