

MIDDLE SCHOOL MATTERS

INSTITUTE



Model Lesson

Learning How to Generate Level 3 Questions



Middle School Matters Institute

An initiative of the George W. Bush Institute in partnership with
The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk



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Note

This work is based on the recommendations in Denton, C., Vaughn, S., Wexler, J., Bryan, D., & Reed, D. (2012). *Effective instruction for middle school students with reading difficulties: The reading teacher's sourcebook*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.

TEACHER MATERIALS

MODEL LESSON PLAN

Learning How to Generate Level 3 Questions

Objective: Students will increase inferential comprehension of text by generating Level 3, “making connections,” questions.

MSM Field Guide

Alignment: Reading and Reading Interventions, Principle 4, Practice 1

Prerequisite Knowledge and Skills:

- Level 1, “right there,” questions
- Level 2, “putting it together,” questions
- Applicable content knowledge

Materials:

For teachers:

- Model lesson plan
- Level 3 Questions Planning Sheet

For students:

- Text or passage (“Democracy in Ancient Greece” provided as an example)
 - Leveled question cue cards (each type of card copied two-sided, cut out, and hole-punched; one set per student placed on a metal ring):
 - Level 1—Right There cards (copied on red paper)
 - Level 2—Putting It Together cards (copied on white paper)
 - Level 3—Making Connections cards (copied on blue paper)
 - Student Log for Self-Generated Questions (one per student)
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Preparation

1. Read the text you will use to model the strategy. Ask yourself, “What is the most important idea that I want students to understand and remember from this text?” Identify key vocabulary words. Record this information on the Level 3 Questions Planning Sheet.
2. Identify Level 3 questions. Record your questions on the Level 3 Questions Planning Sheet or directly on the text to use as you model.

Note: Level 3 questions usually require the student to read most of the text. There may not be time for more than one or two Level 3 questions for each text. Consider comparing and contrasting two texts on the same topic.

CRITERIA FOR LEVEL 3 QUESTIONS—MAKING CONNECTIONS

- Questions cannot be answered by using the text alone.
- Answers require you to think about what you just read, what you already know, and how they fit together.

Prior Skills Review and Purpose of the Lesson

1. Review the characteristics of Level 1 and Level 2 questions.
2. Tell students that they will learn how to ask themselves questions that can be answered by thinking about how what they just read and what they already know fit together.

EXAMPLE TEACHER TALK

“Think back to when we worked on generating Level 1 questions, which we also call ‘right there’ questions. Let’s review the steps of writing Level 1 questions after reading a section of text.

1. Find an important fact.
2. Write a question that uses *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, or *how*.
3. Answer the question by using the text word-for-word. You should be able to point to the answer with your finger.

“Let’s also review Level 2 questions, or ‘putting it together’ questions. Look at the Level 2 question cue card. Writing a Level 2 question is similar to writing a Level 1 question. After we read the text, we pause to identify important information, just like with Level 1. The only difference is that the answers require us to look in more than one place in the text. The answer to this type of question could be one sentence, but usually, it is two or more sentences.

“Today we will learn about Level 3 questions, which will help us comprehend what we read and remember the important information.”

Modeling

1. Distribute the leveled question cue cards.
2. Introduce the Level 3 question type.

EXAMPLE TEACHER TALK

"You have done a great job generating Level 1 and Level 2 questions. Today we will learn how to write the final type of question—Level 3, or 'making connections' questions.

"Look at the Level 3 question cue card. Level 3 questions cannot be answered by using the text alone. They require you to think about what you just read, what you already know, and how they fit together. Level 3 questions might require you to make an inference or a judgment. The answers are usually longer than the answers to Level 1 or Level 2 questions. You will see why when we practice in just a moment. The purpose of asking and answering Level 3 questions is to help you understand what you read at a deeper level and remember the important information about what you read.

"Let's read a section from this passage, and I'll show you how it works."

3. Introduce a short, easy-to-comprehend passage from your content area; preteach difficult vocabulary words; read the passage with students; and model generating Level 3 questions.

Optional: Have students generate some Level 1 and Level 2 questions after reading before moving on to modeling Level 3 questions.

EXAMPLE TEACHER TALK

This example uses the provided expository text: "Democracy in Ancient Greece." Read the first section of the text before beginning the example below.

"Today we will learn about the ancient Greek system of democracy and how it was similar to and different from the system of government in the United States today.

"I need to write a Level 3, 'making connections,' question about our text. I know that the answers to this type of question require me to combine information in what I just read with what I already know about the topic. This text was all about democracy in Athens. I know we also have democracy here in the United States today, but I noted some pretty big differences in the text between our democracy and that of ancient Greece. I will write a question about that.

"I see on my question card that I have a question stem about differences. I will write my question on the Student Log for Self-Generated Questions: 'How was Athenian democracy different from democracy in the United States today?'

"Let's think about the answer. I know that I have to combine what I read with what I already know. Students, with your partner, find and underline three important facts in the text about Athenian democracy."

Provide time for students to discuss. Then elicit responses from students.

"I see that every citizen was required to participate and vote. Also, only men who were not slaves could vote. How is this different from democracy in the United States today?"

Discuss student responses.

“To answer my question, I will combine what I learned about Athens with what I already know about the United States. I also will use the question to start my answer. Watch me.”

Write and display the following answer.

“Athenian democracy was different from democracy in the United States today because every citizen was required to participate and vote, and citizens were only free men. In the United States today, men and women can vote and voting is not mandatory.”

“I know this because I read about Athens in the text and thought about what I know about U.S. government.”

Highlight or underline the sentences in the text.

- If students have difficulty writing Level 3 questions, have them first recognize Level 3 questions that you’ve written.

Guided Practice

- Practice creating and answering Level 3 questions. Remind students to look at their question cue cards to remember this question type. Students may record their questions on the Student Log for Self-Generated Questions.

Note: As a logical follow-up to the last question, students can write and answer a question about the similarities between the Athenian democracy and current U.S. democracy after reading the whole text.

- Provide more guided practice with the whole class or in small groups. Some students may need additional guided practice over several days to master the process of generating Level 3 questions.

Sample Questions for “Democracy in Ancient Greece”

Level 1:

- Question: In ancient Greece, who was considered a citizen?
- Answer: Citizens were only free, wealthy men who were not foreigners.

Level 2:

- Question: How was life different for women in ancient Greece, and did their rights expand under Solon’s reforms?
- Answer: Women were not citizens, couldn’t vote, were rarely allowed in public, and were restricted in their own homes. Solon expanded government participation to all free men, but women could still not participate.

Level 3:

- Question: How was Athenian democracy after Cleisthenes similar to the democracy in the United States today?
- Answer: Every citizen had equal rights. Also, juries decided court cases.

Independent Practice

1. Using a different brief selection, have students work in pairs to generate “making connections” questions about the selection. Students may continue to use their cue cards and should record their questions on the Student Log for Self-Generated Questions. Students should also record their answers to the questions along with the evidence supporting each answer (e.g., page number).
2. Circulate through the room and provide feedback and scaffolding as needed. Be prepared to model again if necessary. Ask pairs to share their “making connections” questions and to explain where in the text the answer to each question can be found.

Ongoing Use of the Strategy

Each time students read an unfamiliar passage, preview the passage with them, preteaching important vocabulary. Then, have students generate Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3 questions in pairs or small groups. Circulate through the room to monitor responses and provide feedback.

Once students become skilled at generating all three levels of questions, turn the process over to them but continue to preteach important vocabulary and to remind students to preview text and generate questions. Occasionally, return to question generation in pairs so that you can monitor the process.

Monitor Student Learning

Assess students frequently to ensure correct use of the strategy and use this information to inform your teaching.

- Ask students to share their Level 1, 2, and 3 questions with the class. Provide feedback and scaffolding to improve students’ question generation.
- Circulate throughout the classroom to monitor student work during guided and independent practice. Provide feedback and scaffolding as needed.
- Ask questions that require students to provide evidence from the text that supports answers to their Level 1 and Level 2 questions and to explain how they combined information in the text with background knowledge to answer their Level 3 questions. (This information should also be recorded on the Student Log.)
- Review and/or grade completed Student Logs. Note common errors on question generation and answers to questions. Model and reteach the strategy with the entire class, small groups, or individual students as needed.

When students learn to ask questions about what they read, they understand and learn more from text. Ultimately, this strategy increases students’ content area learning and may increase their performance on assessments of content area knowledge.

LEVEL 3 QUESTION PLANNING SHEET

1. Identify appropriate text for modeling and guided practice of Level 3 questions.

The text should be at students’ independent reading level, which may require finding a passage below your grade level. You will use the text only to introduce the strategy to the students—text that is too difficult will distract students from the goal of understanding what a Level 3 question is, how to generate a Level 3 question, and how to locate the answer in the text.

Reading Passage: _____

2. Preview the text and make note of the following information, which will help you introduce the text to students and guide students to generate Level 3 questions.

Important ideas you want students to understand and remember	
Key concepts	
Vocabulary to preteach	
Connections to prior learning	

3. Develop your model Level 3 questions.



Ideas for Further Differentiation

- Have students highlight a sentence and then rewrite it in the form of a question.
- Provide students with an answer and ask them to write the question (like Jeopardy!).

STUDENT MATERIALS

Democracy in Ancient Greece

The men with red paint on them were in trouble.

Because these men had not fulfilled their duties as citizens of Athens, they were marked with red paint as a punishment. They were ridiculed and scorned by their fellow citizens. What was their crime? They failed to attend the assembly meeting.

In Athenian democracy, every citizen was required to participate in governmental meetings or suffer punishment. This practice is very different from present-day democratic governments, in which citizens can choose whether to participate.

But not everyone in Athens was a citizen. Only free, wealthy men who were not foreigners enjoyed the rights and responsibility of citizenship. Only about 20% of the residents of Athens were citizens. Women were not citizens, so they could not vote or have any input in politics. In fact, they were rarely permitted in public and were even restricted as to where they could go in their own homes.

Nevertheless, the idea of democratic government is one of the most important contributions of the ancient Greeks to modern-day government.

An Important Contribution

In English, the word *solon* means “a wise and skillful lawgiver.” This term comes from the Athenian statesman Solon. Solon reformed the government by ending the policy that only wealthy, land-owning men could participate in government. Solon believed that all free men, rich or poor, should be able to have a say in the government. Poor citizens gained the right to vote and to sit in the assembly. But again, women, slaves, and foreigners were denied these rights.

Later, a statesman named Cleisthenes expanded Athenian democracy by giving every citizen equal rights. He also created a legislative body. Cleisthenes wanted the legislative body to be similar to the general population, so he decided that they should be picked at random.

The citizens of Athens usually gathered in the agora when there was an assembly meeting. The agora, a feature in the middle of every major Greek city-state, was a large open space that contained a marketplace and government buildings. Citizens mingled and discussed the issues of the day in the agora before gathering for the assembly meeting.

During the meeting, citizens voiced their opinions and cast votes. It was in these meetings that people could be marked with red paint for not fulfilling their civic duty.

Court hearings were held in the agora. The juries in court cases were much larger than juries in the United States. Some juries in Athens had hundreds or thousands of men! Athenian juries were so large because Athenians wanted their juries to reflect the general population. There were no lawyers. Each citizen was expected to make his own case or defend himself.

Athenian democracy depended on every citizen fulfilling his role. All citizens were expected to vote, but they were also expected to serve in the government if necessary. In Athens, the people governed and the majority ruled. All citizens had equal rights and powers.

In a city-state as small as Athens, a pure democracy with each individual participating was possible. As states grew larger and their populations increased, the notion of electing representatives to make decisions for the public became more practical. However, the idea that every citizen has a voice that should be heard originated in ancient Athens.

Level 1—Right There

- Questions can be answered in one word or one sentence.
- Answers can be found word-for-word in the text.

➤ Who? ➤ Where?
➤ What? ➤ Why?
➤ When? ➤ How?

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Level 1—Examples

- What is the capital of Texas?
- Who was Jane Long?
- Where did the Mexican War begin?

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Level 2—Putting It Together

- Questions can be answered by looking in the text.
- Answers require one or more sentences.
- To answer the questions, you have to look in more than one place and put information together.

➤ Who? ➤ Where?
➤ What? ➤ Why?
➤ When? ➤ How?

Level 2—Putting It Together

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- Answers require one or more sentences.
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- Describe the events leading to Texas joining the United States.
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Level 3—Making Connections

- Questions cannot be answered by using text alone.
- Answers require you to think about what you just read, what you already know, and how they fit together.
- How is ___ like (similar to) ___ ?
- How is ___ different from ___ ?
- How is ___ related to ___ ?

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- How is the Texas Declaration of Independence similar to the United States Declaration of Independence?
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STUDENT LOG FOR SELF-GENERATED QUESTIONS

LEVEL _____	QUESTION 1:		
	Answer:	Provide the evidence! How do you know that?	Page number(s)
LEVEL _____	QUESTION 2:		
	Answer:	Provide the evidence! How do you know that?	Page number(s)
LEVEL _____	QUESTION 3:		
	Answer:	Provide the evidence! How do you know that?	Page number(s)