

Inquiry-Based Reading Lesson Plan

Grade 3 Fiction Text

Goal

To introduce the idea that readers ask questions about texts and look for the answers to questions within the text itself

Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Objective

Students will answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text.

Materials

Pens/pencils

Copy of grade-level text

Procedures

Students will ask questions to demonstrate understanding of a text.

Student Activity: 5 Ws and an H

- Begin by asking students to share some of the things good readers do when reading a text (e.g., determine the meaning of new words, make connections, think about the author's purpose).
- List students' ideas on the board or chart paper (using the table below).
- Explain that one thing good readers do is ask and answer questions about the text.
- Ask students if they can think of any questions they might ask themselves while reading a story. For example,
 - "Who is the main character?"
 - "Where does the story take place?"

- “When does the story take place?”
- List students’ suggestions on the board or chart paper, sorting them into categories where appropriate: Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How.
- Explain that these categories are known as the “5 Ws and an H” and provide a useful way for thinking about questions to ask of any text.

Conclusion

Tell students that you’d like them to always think about asking and answering questions as they read. Invite students to record their questions in a reading journal.

An alternative option is to play Jeopardy using the 5 Ws and an H as categories. You can have students develop questions for each category themselves. During play, require that students refer to the text when answering questions.

WHO	
WHAT	
WHERE	
WHEN	
WHY	
HOW	

Who: This inquiry-based reading lesson plan is effective for all grade levels and all levels of readers.

What: Good readers ask themselves questions as they read, using the text and their own ideas to answer those questions as well as questions from others. One way to encourage students to ask and answer questions about a text is to “think aloud,” modeling the kinds of questions readers ask themselves and where to find the answers.

Where: This lesson plan can be used in language arts, science, social studies, or any subject. The lesson plan can be easily modified for fiction or nonfiction texts.

When: This lesson plan is geared towards whole group instruction as a model for how to implement a strategy for inquiry-based reading. It can be used at any point during the school year.

Why: The activity presented in the lesson plan (“5 Ws and an H”) is a good framework for getting students to think about the types of questions to ask while reading.

******Please see the sample of a 3rd grade fiction text and how the lesson plan can be applied to it. Note that student answers will vary.****

Sample Text

Sarah, Plain and Tall by Patricia MacLachlan

“Did Mama sing every day?” asked Caleb. “Every-single-day?” He sat close to the fire, his chin in his hand. It was dusk, and the dogs lay beside him on the warm hearthstones.

“Every-single-day,” I told him for the second time this week. For the twentieth time this month. The hundredth time this year? And the past few years?

“And did Papa sing, too?”

“Yes. Papa sang, too. Don’t get so close, Caleb. You’ll heat up.”

He pushed his chair back. It made a hollow scraping sound on the hearthstones. And the dogs stirred. Lottie, small and black, wagged her tail and lifted her head. Nick slept on.

I turned the bread dough over and over on the marble slab on the kitchen table.

“Well, Papa doesn’t sing anymore,” said Caleb very softly. A log broke apart and crackled in the fireplace. He looked up at me. “What did I look like when I was born?”

“You didn’t have any clothes on,” I told him.

“I know that,” he said.

“You looked like this.” I held the bread dough up in a round pale ball.

“I had hair,” said Caleb seriously.

“Not enough to talk about,” I said.

“And she named me Caleb,” he went on, filling in the old familiar story.

“I would have named you Troublesome,” I said, making Caleb smile.

“And Mama handed me to you in the yellow blanket and said...” He waited for me to finish the story. “And said...?”

I sighed. “And Mama said. ‘Isn’t he beautiful, Anna?’”

“And I was,” Caleb finished.

Caleb thought the story was over, and I didn’t tell him what I had really thought. He was homely and plain, and he had a terrible holler and a horrid smell. But these were not the worst of him. Mama died the next morning.

That was the worst thing about Caleb.

“Isn’t he beautiful, Anna?” her last words to me. I had gone to bed thinking how wretched he looked. And I forgot to say good night.

I wiped my hands on my apron and went to the window. Outside, the prairie reached out and touched the places where the sky came down. Though the winter was nearly over, there were patches of snow everywhere. I looked at the long dirt road that crawled across the plains, remembering the morning that Mama had died, cruel and sunny.

They had come for her in a wagon and taken her away to be buried. And then the cousins and aunts and uncles had come and tried to fill up the house. But they couldn’t.

Slowly, one by one, they left. And then the days seemed long and dark like winter days, even though it wasn’t winter.

And Papa didn’t sing.

Application of Lesson Plan

1. Distribute a copy of the table “5 Ws and an H” as well as copies of the excerpt from *Sarah, Plain and Tall*.
2. Say, “I’m going to show you some of the things I might ask myself while reading this passage from the book *Sarah, Plain and Tall*. I want you to follow along and record the questions in the appropriate category on the activity. Raise your hand if you have any questions along the way.”
3. Read the passage aloud, stopping to “think aloud” the questions you have while reading the text.
4. Model writing your questions on the board or your own copy of the activity.
5. When you finish reading, ask students where they would find the answers to your questions. From their heads? From other people? Or from the text itself?
6. Explain that readers get their answers to almost all of their questions from the text itself. Even when answering questions such as “How does this story relate to my own life?” or “What do I like about the story?” good readers support their answers with details from the text.
7. Together, discuss the answers to some of your questions, encouraging students to refer to the text. For example, if one of your questions is “Who is the main character?” and a student responds, you might say, “Can you tell me what part of the text makes you think the main character is Anna?”
8. Model filling in the answers to your questions on the activity, along with a text reference.
9. Explain that, since you are reading such a short passage, you might not be able to answer all of your questions. The same is true when students read independently—they may have questions they can’t answer until the end of the book.

Here are some questions you might ask during your think aloud for the passage from *Sarah, Plain and Tall*:

- Who is the main character/speaker?
- What is the relationship between the speaker and Caleb?
- What is the setting?
- Where does the story take place?
- What time of day is it?
- When does the story place? (Time period/season)
- Why is the speaker baking bread?
- Where did she learn how to make it?
- Does she make all of the food for her family?
- Why doesn't Papa sing anymore?
- How long ago did Mama die?
- How does the speaker feel about Mama's death?
- What was the speaker's relationship to Mama?
- What was Caleb's relationship to Mama?
- Why does the speaker say she would have named Caleb "Troublesome"?
- How does the speaker react to all of Caleb's questions?
- How old is the speaker?
- How old is Caleb?
- Why doesn't the speaker tell Caleb the truth about the day he was born?
- How does Caleb know Mama sang every day?
- Where is Papa when this scene is taking place?
- How does the speaker feel about the last words she said to Mama?
- What does the speaker mean by describing the morning Mama died as "cruel and sunny"?
- What is the difference between the house with Mama in it and the house without Mama?

Here are some learning extension activities:

- Consider keeping running lists of good questions to ask during reading for each of the 5 Ws and H. Post the lists where students can see and add to them.

- Encourage students to record at least three questions in their journals during every group or independent reading section.
- Write various questions about a group text you are reading on index cards. Near the end of the day, give one card to each student as an “exit pass.” They must answer the question with a text reference in order to leave.