

## **Objectives**

Students will:

- Build background knowledge so they can wonder about a topic
- Create questions for discussions and research
- Use open-ended questions to prompt critical reading of Science and Social Studies texts

## **Materials**

- Chart paper and writing tools
- Text related to a topic you're studying

## **Directions**

### **PART 1: Teaching Students to Ask Questions**

**Step 1:** Introduce the topic you'll be learning about and divide the class into small groups to discuss what they know about the subject. If they have no prior knowledge, set aside 15 minutes for 2 or more classes to have students browse through books and magazines, review their textbooks, watch a film, or participate in a similar experience that will provide some background information.

**Step 2:** In their groups, have students pose questions that they want to have answered. Have them share these with the entire class, and write them on chart paper.

- Example: After teacher Minda Parks' 6th graders previewed a chapter on decimals in their math text, they used these questions to drive their study of decimals:

"How can decimals be fractions and whole numbers?"

"Can you change decimals to fractions and fractions to decimals?"

"How are decimals in our lives?"

**Step 3:** Have students read the nonfiction text assignment. Remind them to keep the questions they've already created in mind as they read critically.

**Step 4:** Assign questions from Step 2 to the different groups and have them discuss them.

**Step 5:** Select questions for the class to discuss together. Make sure students include specific details to support their answers and have them share high points from the group discussions.

### **PART 2: Using Open-Ended Questions for Informational Texts**

Model good questioning skills by prompting students with these open-ended questions when your class is reading Science and Social Studies texts.

- Does the author try to persuade you in any way? How?
- Can you identify the facts? The opinions?
- How do statistics and data support the author's perspective?
- Do you find the author's evidence convincing? Explain.
- What new information did you learn? How can you apply this information to an issue or problem in today's world?
- How did this new information change your way of thinking about this subject?
- What words, phrases, statements does the author use that caught your attention? Why? How did they make you feel? What did they make you think?

- Did the author weave opinion and fact statements into the piece? Find examples of each.
- Were there any photographs, illustrations, charts, graphs, or diagrams that were important? Select two or three and show what you learned from them and explain why you believe each one was important.
- Did the reading leave you with unanswered questions? What are these?
- How did you connect to the piece? Was it personal? Was it an issue that affects your community and the world? Explain.

Tip for evaluating students: Set standards for supporting ideas and ask students to include specific details to back up points.

This lesson was adapted from Laura Robb's [\*Teaching Reading in Social Studies, Science, and Math: Practical Ways to Weave Comprehension Strategies into Your Content Area Teaching\*](#). For more lessons from this book, see [Skimming a Text](#) and [Connect & Apply](#).