Close Reading & Text-Dependent Questions

Fall River Public Schools Educators Conference
The Common Core Requires Three Shifts in Literacy

1. Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction

2. Reading, writing and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational

3. Regular practice with complex text and its academic language
Informational Text Takes Center Stage.....

*Nonfiction*.... 75:25 of all reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

In other words, literacy happens across all subject areas and students build their academic knowledge through challenging text.
Shift # 2: Text Dependent Questions

1. Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction

2. Reading, writing and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational

3. Regular practice with complex text and its academic language
More instructional time spent outside the text means less time inside the text.

Departing from the text in classroom discussion privileges only those who already have experience with the topic.

It is easier to talk about our experiences than to analyze the text—especially for students reluctant to engage with reading.

Common Core = College and Career Readiness Standards.
Text-Dependent Questions are not...

- Low-level, literal, or recall questions
- Focused on comprehension strategies
- Just questions...
Text-Dependent Questions...

- Can *only* be answered with evidence from the text.
- Can be literal (checking for understanding), but must also involve analysis, synthesis, evaluation.
- Focus on word, sentence, and paragraph, as well as larger ideas, themes, or events.
- Focus on difficult portions of text in order to enhance reading proficiency.
- Can also include prompts for writing and discussion questions.
### Non-Examples and Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not Text-Dependent</th>
<th>Text-Dependent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In “Casey at the Bat,” Casey strikes out. Describe a time when you failed at something.</td>
<td>What makes Casey’s experiences at bat humorous?</td>
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<td>In “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” Dr. King discusses nonviolent protest. Discuss, in writing, a time when you wanted to fight against something that you felt was unfair.</td>
<td>What can you infer from King’s letter about the letter that he received?</td>
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<td>In “The Gettysburg Address” Lincoln says the nation is dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Why is equality an important value to promote?</td>
<td>“The Gettysburg Address” mentions the year 1776. According to Lincoln’s speech, why is this year significant to the events described in the speech?</td>
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Three Types of Text-Dependent Questions

When you're writing or reviewing a set of questions, consider the following three categories:

- Questions that assess themes and central ideas
- Questions that assess knowledge of vocabulary
- Questions that assess syntax and structure
Core Understanding and Key Ideas

- Reverse-engineered or backwards-designed
- Crucial for creating an overarching set of successful questions
- Critical for creating an appropriate culminating assignment
Grade 7 PARCC Response

**Item:**

- **Session 1:**
  - Students begin by reading an anchor text that introduces the topic. Items ask students to gather key details about the passage to support their understanding.
  - Then, they write a summary or short analysis of the piece.

- **Session 2:**
  - Students read two additional sources (may include a multimedia text) and answer a few questions about each text to learn more about the topic so they are ready to write the final essay and to show their reading comprehension.
  - Finally, students mirror the research process by synthesizing their understandings into an analytic essay using textual evidence from several of the sources.
You have read three texts describing Amelia Earhart. All three include the claim that Earhart was a brave, courageous person. The three texts are:

- “Biography of Amelia Earhart”
- “Earhart's Final Resting Place Believed Found”
- “Amelia Earhart’s Life and Disappearance”

Consider the argument each author uses to demonstrate Earhart’s bravery.

*Write an essay that analyzes the strength of the arguments about Earhart’s bravery in at least two of the texts. Remember to use textual evidence to support your ideas.*
Based on the information in the text “Biography of Amelia Earhart,” write an essay that summarizes and explains the challenges Earhart faced throughout her life. Remember to use textual evidence to support your ideas.
Vocabulary

Which words should be taught?

- Essential to understanding text
- Likely to appear in future reading

Which words should get more time and attention?

- More abstract words (as opposed to concrete words)
  - persist vs. checkpoint
  - noticed vs. accident
- Words which are part of semantic word family
  - secure, securely, security, secured
Grade 6 PARCC Item - Vocabulary

Part A
What does the word “regal” mean as it is used in the passage?
   a. generous
   b. threatening
   c. kingly*
   d. uninterested

Part B
Which of the phrases from the passage best helps the reader understand the meaning of “regal?”
   a. “wagging their tales as they awoke”
   b. “the wolves, who were shy”
   c. “their sounds and movements expressed goodwill”
   d. “with his head high and his chest out”*
Grade 6 PARCC Item:

- Reflects a key shift, namely focusing on the words that matter most, not obscure vocabulary, but the *academic language* that pervades complex texts.

- Rewards *careful, close reading* rather than requiring the students to race through the passage to determine the meaning of an academic word by showing the context within the passage that helped them determine the meaning of the word.
Syntax and Text Dependent Questions

- Syntax can predict student performance as much as vocabulary does.
- Questions and tasks addressing syntax are powerful.

*Example:*
- Who are the members of the wolf pack? How many wolves are in the pack? To answer this, pay close attention to the use of *commas and semi-colons* in the last paragraph on pg. 377. The semi-colons separate or list each member in the pack.
Structure and Text-Dependent Questions

Text-dependent questions can be crafted to point students’ attention to features of text that enhance understanding (such as how section headers and captions lead to greater clarity or provide hints regarding what is most important in informational text, or how illustrations add to a narrative).
Structure and Text Dependent Questions

Examples:

- “Look at the illustrations on page 31. Why did the illustrator include details like the power outlets in the walls?”

- “Dillard is careful to place opposing descriptions of the natural and man-made side-by-side. How does this juxtaposition fit with or challenge what we have already read? Why might she have chosen this point in the text for these descriptions?”
Reading Strategies and Text-Dependent Questions

- Text-dependent questions generally call on students to employ reading strategies.
- Strategies are no longer taught in isolation.
- The text and readers’ need to comprehend it should determine what strategies are activated - not the other way around.
Culminating Tasks

- Should relate to core understanding and key ideas.
- A coherent sequence of text dependent questions will scaffold students toward successfully completing the culminating task.

**Example:**

“The title of this selection is ‘Because of Winn-Dixie.’ Using your answers from the questions above and class discussion, explain why this is an appropriate title for the selection. Be sure to clearly cite evidence from the text for each part of your answer.”

“Officer Buckle’s final safety tip is 'ALWAYS STICK WITH YOUR BUDDY.' How did he and Gloria each learn this lesson for themselves throughout the story?”
Close, analytic reading stresses engaging with a text of sufficient complexity directly and examining its meaning thoroughly and methodically, encouraging students to read and reread deliberately. Directing student attention on the text itself empowers students to understand the central ideas and key supporting details. It also enables students to reflect on the meanings of individual words and sentences; the order in which sentences unfold; and the development of ideas over the course of the text, which ultimately leads students to arrive at an understanding of the text as a whole. Close, analytic reading entails the careful gathering of observations about a text and careful consideration about what those observations taken together add up to from the smallest linguistic matters to larger issues of overall understanding and judgment. (p. 6, PARCC Model Content Frameworks for ELA/Literacy)
Close Analytic Reading

- Requires prompting students with questions to unpack unique complexity of any text so students learn to read complex text independently and proficiently.
- Virtually every standard is activated during the course of every close analytic reading exemplar through the use of text dependent questions.
- Text dependent questions require text-based answers – evidence.
Close Reading

“Marries” the 3 Instructional Shifts:

1. Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction
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Close Reading

Builds literacy across the content areas while preparing our students for college and career success.
Final Thoughts

- There is no one right way to have students work with text dependent questions.
- Providing for the differing needs of students means providing and scaffolding supports differentially - not asking easier questions or substituting simpler text.
- Listening and speaking should be built into any sequence of activities along with reading and writing:
  - “Re-read it, think it, talk it, write it”
- The Common Core require ALL students to read and engage with grade appropriate complex text regularly. This requires new ways of working in our classrooms.