

Curious Questions

These are questions that I print up and laminated to tag board. I use these for shy students during book chats. Fan them out like a card deck and have students pick a question to prompt a literary conversation. Each card says *Curious Question* on one side, and on the other side is the question. (I have some other tips at the end of this list, so read on!)

1. Some characters play small but important roles in a story. Name such a character. Why is this character necessary for the story?
2. What sections of the book did you read quickly or slowly?
3. Think about your main character. How are you alike or different?
4. Think of a different ending to the story. How would the rest of the story have to be changed to fit the new ending?
5. Who is the main character of the story? What kind of person is the character? How do you know?
6. Are any characters changed during the story? If they are, how are they different? What changed them? Did it seem believable?
7. At which point in your current book did you become hooked?
8. Which parts did you reread in order to understand the story better?
9. Trace the main events of the story. Could you change their order or leave any of them out? Why or why not?
10. If you could change the point of view of your book, who would you have tell the story? In what ways would it be different?
11. What will you tell your friends about the book? What won't you tell them because it might spoil the story for them or be misleading if you did?
12. What do you think was the best part of the story? Why?
13. When you first saw the book even before you read it, what kind of book did you think it was going to be?
14. Is this story like any other story you have read? Tell me more.
15. Tell me about the parts you didn't like.

16. Think about the characters in the story. Are any of them the same type of character that you have met in other stories?
17. What questions would you ask if the author was sitting right here? Which would be the most important question to ask?
18. What does the author do to build suspense? How does the author make you want to read on to find out what happens?
19. If you could compliment the author on one passage that was full of imagery, which one would you choose? Why?

Other tips...

Keep a file box of color-coded index cards, 4 x 6, on each student. Choose a color per period. File them alphabetically by last name. The colors will help the students find their cards more easily.

Invite your team members to do book chats, too. Train them by modeling a book chat for them during a team meeting. Let students sign up to come in at lunchtime. This way they can choose the personality of the teacher that best matches theirs. Include your librarian, your resource teacher, your counselor, your principal... Just remind them to take along the book and their reading card to have it signed, dated, and page numbers recorded.

Model a book chat in front of your class when you explain your independent reading program. Have the librarian come in and do one with you. Eventually videotape you and a student doing this so it eases the students' minds. They really have no idea what to expect until they do it, and it can make them anxious.

Remember to let parents complete book chats, too. Make them a little more challenging by having the students complete a plot line sheet. Don't let them do more than one a quarter like that. You need to hear them read, too, and it will help you get to know them better as readers.

Use your book chat time to individualize instruction. Revisit the strategies you are teaching in class. For example, after teaching how writers begin with leads, have students identify the strategy in the book. If you are working on writing authentic dialogue, have the student point out effective dialogue in the book.

A typical book chat for me...

Oooh, what book did you read?

(If it is an adult book or one that has mature content, ask the student if his parents know what he is reading. Is it good for you and your family? When my students read adult

books, I remind them that they are teenagers for only a short period of time and will be adults forever. Do they really want to abandon young adult literature so quickly?)

Did you finish the whole thing?

Who told you about this one? Where did you get it?

Well, tell me a little bit about the book.

Do you think you'll read any other books by this author?

Do you think I would like this book?

What about your best friend?

So what do you think you'll read next? (Look at his reading card and make a professional judgment. Is he reading books that are too easy just to get quick points? Is he in a reading rut obsessed with an author or a genre?)

Finally, pick a section near the end of the book and have the student read a good amount aloud. Monitor fluency, decoding skills, and comprehension. Ask how the passage fits within the entire plot. This is where you can tell whether someone has really read the book.