

GRADES 6-12

PLANNING POWERFUL INSTRUCTION

7 MUST-MAKE MOVES TO TRANSFORM
HOW WE TEACH—AND HOW STUDENTS LEARN

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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *Planning Powerful Instruction, Grades 6-12*, by Jeffrey Wilhelm, Rachel Bear, and Adam Fachler. This three-level questioning guide moves learners through the levels of literal, inferential, and reflective evaluation and application questions.

LEARN MORE about this title, including Features, Table of Contents, and Reviews.

QUESTIONING MOVE 1: THREE-LEVEL QUESTIONING GUIDE

In the vignette opening this chapter, Tommy could not move beyond literal decoding because he did not have a mental model of expert reading that included inferencing and reflecting while building meaning. A powerful technique for assisting readers of any text—visual, written, numerical—is the three-level questioning guide, because it moves learners through the levels of literal, inferential, and reflective evaluation and application questions. These question types are also known as “on the lines,” “between the lines,” and “beyond the lines” questions. The three-level guide provides support for generating powerful questions that work toward deep understanding and knowing how to find answers to them. Through this gradual release, an expert mental model of reading and how to pursue it with three levels of questioning becomes the domain of the learner and can be transferred across texts and situations. Figure 11.1 walks us through each type of question, as well as examples to prompt thinking.

Let’s look at the different types of questions in three-level questioning:

“ON THE LINES” QUESTIONS

These are literal-level questions that have a directly stated answer. In other words, you can point at the answer and say, “The answer is right there!” This is the simplest kind of question. The reader finds the answer directly stated in the text through key details that deepen understanding. Key details are cued by rules of notice (see Chapters 9 and 10 for more on rules of notice, and download the complete list of rules of notice from the companion website, <http://resources.corwin.com/EMPOWER-secondary>).



“BETWEEN THE LINES” QUESTIONS

These are also known as inferential questions, which can be either Think and Search or Author and Me questions (according to the Question-Answer Relationship scheme [Raphael, 1982]).

- Think and Search: The reader searches for patterns in the text and then connects the dots and interprets the pattern formed by the different pieces of information.
- Author and Me: The reader “figures forth” by inferring additional meanings typically from one crucial and revealing piece of information. This requires connecting the detail to personal life experience or world knowledge that reveals the hidden or unstated implications of the details.

With “between the lines” questions, the questioner may be required to

- Infer what key details imply but do not directly say
- Connect details from different parts of the text into a pattern that reveals meaning, being able to explain the nature of the connections
- Ask an Author and Me question by identifying a textual detail and adding life experience or world knowledge to interpret it by

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- Predict or anticipate consequences, what will happen next, or endings
- State underlying motivations and reasons for problems, events, or actions
- Make generalizations about a character, setting, problem, or other aspect of text

“BEYOND THE LINES” QUESTIONS

Also known as critical/evaluative/applicative or inquiry questions, these do not actually require textual details to answer, though the question will be related to a central topic of the text. The reader makes links between a topic of the text and his or her own experience and world knowledge to find the answer. The question is open-ended and promotes rich discussion and deeper understanding. The reader needs to justify the answer with evidence from beyond the text and reasoning about this evidence. *The topic of the text or data generally informs the question but will not be necessary to answering it.*

The questioner may be required to

- Make generalizations or explain rules the text or data implies for human behavior
- Make comparisons to different extratextual events, actions, or ideas
- Make judgments, and consider how far he or she wants to accept, resist, or revise major points that apply to the world
- Make recommendations and suggestions
- Make decisions
- Create alternative endings and explain differences in meaning

■ FIGURE 11.1: THREE-LEVEL QUESTIONING GUIDE

QUESTION TYPES AND DEFINITIONS	EXAMPLES (REHEARSE SAMPLE QUESTIONS HERE, INCLUDING EVIDENCE FROM TEXT OR YOUR LIFE NECESSARY TO CRAFT AN ANSWER.)
<p>ON THE LINES (or Right There questions)</p> <p>TIP: This kind of question should highlight a key detail (cued by rules of notice) that is important to understanding the text at a deeper level. This kind of question should be in service of the higher-level questions that follow it—between and beyond the lines.</p> <p>To ask this kind of question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify a directly stated key detail that conveys deep meaning or that may be important later on, or identify a directly stated point, generalization/main idea of the excerpt, or what might be a main event or consequential action. <p>CONFIRM: To confirm this question type, find the answer at one place in the text and point to it in the text.</p>	<p>Examples of “on the lines” question starters, <i>if the answers are directly stated:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What happened . . . ?• How many . . . ?• How did . . . ?• Who . . . ?• What is . . . ?• Which is . . . ?• When did . . . ?• Where was . . . ?

QUESTION TYPES AND DEFINITIONS	EXAMPLES (REHEARSE SAMPLE QUESTIONS HERE, INCLUDING EVIDENCE FROM TEXT OR YOUR LIFE NECESSARY TO CRAFT AN ANSWER.)
<p>BETWEEN THE LINES (or Think and Search/Author and Me)</p> <p>Think and Search questions: Search for patterns in the text and then interpret or explain the pattern formed by the different pieces of information. TIP: This kind of question should connect key details to reveal patterns that express implied meanings. This can also be called a “connect the dots” question.</p> <p>Author and Me questions: The reader infers additional meanings from one crucial and revealing piece of information. This requires connecting the detail to personal life experience or world knowledge that reveals the hidden or unstated implications of the detail(s). TIP: This kind of question should help you to interpret the unstated and implied meanings of a detail or event by connecting it to life experience or world knowledge. This involves going beyond what is directly stated to figure out deeper meanings.</p> <p>CONFIRM: Think and Search questions can be confirmed by pointing to details in different places in the text and explaining how they are connected. Author and Me questions can be confirmed by showing how a detail can be interpreted by connecting it to details and knowledge outside the text, and usually include “you” or “me” in the question.</p>	<p>Examples of Think and Search question starters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did . . . ? • What was the deep or hidden reason for/implied meaning of . . . ? • Why might X be important? • What might be the implications or consequences of detail/action/result X? <p>Examples of Author and Me question starters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think about . . . ? • How can you explain . . . ? • What is your theory about why . . . ? • How do you think this was similar to/different from X (from another text or the world)? • How would the character/action/etc. be changed if the text were in a different setting or if the situation was changed to/there was a different narrator (or any kind of change) . . . ? • How does this excerpt extend or complicate our understanding from previous understandings or other texts we have read? • Do you think that . . . should have . . . ? • What else could he/she/you . . . ? • How would you . . . ? • Do you agree . . . ? • What do you think would have happened if . . . ?
<p>BEYOND THE LINES (On Your Own: Evaluation and Application questions)</p> <p>TIP: This is an inquiry question that requires generalizations or rules that can be applied beyond the text (e.g., making a claim that is generally true about the world beyond the text, or setting a rule about behavior applicable in the world beyond the text).</p> <p>CONFIRM: “Beyond the lines” questions can be confirmed by demonstrating how the question is about the world beyond the text and could be answered without information from the text if needed.</p>	<p>Examples of “beyond the lines” question starters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is courage/love/leadership (a definition that applies to the world)? • What makes a powerful speech/effective parent, great leader, good relationship etc.? • What actions most effectively promote civil rights? • How might major ideas/rules about the topic be used/applied in our lives? In policy? • How might . . . ? • What effect does . . . ? • In the future/in this different context of . . . what would follow . . . ? • How might I use what I’ve learned in future readings on this topic? When I encounter particular problems or challenges that I might envision?

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The process for guiding students through the three-level questioning guide is as follows:

Step 1: Prime students when you first introduce the three-level questioning guide by asking how they know that they really understand something. Prompt them to think of something they deeply understand and the ways in which they demonstrate deep understanding. Point out that understanding has multiple levels. Continue priming by viewing an excerpt of “Questions Only” from *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkxRzV3gtDcor) or playing a round of Twenty Questions. Ask students to reflect on and name what kinds of questions generated the most insight or discussion, and how questions can be sequenced so that one question leads to a deeper one.

Step 2: Orient learners by explaining that expert understanding goes beyond facts to the implications of facts, the connections between details, and the deeper meanings and applications of what has been read. Ask learners to consider how often they ask questions that go beyond the literal, and when and why they do so.

Step 3: The walk-through begins by explaining the three question types and how they mirror what expert readers and learners do when they reach for understanding and use; the template in Figure 11.1 can serve well here. Use this guide to model how to use the question types and stems to generate questions of each type. Quickly move to having learners help you, and then to helping each other. Share and provide procedural feedback about power moves and potential moves used by the students.

Step 4: Have students explore and extend the use of the questioning guide by applying it independently to their own reading or learning. Peers and teacher can “Gut Check” the question types with learners and help to revise them as necessary. Throughout, ask learners to reflect on how the different kinds of questions help them develop deeper understanding, and to assess how they have improved in asking higher-order questions.