

Literacy How-To: Facilitate Text Comprehension



QUESTIONING THE AUTHOR: Students Take the Lead



"*Text Talk* is amazing! The students are actually running their own groups and encouraging each other to elaborate and use stronger vocabulary."

Tricia Marini, Literacy Specialist, Irving School, Derby, CT

"I have begun using student-led *Text Talk* groups as a Breakfast Club to help 25 students participate in text discussions every week!"

Heather Rivera, Literacy Coach, Hinsdale School, Winchester, CT

What is *Questioning the Author* (aka *Text Talk*)?

*Questioning the Author** (aka *Text Talk****) is an approach for text-based instruction that was designed to facilitate building understanding of text ideas. The goal of building understanding is supported through the use of questions (what Beck refers to as "queries")

and discussion. This comprehension technique helps students construct meaning through purposeful discussions while reading a text for the first time (called a *cold read*). After carefully analyzing the text, the teacher guides students to consider meaning and grapple with ideas based on queries s/he has developed. These queries are open-ended “questioning” of the author’s ideas, word choices, etc.—whatever a student might find confusing—that could interfere with comprehension. *Questioning the Author* can be used with both narrative and expository texts.

Major Understandings of *Questioning the Author*

- *The fallibility of the author* is connected to how students feel about themselves when they are unable to understand the text
- *Determining major understandings from text*—determines lesson focus
- *Initiating Queries*—questions a teacher poses to students in order to begin a discussion, such as "What is the author trying to say here?" or "What do you think the author wants us to know?".
- *Follow-up Queries*—questions a teacher poses to clarify or expand student understandings of content being discussed, such as "Does that make sense with what the author told us before?" or "Does the author tell us why?".



Learn More About Text Comprehension

[View](#) a Literacy How Mentor-led *Questioning the Author* expository text lesson in a second grade classroom. [See](#) the lesson template. Click on [Text Comprehension](#) in Literacy How's Reading Wheel to learn more.

*Beck, I.L. & McKeown, M.G. (2006). *Improving comprehension with questioning the author: A fresh and expanded view of a powerful approach*. New York, NY: Scholastic.

**Beck, I.L. & McKeown, M.G. (September 2001). Text talk: Capturing the benefits of read-aloud experiences for young children. *The Reading Teacher* 55 (1), 310-20.

www.literacyhow.com

203-239-7323

[Send us an Email](#)

Our Mission is to **EMPOWER TEACHERS** to ensure that every child learns to read by third grade.

100 Broadway 2nd Floor | North Haven, CT 06473 US

