**Teaching Students How To Ask Good Questions about Texts**

"Asking the right questions takes as much skill as giving the right answers." *- Robert Half*

**Objectives**

The session provides teachers with a framework that guides both students and teachers in asking and answering questions that will increase and elevate student classroom discourse about texts.

**Guiding Questions**

What kinds of questions should I be asking as I read different texts?

How can different types of questions help us to deepen our understanding and appreciation of the texts we read?

**At a Glance**

Facilitator sets context by introducing objective and summarizing objectives and common problems students have with questioning, then introduces the Question Answer Relationship (QAR) Framework. Teachers then have the opportunity to use the framework in developing questions in small groups for the text “Thank You, Ma’am” by Langston Hughes. Groups share out examples of their work and then discuss how this can be used with students.

**Facilitator’s Notes**

This session is based on the Question Answer Relationship[[1]](#footnote-1) adolescent literacy strategy (<http://www.adlit.org/strategies/19802/>).

The short story “Thank You, Ma’am” by Langston Hughes is available at these sites as of March 2020:

<https://www.whiteplainspublicschools.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&ModuleInstanceID=3819&ViewID=7b97f7ed-8e5e-4120-848f-a8b4987d588f&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=2041&PageID=7779>

<http://staff.esuhsd.org/danielle/english%20department%20lvillage/rt/Short%20Stories/Thank%20You,%20Ma%27am.pdf>

**Materials**

Paper and pens for each table

Copies of each of the following (one for each participant):

“Thank You, Ma’am” (Short Story)

QAR Handout

QAR blank framework for developing questions

QAR Graphic

Handouts:

Teacher Reflection Form

Sample QAR Lesson Plan

QAR Lesson Plan

**Procedure**

Have teachers sit at tables of 4-5 for small group discussion during the session.

**Introduction (7-10 minutes)**

First slide presents quotations about asking questions for early comers to reflect on. Facilitator sets context by introducing objective and summarizing objectives and common problems students have with questioning (Slides 3-5). Facilitator then introduces the Question Answer Relationship (QAR) Framework, noting Raphael & Au as a source (Slide 6), and presents the four types of questions (Slide 7). In asking teachers about their familiarity with the framework, facilitator should mention that the types have different names in the original framework: “Right There, On the Line, Author and Me and On My Own”). Slides 8-12 give specific examples of each of these types, using *Romeo and Juliet* as an example text. Slide 13 presents a graphic summary of the question types. After the brief presentation, facilitator leads a discussion about teachers’ previous familiarity with the framework and their opinions about it (Slide 14).

**Small Group Application Exercise (30-35 minutes)**

Using Slide 16, emphasize to teachers that this segment is designed to allow them to experience and debrief an activity they can use with their students in their own classrooms. With teachers in groups of 4-5, pass out copies of the short story and the QAR question framework. After teachers read the story individually, teachers within each table group should collaborate in writing several questions from each category. They should then discuss the questions on Slide 17.

**Large Group Discussion (10-15 minutes)**

Each table shares one question in each category. Teachers then reflect together about how this type of activity would work with students (Slide 19). Slide 20 presents several suggestions for how the framework can be used in student activities.

**Teacher Reflection (5 minutes)**

Teachers have time to reflect personally using the Teacher Reflection Form.

1. *Fisher, D., and Frey, N, (2004). Improving Adolescent Literacy: Strategies at Work. New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall.*

   *Raphael, T.E., & Au, K.H. (2005). QAR: Enhancing comprehension and test taking across grades and content areas. The Reading Teacher, 59, 206-221.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)