

ACHIEVE  
THE CORE

# Understanding Text-Dependent Questions

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# The CCSS Requires Three Shifts in ELA/Literacy

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1. Regular practice with **complex text** and **academic language**
2. Reading, writing and speaking grounded in **evidence from text**, both literary and instructional
3. **Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction**

## Shift # 2: Text-Dependent Questions

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1. Regular practice with complex text and its academic language
2. Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational
3. Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction

## **Time – In and Out of the Text**

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- 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.
- The CCSS are College and Career Readiness Standards.

## **Text-Dependent Questions are not...**

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

## Text-Dependent Questions...

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- 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.

## Three Types of Text-Dependent Questions

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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

# Non-Examples and Examples

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## Not Text-Dependent

In “Casey at the Bat,” Casey strikes out. Describe a time when you failed at something.

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.

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?

## Text-Dependent

What makes Casey’s experiences at bat humorous?

What can you infer from King’s letter about the letter that he received?

“The Gettysburg Address” mentions the year 1776. According to Lincoln’s speech, why is this year significant to the events described in the speech?



# Creating Text-Dependent Questions

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- Step One:** Identify the core understandings and key ideas of the text.
- Step Two:** Start small to build confidence.
- Step Three:** Target vocabulary and text structure.
- Step Four:** Tackle tough sections head-on.
- Step Five:** Create coherent sequences of text-dependent questions.
- Step Six:** Identify the standards that are being addressed.
- Step Seven:** Create the culminating assessment.

# Core Understanding and Key Ideas

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

# Core Understanding and Key Ideas: *Example*

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## Core Understanding and Key Idea:

Two people of very different ages may still have much in common and become friends.

## Synopsis:

Opal has just moved to a new town in a new state and has no friends yet. Through a series of comic mishaps inadvertently started by her very special dog, Winn-Dixie, Opal meets Miss Franny, the town librarian. Opal realizes they have much in common and a friendship is ignited.

# Vocabulary

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## 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

## Vocabulary and Text Dependent Questions

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### From “Hot and Cold Summer” - 5th grade fictional text

- “To *avoid* someone means to keep away from them so that you don’t have to see them and they don’t have to see you. How did the boys avoid meeting Bolivia at first?” (pg. 23)
- Re-read the last two paragraphs on page 39. Rory had a “strong *suspicion*”. What is a *suspicion*? What details in the story made Rory suspicious of Bolivia?

## Syntax and Text Dependent Questions

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- 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

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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

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## *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

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- 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.

Bands	11-CCR	9-10	6-8	4-5	2-3	K-1
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## Standard One

**Increased Ability to Use Text Evidence**



**Standards Two through Nine**

## Standard Ten

**Increasing Range and Complexity**

Bands	11-CCR	9-10	6-8 4-5	2-3	K-1
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## Culminating Tasks

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- 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?”

## Final Thoughts

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- 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 CCSS require ALL students to read and engage with grade appropriate complex text regularly. This requires new ways of working in our classrooms.