



How to Model Wide Questions

1. Set a Purpose for Learning

Students, we've been writing specific questions while we read to help us understand and remember what we're reading about. Remember, specific questions ask about a single important fact or idea from the text. You can put your finger on the answer to the question in one place. Today I will tell you about wide questions. Wide questions are broader and ask about a big idea from the text. The answer may be in

- different places in the same text,
- the text you're reading and another text, or
- the text and in your head (what you already learned).



2. Read the First Chunk of Text Aloud to the Class

Traveling West

By Barbara Radner
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During the 19th century in America, the idea of "manifest destiny" became very popular. Under this idea, many Americans believed that they were meant to expand throughout the North American continent. The idea of traveling westward to reach new land for farming, as well as to bring American customs and practices to newly acquired parts of the country, became very popular. As you read, take notes on the reasons why Americans moved westward during the 1800s and the struggles that they faced along the way.

- [1] Long ago, when people settled the United States, most lived in the East, and it was hard to travel west. There were no planes, trains, or automobiles. People traveled by wagon or boat, and it took many days to reach a destination. Although it was difficult, in the 1840s, many people traveled far across the United States from the East to the West. They were pioneers. They would settle in the western part of the country after a challenging journey to a new life.
- [2] Getting to the West was very difficult because there were no roads and there were many obstacles to travel. People traveled in groups, and each family would buy a covered wagon, which is a big wooden wagon with a kind of tent on it. It was small, about the size of an automobile, but it would be home for the whole family while they traveled to their new home. Each family would pack the tools and supplies they needed to build a new life in the West. They would have to fit all they took in their wagon, so they would bring only the items that were essential. It was dangerous to travel west without protection, so families would travel together, combining their wagons into what was called a wagon train, or a group of wagons all going the same way. To prepare, they would meet with other families to plan their trip, choosing a route based on the travels of others. When the families started the trip, they did not know each other; they only had in common that they were leaving the East to start a new life in the West. They met when the trip began, and they would spend more than a year together, so they got to know each other well. Sometimes they would borrow tools from each other, and sometimes they shared food. When the wagons encountered a problem, such as a storm that caused wagons to stick in muddy holes, they would solve it together.

(Adapted with permission from the author.)

3. Stop and Model How to Write a Wide Question While Thinking Aloud

Remember, for a wide question, the answer can be found in multiple places and the answer likely requires more than one sentence.

- First I will locate facts in two or more places in the text. This paragraph talked a lot about how difficult the journey was to the West. For example, there weren't any roads, it was really dangerous, and it took a long time—more than a year. Sometimes, the wagons got stuck, too.
- Next, I'll think about how the facts are related. All of these facts explain the REASONS why traveling to the West was so difficult, so I will write a WHY question: Why was travel from the East to the West so difficult?
- Then I'll check to be sure my answers comes from multiple places (in the same text, in two texts, or from the text and in my head). Yes, it does!
- Last I'll write the question, answer, and text evidence in my log.



Question	Answer	Text Evidence
Why was travel from the East to the West so difficult? Describe several reasons.	Travel from the East to the West was difficult because it was slow and dangerous. People traveled in small wagons with limited supplies. If the ground was muddy, the wagons could get stuck.	Paragraph 2