

QAR: Question Answer Response Strategy

With an example from The Westing Game by Ellen Raskin

PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

Raphael (1984, 1986) studied the question-answer relationship. This is a taxonomy that is broken into four levels: Right There, Think and Search, the Author and You, and On My Own. This strategy helps students to actively comprehend the author's message and also provides the students with a way to think about questions and answers. If students are responsible for creating their own questions, then QAR can also extend writing ability.

DIRECTIONS:

STEP 1

Introduce the Strategy

Introduce the strategy with the worksheet showing the relationship of the Questions to Answers. Post an enlarged chart of this somewhere in the classroom allowing students to refer to it.

STEP 2

Using small sections of text, create QAR questions (no longer than about five sentences) for each of the four levels. Using these questions, model how each level of the QAR questions can be identified and answered. Help the students understand the differences between the questions.

Found in the text:

Right There: the answer is textually explicit (can be found in the text), usually as a phrase contained within one sentence.

Think and Search: while the answer is in the text, the answer is implicit and the student is required to combine separate sections or chunks of text to answer the question.

Found in your head:

On Your Own: require students to think about what is already known from their reading and experience (schema and prior knowledge) to formulate an answer.

Author and You: as the answer is not directly stated in the text, the student draws on prior knowledge (schema) and what the author has written to answer the question.

STEP 3

Provide the students with sample questions (such as the ones on the following handout), to answer in small groups, and identify which of the QAR levels they used.

STEP 4

Have the students work individually on the questions from longer passages.

ASSESSMENT

Students are able to increase comprehension by having a growing awareness of how we read specific texts. As students study different sources of information they learn that there are relationships between questions that readers ask and the types of responses that can be given.



Sample QAR Questions for The Westing Game by Ellen Raskin

Passage 1 (p. 19)

The Halloween moon was full. Except for her receding chin Turtle Wexler looked every inch the witch, her dark unbraided hair streaming wild in the wind from under her peaked hat, a putty wart pasted on her small beaked nose. If only she could fly to the Westing house on a broomstick instead of scrambling over rocks on all fours, what with all she had to carry. Under the long black cape the pockets of her jeans bulged with necessities for the night's dangerous vigil.

Question: What was Turtle Wexler dressed up as for Halloween?

Rationale: This is a “**right there**” question. The answer is found directly in this passage of text.

Passage 2 (p. 31)

Sydelle Pulaski waved a gaily painted crutch in the air, tottered, and set it down quickly with another thump – “this crutch. Crutch. What a horrible word, but I guess I’ll have to get used to it.” She pursed her bright red mouth, painted to a fullness beyond the narrow line of her lips, trying to suppress a smile of triumph. Everyone was staring; she knew they would notice.

Question: Why is Sydelle Pulaski really using a crutch?

Rationale: This is a “**think and search**” question. The passage never states that this is a Christmas celebration, but the clues in the text help the reader figure it out.

Passage 3 (p. 151)

She was protecting someone. She had set off the fireworks in the elevator to divert suspicion from the real bomber. But who was the real bomber? Nothing to do but drag it out of her, name by name, starting with the least likely. “Are you protecting Angela?”

Question: Is it morally okay to commit a crime if you are trying to protect another person?

Rationale: This is an “**on your own**” question. The students must use the text to start thinking about this issue, but the answer is their own reaction.

Passage 4 (p. 206)

Turtle never told. She went to the library every Saturday afternoon, she explained (which was partly true).

Question: Why did Turtle never tell anyone that she won the Westing Game?

Rationale: This is an “**author and you**” question. The answer is not explicitly stated in the text, but the reader can use his/her opinion as well as sense the author's opinion to come up with an answer.

