

TOP TIPS



Useful questions for parents/carers to ask when hearing their child read to support comprehension and language development.



Before you begin reading; Look at the front cover and encourage your child to make predictions about who/what the story might be about, where it might take place, and what might happen.

Look at the back cover and blurb – what do you learn about the story before you even start reading it?

Who wrote the book? (author)

Who created the pictures? (illustrator)

Once your child has finished reading the page or the book, ask questions that challenge their understanding of the text

Examples of prompting questions

- Can you find the word...? Can you think of a synonym (word with same meaning) and an antonym (work with opposite meaning) for that word?
- Point to a conjunction – can you think of an alternative?
- Point to the question marks, speech bubbles, speech marks, semicolons, exclamation marks, commas, elipsis (etc.) on this page? – Why has the author used them?
- Can you find a long word on this page? - Can you break it up into syllables? How many syllables does it have?
- Find a word that rhymes with...
- Find a word that starts with the sound...

Examples of questions that focus on responding to the text read

Fiction:

- What happened in the beginning/middle/end of the story?
- Where does the story take place? – the setting.
- Can you name the characters?
- How would you describe the characters' personalities?
- Why do you think the book is called...?
- What was your favourite part of the story?
- Did anything in the story make you laugh or feel sad? Why?
- What did you dislike about the story?
- Did the book remind you of anything that has happened to you?

- Did the book make you think differently about your own similar experience?
- Were you surprised by anything in the book?
- Why do you think the author used that word/phrase? What atmosphere do you think he/she was trying to create?
- What do you think of the pictures? Did they help you? How?

Non-fiction:

- What type of book is this?
- Did you find anything out that you didn't know before?
- Does this book have a contents page/index? How do you use them?
- What do you think of the pictures/diagrams? Did they help you understand the book better? How?
- Some of the text is in bold, why do you think this has been done? How can you find out what these words mean?
- What was your favourite part of the book?
- What would be three of the most interesting facts you have learnt from this book that you could teach someone else?

Basic questions

- Was there anything you'd have liked more of?
- Did anything **puzzle** you?
- Did you think anything was strange?
- Did you find anything that you have never found in a book before?

- Did you notice any patterns?

General questions

- What kind of book did you think it was going to be before you started reading? Why?
- After reading, is the book like you thought it would be?
- **Have you ever read other books like it?** What makes this one similar? What makes it different?
- Have you ever read this book before? Did you find it different this time? Did you notice anything new/different this time? Did you enjoy it more or less?
- **Would you recommend** that other people read it more than once or not?
- Were there any particular words or phrases that you would like to use in your own writing?
- Are there any words or phrases in this book that you think sound like a way that a particular person would speak?
- Did you think this book used language in a special way at all? Where?
- **How do you think the writer could have made the book better?**
- Which parts of the book do you think were the most realistic?
- Could you imagine the story happening while you were reading?
- Which parts of the book could you 'see' best in your mind? Which parts stay in your mind most **vividly**?

- Would you like to read the book again?
- What will you tell your friends/family about this book?
- Is there anything you won't tell them because it might spoil the book for them?
- What do you think I should tell people older than you/younger than you about the book to help them decide whether to read it or not?
- Are you surprised by anything that anyone else noticed about the book?
- Considering everything we have discussed, what is the most important thing about the book for you?
- **Do you know anything about the author?** Or about how the story came to be written? Would you like to find out more? How would you find out?

Further questions

- Did we read things in the book in the order that they happened in the story?
- When you tell a story, do you always tell it in the order in which things happened? Do you ever tell it in a different order? Why?
- Did you notice any parts of the story where things would have taken a long time to happen but were explained quickly in a few words?
- Did you notice any parts where the action would have happened very quickly but the writer used a lot of space to tell it?
- Were there any parts that took the same time to read as they would have taken to happen in real life?

- Could this story have been set anywhere or was the setting where the story took place an important part of the story? Do you think it would have been better set somewhere else? Where?
- As you were reading, did you think about or imagine the place?
- Are there any passages in the book that are especially about the place that the story is set? What did you like, or dislike, about them? Was the setting interesting? Would you like to know more about it? How would you find out more about it?
- **Who was your favourite character?** What did you like about them? Is the story mainly about that character or is it mostly about someone else?
- Were there any characters you disliked? Why?
- Did any of the characters remind you of anyone you know or characters from other books?
- Were there any characters that weren't mentioned in the book, but without whom, the story couldn't have happened?
- Why do you think s/he doesn't appear or isn't mentioned? Would the story have been the same if that character had been mentioned or appeared in the book?
- Who was narrating the story? How do we know?
- Is the story told in the **first person** or the **third person**? **Who is the first person?**
- What do you think the narrator thinks and feels about the characters? How do you know?

- Do they approve/disapprove of any of the characters' actions? Do you agree with them?
- When you imagined the story, whose eyes were you seeing the story through? Did you only see what one character in the story saw, or did you see things sometimes as another character saw them?
- Did the story take you inside any of the characters' heads? Did it take you inside more than one of the characters' heads?
- Were we told what the characters were thinking/feeling, or was the story always told from outside the characters by a narrator who was not part of the story, watching what they did and hearing what they said, but never knowing what they were thinking and feeling?
- Did you feel like the story was happening at the same time as you were reading or in the past? What was it that made you feel like this?
- Did you feel as if everything in the story was happening to you, or like you were an observer watching the action?

Discussion Questions

The following are examples of the types of questions to use when discussing a story.

What was the story about? Who was the main character? What sort of a person was he/she?

Was that a sensible thing to do? What should he/she have done? Which part did you like best?

What would have happened if....?