

Questions to Ask Your Child About the Book They Are Reading

These questions are some suggestions that represent the thinking that would be appropriate for children reading around typical grade level expectations and reading books around those levels. (Your child's teacher likely shared your child's current independent or instructional reading level with you at conferences.) They are not intended to be used as a checklist, but as a menu of some options you might use to discuss a text with your child. Having a conversation around a book is ideal instead of "quizzing" your child. Some questions lend themselves better to certain texts, and they've been noted below when appropriate for fiction or nonfiction.

Typical Kindergarten Readers

Thinking Within the Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do the pictures help you read this?• What is happening in this picture?• What happened in this story? (first, next, last) (fiction)• What did you learn in this book? (nonfiction)
Thinking Beyond the Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What do you think is going to happen next based on what you already know? (pictures, what character says, patterns in text, etc.. Can predict the end or what could happen after the book is over.)• Does this make you think of something in your own life? Another book? Tell me about it.• How do you think this character feels? How can you tell? (fiction)• Where do you think this story takes place? (fiction)• What is the character like? (e.g. funny, kind, brave)• Before reading:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ What do you think you'll learn about? (nonfiction)◦ What do you already know about this topic? (nonfiction)
Thinking About the Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Did you enjoy this book? Why or why not?• Which picture did you think was a good one for this story? Why? (fiction)• Which picture did you think was a good one to teach about this topic? Why? (nonfiction)• How are the ideas in the book related to the title?• Was this title a good one for this book?• Did you like the character? Why or why not? (fiction)• Is this story like real life? Why or why not? (fiction)• What kind of story is this? (i.e. family, friends, or school story)

Typical First Grade Readers

Thinking Within the Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Who are the characters?● What happened in the story? (beginning, middle, end) What was the problem and how did it get solved?● Do the pictures help you understand any of the words, especially any new words?● What other information do you get from the pictures (or graphics)● What important information or facts did you learn? (nonfiction)● Can you tell the most important parts in order (summary)?● Who is talking in this part of the story? (fiction)
Thinking Beyond the Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● What do you think is going to happen next based on what you already know? (pictures, what character says, patterns in text, personal experience, etc.. Can predict the end or what could happen after the book is over.)● Does this make you think of something in your own life? Tell me about it.● Is there another book you've read like this? Tell me about it.● How do you think this character feels? How can you tell? (fiction)● Where do you think this story takes place? (fiction)● What is the character like? (e.g. funny, kind, brave) How can you tell?● How does this connect to what you already know? (nonfiction)● Before reading:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ What do you think you'll learn about? (nonfiction)○ What do you already know about this topic? (nonfiction)
Thinking About the Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Did you enjoy this book? Why or why not?● Which picture did you think was a good one for this story? Why? (fiction)● Which picture did you think was a good one to teach about this topic? Why? (nonfiction)● Was this a good title for this book? Why?● What kind of book is this? (i.e. family, friends, or school story; fiction; nonfiction; informational; etc.)● Did the writer use any funny words? How did they add to the story or action?● Did you like the characters in the book? Why or why not?● What information did the graphic(s) show? How did they help you understand better? (nonfiction)● Could this happen in real life? (fiction)● Does this take place in a kind of place (setting) you know about?

Typical Second Grade Readers

Thinking Within the Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tell the important things that happen in the story in order. (Fiction) (summary)• What was the character's problem and how did it get solved? (Fiction)• Tell the important information in the book. (Nonfiction) (summary)• What does this diagram tell you? How do the labels help you understand the text? Why does the author put captions under the pictures? How does this help you understand the text? (nonfiction)
Thinking Beyond the Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When have you had a similar experience to this character? How was it similar or different? (fiction)• What connection do you see to [another book on the same topic or similar content]?• What do you already know about this setting (i.e. desert, city, etc.)?• What do you think will happen? (based on: character behavior, the genre, narrative structure, personal experiences, readings from other texts, illustrations and graphics, etc.)• What did you learn from the character, problem, or resolution? Or what is the lesson the story teaches? (fiction)• Talk about how the character is feeling or what the character's personality is like. (based on illustrations and text, especially dialogue) (fiction)• How is the setting important to this story (esp. in biographies, books set in the past or geographically different from student's own knowledge)• Why did this character change? (inference) How do you know?
Thinking About the Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What kind (or genre) of book are you reading? (e.g. fiction, nonfiction, informational, how-to, folktale, humorous story, fantasy, mystery, etc.) How do you know?• Did the author use any words to help you tell the order in which it happened?• Does this take place in a place and time (setting) you know about?• Who is telling the story? How do you know? Why do you think the writer chose to write it from that perspective?• Could this story really happen? How do you know?• Did you like this book? Why? What did the author do to make it interesting or uninteresting?• How does the author show the character is _____? (upset, shy, embarrassed, etc.) What evidence do you see?• Does the author use any humor? How does it add to the story?• What information does the author give in text features (such as caption, heading, table of contents, photograph, illustration, etc.)? Why did they include it? (non-fiction)• Why is the title a good one? Why did the author choose this title?

Typical Third Grade Readers

Thinking Within the Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What unfamiliar word(s) did you come across? Can you tell what they mean from the rest of the sentence/text or other clues?• Give a summary of the story (or chapter), including characters, problem and how the problem is solved. (fiction)• Summarize the important information (nonfiction)• What information do the text features help you understand? (captions, graphics, diagrams, charts, photos, etc.) (nonfiction)
Thinking Beyond the Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When have you had a similar experience to this character? How was it similar or different? (fiction)• What connection do you see to [another book on the same topic or similar content]?• What do you think will happen? (based on: character behavior, the genre, narrative structure, personal experiences, readings from other texts, illustrations and graphics, etc.)• What did you learn from the character, problem, or resolution? Or what is the lesson the story teaches? (fiction)• Talk about how the character is feeling or what the character's personality is like. (based on illustrations and text, especially dialogue) (fiction)• Why did this character change? (inference) How do you know?• What was new, interesting, or surprising info?• What new understanding do you have? What events in the story changed your thinking? (fiction)• How is this information different from your previous thinking?
Thinking About the Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What kind (or genre) of book are you reading? (e.g. fiction, nonfiction, informational, how-to, folktale, humorous story, fantasy, mystery, etc.) How do you know?• Who is telling the story? How do you know? Why do you think the writer chose to write it from that perspective?• Why do you think the author wrote this?• Why is the title a good one? Why did the author choose this title?• What information does the author give in text features (such as caption, heading, table of contents, photograph, illustration, etc.)? How does it add to the text? (non-fiction)• Which events or what about the character make this believable? (fiction)• What do you notice about how the author wrote the story? (fiction) or notice about how the author organized the text? (nonfiction)• Did you like this book? Why? What did the author do to make it interesting or uninteresting? (interesting character?)

Typical Fourth Grade Readers

Thinking Within the Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What unfamiliar word(s) did you come across? Can you tell what they mean from the rest of the sentence/text or other clues?• Give a summary of the story (or chapter), including main and supporting characters, problem and how the problem is solved. (fiction)• What is the theme of lesson from the story? (fiction)• Did the characters change in the story? How? (fiction)• Does the story change perspective? Or change to a different time-frame (e.g. flashback) (fiction)• What is the writer's main idea? (or argument-nonfiction)• Summarize the important information (nonfiction)• What information do the text features help you understand? (captions, graphics, diagrams, charts, photos, etc.) (nonfiction)
Thinking Beyond the Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Predict what will happen. What evidence do you have from what you read or personal experience? (based on: character behavior, the genre, narrative structure, personal experiences, readings from other texts, illustrations and graphics, etc.)• What can we learn from this text beyond the facts? What is the writer's message? How can it apply to your own life?• How would you describe the character? How do you know from the text? Why do you think the character is like that or has changed?• How does this connect to another event (from own life, history, current events, or other texts.)• What new understanding do you have? What events in the story changed your thinking? (fiction)• What was new, interesting, or surprising info? How is this information different from your previous thinking?
Thinking About the Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Which events or what about the character make this believable? (fiction)• What do you notice about how the author wrote the story? (fiction) or notice about how the author organized the text? (nonfiction) (structures)• Did you like this book? Why? What did the author do to make it interesting or uninteresting?• What do you think of the character(s)? What could he/she have done differently?• Which events, character actions, or other elements make this believable? (fiction)• How do the graphics or illustrations add to the text?• What kind (or genre) of book are you reading? (e.g. fiction, nonfiction, informational, how-to, folktale, myth, fable, fairy tale, fantasy, mystery, etc.) How do you know?• Who is telling the story? How do you know? Why do you think the writer chose to write it from that perspective?

Typical Fifth Grade Readers

Thinking Within the Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Give an organized summary of the chapter.• Give an organized summary of the book (include characters, problem and solution.) (fiction)• Summarize a section of the text that is important to understanding the character, the plot, or the message. (fiction)• What is the theme of lesson from the story? (fiction)• Did the characters change in the story? How? What evidence did you notice from the text? (fiction)• Does the story change perspective? Or change to a different time-frame? (e.g. flashback) (fiction)• What unfamiliar word(s) did you come across? Can you tell what they mean from the rest of the sentence/text or other clues?• What is the writer's main idea? (or argument-nonfiction)• Summarize the important information in the structure of the text- e.g. cause and effect, chronological sequence, comparison & contrast, question & answer, etc. (nonfiction)• What information do the text features help you understand? (captions, graphics, diagrams, charts, photos, etc.) (nonfiction)
Thinking Beyond the Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the perspective of the story change? How? (fiction)• What can we learn from this text beyond the facts? What is the writer's message? How can it apply to your own life or the world around us today?• Is there a theme about the problem that you might see elsewhere? (around the world, in history, other texts, etc.) Tell me about it.• Does this help you understand another culture's beliefs or customs? How?• What new understanding do you have? What events in the story changed your thinking? (fiction)• What was new or surprising info? How is this different from your previous thinking? Do you have a new way of thinking about it now?• What mood is set (by illustrations or text)?• Does the writer have any bias or specific beliefs you can tell from the text?• Predict what will happen. What evidence do you have from what you read or personal experience? (based on: character behavior, the genre, text structure, personal experiences, readings from other texts, etc.)
Thinking About the Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who is telling the story, and was there a change in perspective? Why do you think the writer chose to write it from that perspective? (fiction)• What kind (or genre) of book are you reading? (e.g. fiction, nonfiction, informational, how-to, folktale, myth, fable, fairy tale, fantasy, mystery, etc.) How do you know?• Did you enjoy this book & why? Was it believable? Why or why not? (fiction) Did the author make the topic interesting? (nonfiction)• What do you think of the character(s)? What could he/she have done differently?• Who are the supporting characters? How are they important or not to the story events?• What structure(s) did the author use? Why did they make this decision?• What tone does the author convey? How can you tell?