Reading with meaning

Questions that help children explain their thinking

A parent and teacher guide | Ages 7-11 | Years 3-6

Use alongside a story, information text or poem. Choose one reading skill and two or three questions that match the section you have shared.

A SIMPLE READING ROUTINE

1. **Read a short section**
   Read aloud, share the reading or let the child listen.

2. **Ask one clear question**
   Give thinking time. Return to the text together.

3. **Say it, then write it**
   Rehearse aloud. Write or type the answer in a full sentence.

HELP CHILDREN SHOW THEIR THINKING

"I think ... because the text says ..."
Model one answer, then invite their own. For a find-and-copy question, copy only the requested words.

SIX FOCUSES INSIDE

Retrieval | Inference | Prediction | Vocabulary

Author's choices | Summarising and sequencing

Offer oral answers, read-aloud support, typing or a scribe when helpful. Build challenge through thinking, not extra copying.

01 Retrieval

Find what the text tells you.

Locate information that is stated directly. Read the question, then return to the relevant sentence.

READ THIS ORIGINAL EXAMPLE

On Thursday, Asha carried two seed trays into the greenhouse before lunch.

ASK

When did Asha take the seed trays into the greenhouse?

ONE POSSIBLE ANSWER

Asha took the seed trays into the greenhouse on Thursday, before lunch.

TRY WITH YOUR OWN TEXT

- Which two items does the character take? Find the sentence that tells you.
- Where does the event happen? Point to the words that name the place.
- What happens before the character leaves? Use the stated details.

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Find two stated facts in different paragraphs that explain how the place has changed. Give a reference for each.

Scan for a name, place or time word. Read the whole sentence before answering.

02 Inference

Read the clues. Explain your thinking.

Combine clues in the text with what you know. An inference needs evidence, and more than one answer may fit.

READ THIS ORIGINAL EXAMPLE

Asha stopped beside the stage. She twisted her sleeve and asked, "Do I really have to go on first?"

ASK

How is Asha likely to feel about going on stage? What supports your view?

ONE POSSIBLE ANSWER

Asha seems nervous because she twists her sleeve and questions whether she must go on first.

TRY WITH YOUR OWN TEXT

- How does the character feel at this moment? Use an action or line of speech.
- What does the character's decision suggest about what matters to them?
- Why might the character hide the object? Connect your idea to a clue.

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Could the same behaviour suggest a different feeling? Compare two interpretations and explain which has stronger evidence.

Say: "I think ... because ..." Name the feeling, then explain the clue.

03 Prediction

Use what you know to look ahead.

Suggest a likely next event using clues already given. Change your prediction if new evidence points elsewhere.

READ THIS ORIGINAL EXAMPLE

Asha reached for the greenhouse latch. Inside, a seed tray balanced on the edge of a wobbly shelf.

ASK

What might happen when Asha opens the door? Which detail makes this likely?

ONE POSSIBLE ANSWER

The seed tray might fall when Asha opens the door because it is already balanced on an unstable shelf.

TRY WITH YOUR OWN TEXT

- What might the character do next? Use something they have already done.
- Which earlier detail suggests a problem could happen soon?
- Has the new information changed your prediction? Explain how.

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Offer two plausible next events. Compare the clues and explain which outcome is more likely.

Say: "I predict ... because the text tells us ..." A sensible prediction is not a certainty.

04 Vocabulary

Work out what a word means here.

Use nearby words and the whole sentence to explore an unfamiliar word. Check that your meaning fits the context.

READ THIS ORIGINAL EXAMPLE

Asha hesitated at the greenhouse door. Her hand hovered over the latch before she finally stepped inside.

ASK

What does "hesitated" mean here? Which detail helps you work it out?

ONE POSSIBLE ANSWER

"Hesitated" means paused because she was unsure. Her hand hovers over the latch before she goes inside.

TRY WITH YOUR OWN TEXT

- Which nearby words help you work out the unfamiliar word?
- What could replace the word without changing this sentence's meaning?
- Find a word that suggests the character moves carefully. Explain your choice.

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Compare two possible replacements for a word. Which keeps the original meaning and mood most closely? Explain why.

Try your meaning in the sentence. Read it aloud, then check with a dictionary if needed.

05 Author's choices

Notice the words. Explain their effect.

Explore why the writer chose particular words or details. Explain what they help the reader picture, feel or expect.

READ THIS ORIGINAL EXAMPLE

Beyond the greenhouse, the shed crouched in the shadows. A slow scratching sound came from behind its door.

ASK

How does "crouched in the shadows" make the shed seem unsettling?

ONE POSSIBLE ANSWER

"Crouched" makes the shed seem like a living thing hiding in the dark, so the reader may expect danger.

TRY WITH YOUR OWN TEXT

- Which word makes the setting feel welcoming or threatening? Explain how.
- What does the comparison help you picture? Link it to the scene.
- What does the writer reveal or hold back here? How does this affect you?

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Compare the opening and ending of a paragraph. How does the writer build tension through word choice or structure?

Go beyond "It is interesting." Say what the reader pictures, feels or starts to expect.

06 Summarise & sequence

Keep the main points in order.

Summarising means selecting the most important ideas. Sequencing means putting events in the order they happen.

READ THIS ORIGINAL EXAMPLE

Asha found a cracked tray. She moved the seedlings into pots, swept up the soil and told the gardener what had happened.

ASK

Summarise how Asha dealt with the damaged tray, in the correct order.

ONE POSSIBLE ANSWER

Asha saved the seedlings by repotting them, cleared up the soil and then reported the damage to the gardener.

TRY WITH YOUR OWN TEXT

- Which three events are essential to understanding this section?
- What happened first, next and last? Check the order in the text.
- What is the main idea of this paragraph? Leave out minor details.

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Summarise a chapter in two sentences. Include the main problem and response, and explain why one small detail can be left out.

Use "First ... Next ... Finally ..." For information texts, group the key facts instead.

The question mat

Choose a prompt that fits the text. Name the character, event or paragraph so the question is clear.

01 RETRIEVAL

What does the text tell you?

Which detail tells you where or when this happens?

The text tells me ...

02 INFERENCE

What do the clues suggest?

How does the character feel here? Explain using a clue.

I think ... because ...

03 PREDICTION

What is likely to happen next?

Which earlier detail supports your prediction?

I predict ... because ...

04 VOCABULARY

What does this word mean here?

Which nearby words help you work it out?

Here, the word means ...

05 AUTHOR'S CHOICES

Why might the writer choose this?

How does a word or phrase affect the reader?

The phrase makes ... seem ...

06 SUMMARY & ORDER

What matters most?

What are the key events or ideas? Check their order.

The main points are ...

A STRONG ANSWER

Answer the question directly. Add a relevant clue and explain it when asked. Use full sentences, except for find-and-copy tasks.