

read ahead

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Tips for Interactive Reading

Deepen the reading experience of a mentoring session by making the experience interactive. Pause the reading to ask good questions and allow your mentee the opportunity to respond and reflect. Below are three key tips for engaging in successful interactive reading.

Tip #1: Ask open-ended questions

An open-ended question is one that has no clear right answers, and can't be answered with one word like "yes" or "no". They invite opinions, thoughts, and ideas to be shared. Example questions:

- What do you think about...?
- How do you think...?
- What would you do if...?
- Why do you think?
- Tell me about...
- What do you think happens next?

Tip #2: Create connections between the story and the mentee's life

Stories can serve as a mirror and window for the reader, helping us gain insights about ourselves and the world. This happens when we make connections with the story. Example questions:

- What does... remind you of in your life?
- What is... similar to/different from in your life?
- Has something like... ever happened to you?
- What did you feel when you read...?
- How has this changed your thinking on...?

Tip #3: Ask social-emotional learning (SEL) questions

Asking SEL questions throughout the reading process illuminates the connection between actions and emotions—in both real life and in fiction. Ask questions to reflect on the emotions of the characters and on your mentee's own emotions.

Example questions about the emotions of the characters:

- Can you identify the emotion(s) that the main character is feeling?
- What event or events led him or her to feel this way?
- How is the emotion similar to or different from what the character was feeling earlier in the story?
- How does the main character express emotions? Are the emotions expressed in a healthy and productive way?

Example questions about your mentee's own emotions:

- How are you feeling about what is happening in the story? Why do you think that you are feeling that emotion?
- How would you feel if you were in the same situation as the main character? Why?
- How have your emotions changed during the course of the story?

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SEL questions adapted from:

<https://k12.thoughtfullearning.com/blogpost/developing-social-emotional-skills-through-literature>

Interactive Reading Exercise

Instructions: Read the excerpt from The Sneetches by Dr. Seuss and then follow the prompts to practice developing good interactive questions you could ask a mentee.

Step 1: Read the below excerpt from The Sneetches by Dr. Seuss

When the Star-Belly Sneetches had frankfurter roasts
Or picnics or parties or marshmallow toasts,
They never invited the Plain-Belly Sneetches.
They left them out cold, in the dark of the beaches.
They kept them away. Never let them come near.
And that's how they treated them year after year.

Then ONE day, seems...while the Plain-Belly Sneetches
Were moping and dopping alone on the beaches,
Just sitting there wishing their bellies had stars...
A stranger zipped up in the strangest of cars!

"My friends," he announced in a voice clear and keen,
"My name is Sylvester McMonkey McBean.
And I've heard of your troubles. I've heard you're unhappy.
But I can fix that. I'm the Fix-it-Up Chappie.
I've come here to help you. I have what you need.
And my prices are low. And I work at great speed.
And my work is one hundred percent guaranteed!

Then, quickly Sylvester McMonkey McBean
Put together a very peculiar machine.
And he said, "You want stars like a Star-Belly Sneetch...?
My friends, you can have them for three dollars each!"

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Step 2: Using the excerpt from The Sneetches, practice developing good interactive questions to ask your mentee during (by pausing the reading to reflect) or after reading together.

Open-Ended Questions

Write down an open-ended question you could ask your mentee to spark conversation.

Connecting Story to Life Questions

Write down a question to help your mentee connect the story to his/her own life.

Social-Emotional Learning Questions

Write down one question that asks your mentee to reflect on the emotions of a character in the story and a second question that asks your mentee to reflect on his/her own emotions in reading the story.

1.

2.