



Literacy at Hartford Public High School

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Cues and Questions

from Classroom Instruction that Works
by Robert Marzano, et al.

Questions that Elicit Inferences

Even the best-designed lessons will demand that students “fill in” a great deal of missing information. Questions can greatly aid students in this process. The following groups of questions might help students make inferences about what they are studying.

Things/People:

- What action does this thing/person usually perform?
- What action is being performed on this thing?
- How is this thing usually used?
- What is this thing part of?
- What is the process for making this thing?
- Does this thing have a particular taste, feel, smell, sound? What is it?
- Does this thing have a particular color, number (or quantity), location, or dimensionality? What is it?
- How is this thing usually sold?
- Does this thing have a particular value?
- What this thing is used, does it present a danger to other things or people? What is it?

Actions:

- What thing or person usually performs this action?
- What effect does this action have on the taste, feels, sound, or look of this thing?
- How does this action typically change the emotional state of a thing or period?
- How is the value of a thing changed by this action? How does this action change the size or shape of a thing?

Events:

- What people are usually involved in this event?

- During what season or time of year does this event usually take place?
- On what day of the week does this event usually take place?
- At what time of day does this event usually take place?
- Where does this event usually take place?
- At what point in history did this event take place?
- What equipment is typically used in this event?
- How long does this event usually take?

States of Being:

- What is the basic process involved in reaching this state?
- What are the changes that occur when something reaches this state?

To use these questions, a teacher would identify things, people, actions, events, and states in information the students were learning and then ask questions about these identified elements. For example,

After her students finished an article about different eating disorders, Mrs. Conzone presented them with some inferential questions to help clarify issues in the article.

1. What actions do these individuals perform?
2. What actions are usually performed on these individuals?

Here are some student responses:

1. *What actions do these individuals perform?*
I thought people with eating disorders were those people who did not eat, but is the definition a broader one? In other words, is a person who overeats considered one with an eating disorder?
2. *What actions are usually performed on these individuals?* It seems that each one of the disorder can stem from a different kind of problem, so the diagnosis and prescription has to be very individualized.