

Literacy Links

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This month's edition of *Literacy Links* examines the fourth of the six critical instructional shifts required of the Common Core State Standards for ELA—Text Dependent Questions and Close Reading

Spotlight on...

Text Dependent Questions and Close Reading

"Take the attitude of a student, never be too big to ask questions, never know too much to learn something new."

~Og Mandino



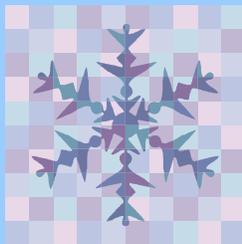
A pivotal shift required of the Common Core State Standards is their strong emphasis on students gathering evidence, knowledge, and insight from their reading. Text dependent analysis is the focus of at least eighty percent of the Reading standards at each grade (Achieve the Core, 2012). This text dependent analysis requires close reading on the part of students and efficient use of text dependent questioning strategies that support students' close reading of texts. While potentially more familiar to secondary level educators, the terms "close reading" and "text dependent questions" are relatively new for elementary educators. To better understand these terms, how they apply to the Common Core State Standards, and what they mean for instruction; let's examine each concept in greater detail.

According to Fisher and Frey (2012), **close reading** is an instructional routine in which students critically examine a text, often through repeated readings. This instructional routine asks students to examine the deep structures of the text, such as its organization, the precise vocabulary used to convey and explain concepts, and its key details, inferential meanings, and arguments. Text dependent analysis expects readers to consider the author's purpose and how the ideas advanced in the text connect with their own prior knowledge as well as knowledge conveyed by other texts. As an instructional routine, close reading also seeks to build students' stamina and persistence with constructing meaning from complex pieces of text (Fisher and Frey, 2012). Close reading should not be the only instructional routine employed by educators...it is one of many that can serve important purposes related to reading instruction. Additionally, not all texts benefit from close reading. Simple, straightforward texts may not require the deep analysis promoted through close reading. The reader's purpose for reading contributes to whether or not close reading is necessary. Skimming and



“Judge a man by his questions rather than his answers.”

~Gandhi



scanning to quickly find information or reading for pleasure are times when close, careful reading is not necessarily required. Several key features of close reading include the following:

- Close reading is generally used with complex texts, texts that require careful examination with supportive teacher scaffolding to build understanding.
- Close reading is usually used with shorter texts (e.g. picture books, passages, excerpts from longer texts, primary source documents, speeches, etc.) so that the text can be read repeatedly.
- Limited frontloading is provided— and it usually focuses on setting a purpose and clarifying some key vocabulary. Students are expected to do the “heavy lifting” to figure out what the text is communicating through repeated reading and ongoing examination.
- Repeated reading of the text is expected (which builds both fluency and comprehension).
- Text dependent questioning strategies are used to focus students attention on critical aspects of the text from which students can construct understanding.
- Text annotating strategies are used to enable students to focus attention and identify evidence.

One of the key components of close reading is the use of **text-dependent questioning strategies** by teachers. Text dependent questions, as the name suggests, specifically ask questions that can only be answered by referring explicitly back to the text that is being read. This type of question does not rely on the students’ background knowledge or experiences. As an example, think of Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address. If the teacher posed the following questions to guide students as they read this speech, would students be dependent on the text to answer them?

- Why did the North fight the civil war?
- Have you ever been to a funeral or gravesite?
- Why is equality an important value to promote?

The answer is no—these questions do not require understanding of Lincoln’s speech to answer. Instead, they require the reader to go outside of the text. While questions like these are tempting to ask because they may activate background knowledge and/or elicit personal connections, they may also take the reader away from Lincoln’s actual points (Achieve the Core, 2012).

Well-designed text dependent questions require students to actually read the text closely and to identify evidence from within the text that supports their answers. This does not mean that there is no longer a transaction between the reader and the text as Rosenblatt (1995) espoused with Reader Response Theory. Instead, text-dependent questions strive to ensure that readers come to understand the author’s intended meaning while extending their own knowledge. Types of text



“Who questions
much, shall learn
much, and retain
much.”

~Francis Bacon



dependent questions that develop a readers' understanding of a text include those that focus on:

- General understanding of the text
- Key details
- Vocabulary and text structure
- Author's purpose
- Inferences
- Opinions, arguments, and intertextual connections

Fisher and Frey caution that even when well-crafted text dependent questions are used, this will not ensure students will be able to read and understand complex text....students still need to be taught to read deeply and to respond with evidence from the text. Text dependent questions are a tool that supports close reading. They are questions worth asking, questions that lead students to think critically, and questions that propel students to build knowledge and understanding.

For additional information about close reading and text dependent questions, check out the resources described in the rest of this month's Literacy Links.

Online Resources...

This month's online resources feature websites that contain resources related to text dependent questions.

Text Dependent Questions

<http://www.missionliteracy.com/page78/page72/assets/FisherFrey%20Text%20Dependent%20Questions%20April%202011.pdf>

This article, written by Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey, provides a thorough explanation of text-dependent questions, including their purpose and design.

Achieve the Core's Guide to Creating Text Dependent Questions

<http://www.achievethecore.org/steal-these-tools/text-dependent-questions>

This link will take you to a guide developed by Achieve the Core that explains a process for developing text-dependent questions that support close reading of complex texts. On this same site, passages can be found that include text-dependent questions as models.

Rhode Island Department of Education's Text Dependent Question Module

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Instruction/CommonCoreMaterials.aspx>

UPCOMING EVENTS



**5th Annual
Literacy
Connections
Conference**
featuring
Literacy for ME

**April 4, 2013
Thomas College**

**Sponsored by the
Barbara Bush
Foundation for Family
Literacy and the
Maine Department of
Education**

**Registration and
Information available
in early February 2013**

This link leads to the Rhode Island Department of Education's collection of professional development resources related to the CCSS for ELA. Scroll to the link to Text Dependent Questions where you will find a professional learning module designed to support understanding of text dependent questioning.

Summary of Professional Texts...

This month we feature two professional texts that focus on aspects of text dependent questioning and close reading.

Teaching Students to Read Like Detectives: Comprehending, Analyzing, and Discussing Text

By Douglas Fischer, Nancy Frey, and Diane Lapp
Solution Tree Publishers, 2011

Empower students to take ownership of their reading and learning with *Teaching Students to Read Like Detectives*. In this comprehensive guide, the authors explore the relationship between text, learner, and learning through discussion and rhetorical writing at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Clearly defined strategies will drive discussion-based learning. Examine the hidden dangers of controlling classroom discourse, foster critical literacy through questioning and instructional routines, and encourage students to find meaning and cultivate thinking from expository texts--even the most challenging ones (Amazon Review).

Close Reading of Informational Texts: Assessment-Driven Instruction in Grades 3-8

Guilford Press, 2012
By Sunday Cummins

This essential book provides a roadmap for instruction and assessment of close reading skills in grades 3-8. To engage deeply with informational texts--a key requirement of the Common Core standards--students need to determine what details are important, how they fit together to convey a central idea, and how to synthesize information from multiple sources. They also need to understand the unique demands of different text features and structures. Presenting effective instructional strategies that teachers can tailor to their own classrooms, the book includes lesson plans, vignettes, and examples of student work, plus a study guide with professional learning activities and discussion questions (Amazon review).

Children's Literature...

This month we feature two texts by Eve Bunting. Bunting's texts lend themselves to close reading and text dependent questions.

A Day's Work

By Eve Bunting
ISBN-13: 978-0395845189



Save the Date!

**Summer Literacy
Institute**

**Common Core State
Standards for ELA**

**2-day Institute
sponsored by MDOE
for school teams**

**June 25-26, 2013 in
Presque Isle**

**August 2013 in
Portland and Bangor
(Dates and Locations
TBD)**

**Registration
information available
by March 1, 2013**



Eve Bunting's tender story is about Francisco and his abuelo, grandfather, looking for work as day laborers. Abuelo doesn't speak English, so Francisco joins him as translator. However, Francisco's desire for work leads to a lie, which causes trouble for him and his grandfather. In the end, Francisco learns a powerful lesson. Readers will also get a glimpse into the world of modern immigration and labor (School Library Journal review).

The Wednesday Surprise

By Eve Bunting

ISBN-13: 978-0395547762

A loving story about a proud granddaughter and her successful efforts to teach her grandmother to read. A plug for literacy is just the bonus; the real focus is on the lessons old and young share when they learn to read each other's hearts. A joyful surprise for any day of the week (School Library Journal review).

News from Maine's English Language Arts Team...

Literacy for ME Webinar Series

In an effort to support the ongoing planning work of community literacy teams, the MDOE is providing a series of webinars focused on various aspects of community literacy planning. Three webinars have been provided and the archived versions can be found at: <http://www.maine.gov/doe/literacy-for-me/webinars2012-13.html>. The next webinar in the series is:

**February 28, 2013 from 3:30-4:30
School Age Community Partners and Connections**

https://stateofmaine.adobeconnect.com/_a827390218/pk20222813a/

This webinar will examine foundational literacy learning and practices for the school age years (K-12) as well as community literacy resources that focus on this age span.

For additional information about any of the items in this newsletter or to sign up to receive this e-newsletter, please email Leeann.Larsen@maine.gov

Click here to view back editions of *Literacy Links*

<http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/newsletters/index.html>

The professional development opportunities and materials are listed in *Literacy Links* for informational purposes only and are not necessarily endorsed by the Maine Department of Education.