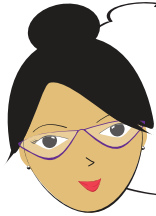


How to Model Question Writing in English Language Arts



Students, I will read this short story and stop at three different points to write a specific question that can be answered, word-for-word, with information from the text. My questions should be about something important in the text. Watch how I do this.

Examples of Specific Questions

Student(s): Ms. Estrada

Class and Period: English, Fourth Period Name of Text: Thank You, M'am

Question	Answer	Text Evidence
What does the boy try to do to the woman?	The boy tries to steal her purse.	Page 1, paragraph 1
What would Mrs. Jones teach the boy if he were her son?	The woman says she would teach the boy "right from wrong."	Page 2, paragraph 1
Why did Roger try to take Mrs. Jones' purse?	Roger tried to take Mrs. Jones' purse because he wanted to buy blue suede shoes.	Page 3, paragraph 1
What does Mrs. Jones tell Roger to never do again?	Mrs. Jones tells Roger to never take her pocketbook or anyone else's pocketbook again.	Page 4, paragraph 3



I'm at my first stopping point, and one important thing that has happened so far is a boy tried to steal a woman's purse. I wrote a question about that and then answered it.



Next, I wrote a question about Mrs. Jones saying she would teach the boy "right from wrong." That seems important because I expected her to take him to jail, but instead, she was kind to him.



Now we've come to the end of the story. There were a lot of important parts in this section, but I focused on Mrs. Jones giving Roger advice before he left. I wrote a question about that and then answered it.

Examples of Wide Questions

Question	Answer	Text Evidence
How does Mrs. Jones show Roger kindness?	Mrs. Jones shows Roger kindness by helping him wash his face, giving him dinner, giving him \$10 to buy the shoes, and giving him advice.	Page 2, paragraphs 8 and 9; page 4, paragraphs 1-3
How were Mrs. Jones' actions in the story different from what you expected?	I expected Mrs. Jones to take Roger to jail because she caught him and wouldn't turn him loose. Instead, Mrs. Jones was kind and tried to take care of him.	Page 1, paragraphs 1-3
Describe what Mrs. Jones wanted Roger to learn from her.	I think Mrs. Jones wanted Roger to learn right from wrong and to never steal again.	Page 2, paragraph 1; page 3, paragraphs 5-8; page 4, paragraphs 3 and 5
<div>Students can use extra blanks on the learning log to write questions generated by other students and then answer those questions using the text.</div>		



To write a wide question, I thought about an important idea, or theme, throughout the entire story. One important idea is how Mrs. Jones is kind to Roger, even though she should have been mad at him for trying to steal her purse. She shows him kindness in multiple places in the text. To answer that question, I had to look through the story to find examples of how she showed him kindness.



Here is another example of a wide question that can be answered using information in multiple places in the story and my prior knowledge. I would expect Mrs. Jones to get really angry with Roger—I would feel angry if someone tried to steal my things. However, instead of turning him in to the police, she showed him kindness several different ways.



Another important idea from the story is that Roger learned a lesson from Mrs. Jones. Here is one way I could write a question about that.

Thank You, M'am

by Langston Hughes

She was a large woman with a large purse that had everything in it but hammer and nails. It had a long strap, and she carried it slung across her shoulder. It was about eleven o'clock at night, and she was walking alone, when a boy ran up behind her and tried to snatch her purse. The strap broke with the single tug the boy gave it from behind. But the boy's weight and the weight of the purse combined caused him to lose his balance so, instead of taking off full blast as he had hoped, the boy fell on his back on the sidewalk, and his legs flew up. The large woman simply turned around and kicked him right square in his blue-jeaned sitter. Then she reached down, picked the boy up by his shirt front, and shook him until his teeth rattled.

After that the woman said, "Pick up my pocketbook, boy, and give it here."

She still held him. But she bent down enough to permit him to stoop and pick up her purse. Then she said, "Now ain't you ashamed of yourself?"

STOP AND WRITE A QUESTION

Firmly gripped by his shirt front, the boy said, "Yes'm."

The woman said, "What did you want to do it for?"

The boy said, "I didn't aim to."

She said, "You a lie!"

By that time two or three people passed, stopped, turned to look, and some stood watching.

"If I turn you loose, will you run?" asked the woman.

"Yes'm," said the boy.

"Then I won't turn you loose," said the woman. She did not release him.

"I'm very sorry, lady, I'm sorry," whispered the boy.

"Um-hum! And your face is dirty. I got a great mind to wash your face for you. Ain't you got nobody home to tell you to wash your face?"

"No'm," said the boy.

"Then it will get washed this evening," said the large woman starting up the street, dragging the frightened boy behind her. He looked as if he were fourteen or fifteen, frail and willow-wild, in tennis shoes and blue jeans.

The woman said, "You ought to be my son. I would teach you right from wrong. Least I can do right now is to wash your face. Are you hungry?"

"No'm," said the being dragged boy. "I just want you to turn me loose."

"Was I bothering you when I turned that corner?" asked the woman.

"No'm."

"But you put yourself in contact with me," said the woman. "If you think that that contact is not going to last awhile, you got another thought coming. When I get through with you, sir, you are going to remember Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones."

STOP AND WRITE A QUESTION

Sweat popped out on the boy's face and he began to struggle. Mrs. Jones stopped, jerked him around in front of her, put a half-nelson about his neck, and continued to drag him up the street. When she got to her door, she dragged the boy inside, down a hall, and into a large kitchenette-furnished room at the rear of the house. She switched on the light and left the door open. The boy could hear other roomers laughing and talking in the large house. Some of their doors were open, too, so he knew he and the woman were not alone. The woman still had him by the neck in the middle of her room. She said, "What is your name?"

"Roger," answered the boy.

"Then, Roger, you go to that sink and wash your face," said the woman, whereupon she turned him loose—at last. Roger looked at the door—looked at the woman—looked at the door—and went to the sink.

"Let the water run until it gets warm," she said. "Here's a clean towel."

"You gonna take me to jail?" asked the boy, bending over the sink.

"Not with that face, I would not take you nowhere," said the woman. "Here I am trying to get home to cook me a bite to eat and you snatch my pocketbook! Maybe you ain't been to your supper either, late as it be. Have you?"

"There's nobody home at my house," said the boy.

"Then we'll eat," said the woman. "I believe you're hungry—or been hungry—to try to snatch my pocketbook."

"I wanted a pair of blue suede shoes," said the boy.

"Well, you didn't have to snatch my pocketbook to get some suede shoes," said Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones. "You could of asked me."

STOP AND WRITE A QUESTION

"M'am?"

The water dripping from his face, the boy looked at her. There was a long pause. A very long pause. After he had dried his face and not knowing what else to do dried it again, the boy turned around, wondering what next. The door was open. He could make a dash for it down the hall. He could run, run, run, run, run!

The woman was sitting on the day-bed. After a while she said, "I were young once and I wanted things I could not get." There was another long pause. The boy's mouth opened. Then he frowned, but not knowing he frowned.

The woman said, "Um-hum! You thought I was going to say but, didn't you? You thought I was going to say, but I didn't snatch people's pocketbooks. Well, I wasn't going to say that."

Pause. Silence.

"I have done things, too, which I would not tell you, son—neither tell God, if he didn't already know. So you set down while I fix us something to eat. You might run that comb through your hair so you will look presentable."

In another corner of the room behind a screen was a gas plate and an icebox. Mrs. Jones got up and went behind the screen. The woman did not watch the boy to see if he was going to run now, nor did she watch her purse, which she left behind her on the day-bed. But the boy took care to sit on the far side of the room where he thought she could easily see him out of the corner of her eye, if she wanted to. He did not trust the woman not to trust him. And he did not want to be mistrusted now.

"Do you need somebody to go to the store," asked the boy, "maybe to get some milk or something?"

"Don't believe I do," said the woman, "unless you just want sweet milk yourself. I was going to make cocoa out of this canned milk I got here."

"That will be fine," said the boy.

She heated some lima beans and ham she had in the icebox, made the cocoa, and set the table. The woman did not ask the boy anything about where he lived, or his folks, or anything else that would embarrass him. Instead, as they ate, she told him about her job in a hotel beauty-shop that stayed open late, what the work was like, and how all kinds of women came in and out, blondes, red-heads, and Spanish. Then she cut him a half of her ten-cent cake.

"Eat some more, son," she said.

When they were finished eating she got up and said, "Now, here, take this ten dollars and buy yourself some blue suede shoes. And next time, do not make the mistake of latching onto my pocketbook nor nobody else's—because shoes come by devilish like that will burn your feet. I got to get my rest now. But I wish you would behave yourself, son, from here on in."

She led him down the hall to the front door and opened it.

"Good-night! Behave yourself, boy!" she said, looking out into the street. The boy wanted to say something else other than "Thank you, m'am" to Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones, but he couldn't do so as he turned at the barren stoop and looked back at the large woman in the door. He barely managed to say "Thank you" before she shut the door. And he never saw her again.

STOP AND WRITE A QUESTION

Question Log

Student(s): _____

Class and Period: _____ Name of Text: _____

Question	Answer	Text Evidence

Question	Answer	Text Evidence

Question Log

Student(s): _____

Class and Period: _____ Name of Text: _____

Question	Answer	Text Evidence

Question	Answer	Text Evidence