

Question-Answer Relationships (QAR)

Why Use the Strategy

The Question-Answer Relationships (Raphael, 1986) strategy helps students make connections between information in the selection and their prior knowledge. Reading comprehension increases with the use of this strategy because readers are asked to think at various levels of cognitive processing. The strategy encourages the reader to think about the selection from four perspectives: entering the text, moving through the text, moving beyond the text, and carrying on a mental dialogue with the author. Students who use this strategy learn to recognize the different types of thinking needed when answering questions. Thoughtful questions cause readers to anticipate meaning, to search for information, to modify ideas, and to elaborate upon the ideas presented in the selection (Reciprocal Teaching, p. 102).

Another benefit of the QAR strategy is that students can learn to ask the four different types of questions, and the questioning process can be transferred from teacher to learner. This allows students to become independent strategic readers by formulating their own questions while reading.

How to Use the Strategy

1) The teacher explains that answering questions about selections read requires the reader to use information found in the book and information from their own background of experience. Provide an overview of the four different types of questions. Help students understand that the first two types of questions are text-based because the answers are found in the text.

Text-Based Questions or “In the Book”

- **Right There** questions require a literal-level response. The answer is easy to find because it is explicitly stated in the text. The words used in the question and the words found in the sentence to answer the question are Right There. Right There questions usually require a one word or short response and begin with words like who, when, or where. Because these questions usually elicit one right answer they require a minimal amount of teacher wait-time or student thinking. Examples of Right There questions are: “Who is president of the United States?” and “Where did the acupuncture technique originate?”
- **Think and Search** questions require more inferential thinking. This type of question asks the reader to interpret or analyze information read and then organize ideas from various sentences in order to formulate the answer. Students will find answers located in the text but first must “Think” how the information in the text is connected and then “Search” through the selection to determine what information will answer the question. Sentences beginning with words like describe, explain, or analyze may signal to the reader that this is a Think and Search question. Examples of the questions are: “Describe the similarities and differences between the drama, Romeo and Juliet, and the movie.” and “Explain how the reading strategies described in the article might benefit your students.”

The next two types of questions ask students to use information pulled primarily from their own background knowledge. These questions require them to hypothesize answers based on personal information. Answers are found in the mind of the reader.

Reader-Based Questions or “In My Head”

- On My Own questions ask students to speculate or hypothesize and apply the information to their own experiences. This type of question requires more think time because often there is no right or wrong answer. The question “What if all teachers incorporated reading strategies in their teaching?” asks the reader to speculate and to go beyond the selection read, using prior knowledge to formulate a response. On My Own questions can be useful in activating background knowledge prior to reading. Question starters include: What if? How might? and What can?

- Author and You questions require students to interact with ideas presented by the author. Students need to think about what they know about the topic, what the author is saying in the text, and how the two are related. For example, the selection discusses the acupuncture technique and the Author and You question might be: “When do you think acupuncture should be used?” Author and You questions may begin with words or statements such as: How will? Where could? and What would?

2) The next step is to model the Question-Answer Relationships process:

- Read a selection to the students.
- Ask a question about the selection.
- Share the answer to the question.
- State the type of question and give an explanation for the answer.

3) Instructional considerations when teaching Question-Answer Relationships include:

- Instruct students how to tell the difference among the four Question-Answer Relationships.
- Give students feedback.
- Progress from shorter to longer and easier to more difficult selections and/or more complex questions.
- Build independence by beginning with the large group, moving to small groups, and finally to independent activities.

When to Use the Strategy

Use the Question-Answer Relationship strategy to:

- Prepare students for standardized testing.
- Develop understanding of informational and narrative text.
- Provide an opportunity for students to create questions about the selection read.

Link to Assessment

Assessment practices in standardized testing includes the four types of questions. Secondary students preparing for the SAT or ACT college entrance exam may find this strategy helpful.