



Literacy at Hartford Public High School

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Orientation Questions

from What Smart Kids Know, Adams

Besides the expert questions, a student must be sure to answer another set of questions—the orientation questions. These help a student to become oriented to, or familiar with, a subject. They also happen to be popular test questions.

They include the following:

- What's the definition of this?
- What's an example of this?
- What are the different types of this?
- What is this related to?
- What can this be compared with?

Unlike the expert questions which are specific, these orientation questions are general and do not vary from subject to subject. A student uses them by substituting the topic being studied for the word *this*.

- What the definition of a mineral?
- What are the different types of igneous rocks?
- What is erosion related to?

The expert and orientation questions allow the student to get to the meat of the subject and analyze it just like an expert. Whatever other questions students may ask as they read, they should make sure to ask, and try to answer, them.

As a teacher, it is important to keep these key questions in the forefront of a student's mind. Teachers should refer to them often, using them to review what has been covered and to look ahead to what is coming next.

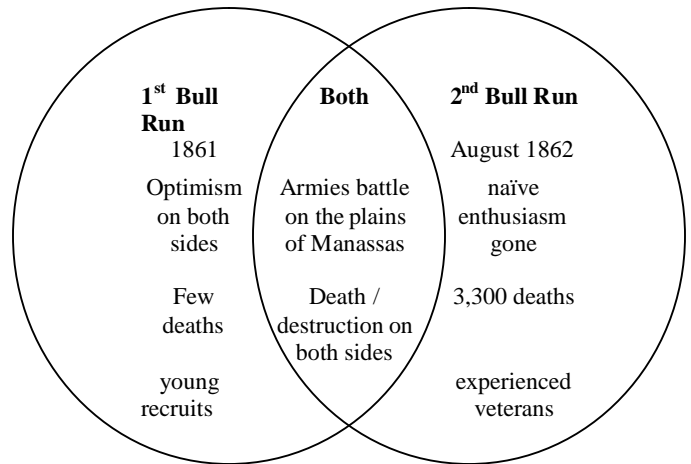
Comparison / Contrast Order

from Reader's Handbook, Great Source

When a paragraph is organized to compare and contrast, the writer shows how two or more things are alike or how they are different. In the following paragraph, the author compares the Second Battle of Bull Run to the first battle.

In August 1862, Union and Confederate armies converged for a second time on the plains of Manassas. [*Main idea stated clearly*] The naïve enthusiasm that preceded the earlier encounter was gone. [*This is the first detail.*] War was not the holiday outing or grand adventure envisioned by the young recruits in 1861. [*This was the second detail.*] The contending forces, now made up of seasoned veterans, knew well the reality of war. [*This was the third detail.*] The Second Battle of Bull Run, covering three days, produced far greater carnage—3,300 killed—and brought the Confederacy to the height of its power. [*This was the fourth detail.*] Still, the battle did not weaken Northern resolve.

A Venn diagram is a useful graphic organizer when keeping track of important details in a comparison / contrast paragraph.



What Makes a Good Question?

from What Smart Kids Know, Adams

A good question tends to have more than one answer. Here are four powerful questions that will help students to understand what they have read. The specific questions between parentheses indicate how the general questions might apply to earth science.

1. **So what?** How is this significant? What does it tell us about other things? (What does the fact that fossils are found in sedimentary rock tell us?)
2. **Says who?** Is this a fact or someone's opinion? How can this be verified? Does this depend on a particular point of view? (How do we know that basalt lies underneath the ocean floor?)
3. **What if...?** What would happen if...? What if I ...? (What would happen if magma stopped rising to the surface?)
4. **What does this remind me of?** Where have I seen something like this before? What does that suggest about this? (What does the rock cycle remind me of?)

As your students work in their texts, encourage them to use these four "good" questions to help them understand what they've read and to think critically.