

# Interrogating the Text: Reading Closely, Reading Critically

## Overview

### Description

This assignment will guide the students to become more expert readers by asking them to actively interrogate a text. Students will analyze a passage by breaking it down into its component parts, looking at how each part functions in the overall performance of that text.

The goal of this assignment is for good questioning to become common practice in the classroom. *Interrogating the Text* is not meant to be a one-time activity. It is a method used to help students develop as active readers who critically explore the texts they read.

**Final Product:** Students will analyze a text according to a series of critical questions. They will conduct a small group presentation on those questions. They will also write a 1-2 page essay in which they describe the larger insights they gained by interrogating the text.

### Subject

English III, IV

### Task Level

Grade 11-12

### Objectives

Students will:

- Analyze a text and dialogue about how its component parts contribute to its overall performance.
- Use appropriate textual evidence and valid illustrations to support their positions and to refute, qualify, or support the positions of others.
- Draw and support complex inferences and analyze and explain a text's position (if expository) or overall effect (if narrative) as well as challenge and defend their classmates' positions during the discussion.
- Analyze literary devices an author employs and explore the impact and purpose of their use (e.g., the use of imagery, figurative language, diction, syntax, etc., to create tone, mood, and other effects).
- Speak and listen actively and effectively in a group discussion.

- Prepare thorough written answers to the questions provided in the *Interrogating the Text* handout, based on the group discussion and their own reading.
- Prepare a 1-2 page essay in which they describe the larger insights gained by interrogating the text.

## Preparation

- Prepare student copies of the Student Notes pages and the *Interrogating the Text* handout.
- Select a text for analysis. This exercise can work with fiction or nonfiction, a selected passage, complete chapter, or an entire short story, play, or novel, but it will be most effective with a relatively independent section of approximately 1000-1500 words taken from a larger work.

## Prior Knowledge

- Students will use the academic vocabulary they have previously learned for textual analysis (e.g., ethos, pathos, logos, claim, support, plot, tone, theme, mood, imagery, types of figurative language, etc.).
- Students should know how to use details from the text to support their arguments.
- Students should be familiar with discussion etiquette and group work.
- Students should be comfortable using word processing software and have prior understanding of and practice in all parts of the writing process, including invention, drafting, revision, and proofreading.

## Key Concepts and Terms

- Annotate
- Argument
- Audience
- Expository
- Figurative language
- Imagery
- Interrogate
- Irony
- Literal
- Mood
- Narrative
- Paradox

- Plot
- Point of view
- Summarize
- Theme
- Tone

### Time Frame

If the passage has been read before the class period begins, discuss the concept of interrogating the text and have students work independently to respond to the questions found in the handout, *Interrogating the Text*, during one class period. The following day, the class can be divided into small groups of 4-5 students, where the individual students should compare their responses and come to some consensus about their answers. The small groups should then get ready to present their responses to the class. The instructor may assign particular questions to particular groups with the members of each group presenting their answers to the question assigned to them and defending their analyses. Small groups should also be prepared to ask questions about another group's prepared presentation. The written portions of the assignment can be due approximately one to three days later.

## *Instructional Plan*

### **Getting Started**

#### ***Learning Objectives***

Students will:

- Identify explicit and implicit textual information including main ideas, overall effect, and any possible “arguments” made by the text.
- Identify and evaluate devices the author uses to create tone and support an argument, idea, attitude, or purpose.
- Draw and support complex inferences from the text to summarize, draw conclusions, and distinguish facts from simple assertions.
- Identify and analyze how an author’s use of language appeals to the senses, creates imagery, and suggests mood.
- Participate actively and effectively in group discussions.
- Listen actively and effectively in group discussions.

#### ***Procedure***

1. Provide the students with a passage previously selected by the instructor.
2. Instruct students to independently read, annotate, and analyze the chosen passage, following the questions in the handout, *Interrogating the Text*.
3. Break students into partners or groups and ask them to come to some consensus regarding their responses to the handout.
4. Each group will present its responses to the class.

### **Investigating**

#### ***Learning Objectives***

Students will:

- Participate actively and effectively in group discussions.
- Listen actively and effectively in group discussions.

#### ***Procedure***

1. Have students discuss their responses to the questions in the handout. As a group, they should come to some consensus about the best or the most inclusive response to each question. If consensus cannot be reached, then each different response should be recorded.

2. Have the groups present their responses to the entire class. They will then have to answer questions posed by the instructor or other students, defending or revising their answers.
3. After each small group presentation, ask students to reconvene in their groups to discuss their reactions to the questions they received and the other responses that they heard.

## Drawing Conclusions

### *Learning Objectives*

Working individually, students will:

- Prepare thorough written answers to the questions provided in the *Interrogating the Text* handout, based on the group discussion and their own reading.
- Prepare a 1-2 page essay in which they describe larger insights gained by reading the passage.

### *Procedure*

1. Ask students to respond to the passage in writing by answering the questions in the *Interrogating the Text* handout.
2. Students will write an additional 1-2 page essay about the insights they have gained about the text or about themselves as readers, as a result of this activity.
3. The goal is for good questioning to become common practice in the classroom. *Interrogating the Text* is not meant to be a one-time activity. It is a method used to help students develop as active readers who critically explore the texts they read.

## *Scaffolding/Instructional Support*

The goal of scaffolding is to provide support to encourage student success, independence, and self-management. Instructors can use these suggestions, in part or all together, to meet diverse student needs. The more skilled the student, however, the less scaffolding that he or she will need. Some examples of scaffolding that could apply to this assignment include:

- Choosing the most appropriate text for students to work with is the most important part of scaffolding for this exercise. In a classroom of students with widely diverging reading skills, the Instructor might even distribute different texts to each student, choosing a passage whose reading level and type is most compatible with that student.
- Making the handout, *Interrogating the Text*, accessible for all students by thoroughly reviewing their initial responses to it and answering any questions they might have about how to proceed with it.
- Grouping struggling learners with stronger ones but monitoring the groups to ensure that all members of the group participate.
- Checking for students' understanding of the passage and the task by listening in on the small group discussions to help ensure that students' analyses show insight.
- Breaking students into partners or groups and assigning them specific questions to discuss and present to the class.
- Requiring written notes or note cards when making the presentation.
- Asking to see drafts of the responses and/or the essay prior to the final draft due date.

The suggestions provided here are intended to address problems you may encounter when evaluating student work associated with it. All assessment factors should be made clear to all students at the beginning of the lesson:

- Clear statement and explanation of the insights gained by the student.
- Clear sense of how the passage's individual elements contribute to its overall success.
- Well-developed questions to ask another group to help them analyze the passage more deeply.
- Clear evidence to support answers to questions.
- Clear and well-organized oral presentation.
- Clear and well-organized written essay.

### TCCRS Cross-Disciplinary Standards Addressed

Performance Expectation	Getting Started	Investigating	Drawing Conclusions
<i>I. Key Cognitive Skills</i>			
A.1. Engage in scholarly inquiry and dialogue.	✓	✓	✓
A.2. Accept constructive criticism and revise personal views when valid evidence warrants.		✓	✓
B.1. Consider arguments and conclusions of self and others.		✓	✓
B.2. Construct well-reasoned arguments to explain phenomena, validate conjectures, or support positions.		✓	✓
B.3. Gather evidence to support arguments, findings, or lines of reasoning.		✓	✓
B.4. Support or modify claims based on the results of an inquiry.		✓	✓
D.3. Strive for accuracy and precision.	✓	✓	✓
D.4. Persevere to complete and master tasks.	✓	✓	✓
<i>II. Foundational Skills</i>			
A.3. Identify the intended purpose and audience of the text.	✓	✓	✓
A.5. Analyze textual information critically.	✓	✓	✓
A.6. Annotate, summarize, paraphrase, and outline texts when appropriate.			✓
B.1. Write clearly and coherently using standard writing conventions.			✓
C.6. Design and present an effective product.			✓

### TCCRS English/Language Arts Standards Addressed

Performance Expectation	Getting Started	Investigating	Drawing Conclusions
<i>I. Writing</i>			
A.1. Determine effective approaches, forms, and rhetorical techniques that demonstrate understanding of the writer's purpose and audience.	✓	✓	

A.3. Evaluate relevance, quality, sufficiency, and depth of preliminary ideas and information, organize material generated, and formulate a thesis.			✓
A.5. Edit writing for proper voice, tense, and syntax, assuring that it conforms to standard English, when appropriate.			✓
<i>II. Reading</i>			
A.1. Use effective reading strategies to determine a written work's purpose and intended audience.	✓	✓	
A.2. Use text features and graphics to form an overview of informational texts and to determine where to locate information.	✓	✓	
A.3. Identify explicit and implicit textual information including main ideas and author's purpose.	✓	✓	
A.4. Draw and support complex inferences from text to summarize, draw conclusions, and distinguish facts from simple assertions and opinions.	✓	✓	
A.5. Analyze the presentation of information and the strength and quality of evidence used by the author, and judge the coherence and logic of the presentation and the credibility of an argument.	✓	✓	
A.7. Evaluate the use of both literal and figurative language to inform and shape the perceptions of readers.	✓	✓	
A.8. Compare and analyze how generic features are used across texts.	✓	✓	
A.9. Identify and analyze the audience, purpose, and message of an informational or persuasive text.	✓	✓	
A.10. Identify and analyze how an author's use of language appeals to the senses, creates imagery, and suggests mood.	✓	✓	
A.11. Identify, analyze, and evaluate similarities and differences in how multiple texts present information, argue a position, or relate a theme.	✓	✓	

<i>III. Speaking</i>			
B.1. Participate actively and effectively in one-on-one oral communication situations.		✓	✓
B.2. Participate actively and effectively in group discussions.		✓	✓
B.3. Plan and deliver focused and coherent presentations that convey clear and distinct perspectives and demonstrate solid reasoning.		✓	✓
<i>IV. Listening</i>			
A.2. Interpret a speaker's message; identify the position taken and the evidence in support of that position.	✓	✓	✓
B.1. Listen critically and respond appropriately to presentations.		✓	✓
B.3. Listen actively and effectively in group discussions.		✓	✓

## TEKS Standards Addressed

<i>Interrogating the Text - Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS): English Language Arts and Reading</i>
110.34.b.3. Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Poetry. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of poetry and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to evaluate the changes in sound, form, figurative language, graphics, and dramatic structure in poetry across literary time periods.
110.34.b.4. Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Drama. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of drama and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to evaluate how the structure and elements of drama change in the works of British dramatists across literary periods.
110.34.b.5. Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Fiction. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of fiction and provide evidence from text to support their understanding.
110.34.b.6. Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Literary Nonfiction. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the varied structural patterns and features of literary nonfiction and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to analyze the effect of ambiguity, contradiction, subtlety, paradox, irony, sarcasm, and overstatement in literary essays, speeches, and other forms of literary nonfiction.

<b><i>Interrogating the Text - Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS): English Language Arts and Reading</i></b>
110.34.b.7. Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Sensory Language. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about how an author's sensory language creates imagery in literary text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to analyze how the author's patterns of imagery, literary allusions, and conceits reveal theme, set tone, and create meaning in metaphors, passages, and literary works.
110.34.b.8. Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Culture and History. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about the author's purpose in cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding. Students are expected to analyze the consistency and clarity of the expression of the controlling idea and the ways in which the organizational and rhetorical patterns of text support or confound the author's meaning or purpose.
110.34.b.9. Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Expository Text. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about expository text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>110.34.b.9.A. Summarize a text in a manner that captures the author's viewpoint, its main ideas, and its elements without taking a position or expressing an opinion.</li> <li>110.34.b.9.B. Explain how authors writing on the same issue reached different conclusions because of differences in assumptions, evidence, reasoning, and viewpoints.</li> <li>110.34.b.9.C. Make and defend subtle inferences and complex conclusions about the ideas in text and their organizational patterns.</li> <li>110.34.b.9.D. Synthesize ideas and make logical connections (e.g., thematic links, author analysis) among multiple texts representing similar or different genres and technical sources and support those findings with textual evidence.</li> </ul>
110.34.b.10. Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Persuasive Text. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about persuasive text and provide evidence from text to support their analysis. Students are expected to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>110.34.b.10.A. Evaluate the merits of an argument, action, or policy by analyzing the relationships (e.g., implication, necessity, sufficiency) among evidence, inferences, assumptions, and claims in text.</li> <li>110.34.b.10.B. Draw conclusions about the credibility of persuasive text by examining its implicit and stated assumptions about an issue as conveyed by the specific use of language.</li> </ul>
110.34.b.13. Writing/Writing Process. Students use elements of the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) to compose text. Students are expected to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>110.34.b.13.A. Plan a first draft by selecting the correct genre for conveying the intended meaning to multiple audiences, determining appropriate topics through a range of strategies (e.g., discussion, background reading, personal interests, interviews), and developing a thesis or controlling idea.</li> <li>110.34.b.7.B. Structure ideas in a sustained and persuasive way (e.g., using outlines, note taking, graphic organizers, lists) and develop drafts in timed and open-ended situations that include transitions and the rhetorical devices to convey meaning.</li> <li>110.34.b.7.C. Revise drafts to clarify meaning and achieve specific rhetorical purposes, consistency of tone, and logical organization by rearranging the words, sentences, and paragraphs to employ tropes (e.g., metaphors, similes, analogies, hyperbole, understatement, rhetorical questions, irony), schemes (e.g., parallelism, antithesis, inverted word order, repetition, reversed structures), and by adding transitional words and phrases.</li> <li>110.34.b.7.D. Edit drafts for grammar, mechanics, and spelling.</li> <li>110.34.b.7.E. Revise final draft in response to feedback from peers and teacher and publish written work for appropriate audiences.</li> </ul>

<b><i>Interrogating the Text - Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS): English Language Arts and Reading</i></b>
<p>110.34.b.17. Oral and Written Conventions/Conventions. Students understand the function of and use the conventions of academic language when speaking and writing. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity. Students are expected to:</p> <p>110.34.b.17.A. Use and understand the function of different types of clauses and phrases (e.g., adjectival, noun, adverbial clauses and phrases).</p> <p>110.34.b.17.B. Use a variety of correctly structured sentences (e.g., compound, complex, compound-complex).</p>
<p>110.34.b.18. Oral and Written Conventions/Handwriting, Capitalization, and Punctuation. Students write legibly and use appropriate capitalization and punctuation conventions in their compositions. Students are expected to correctly and consistently use conventions of punctuation and capitalization.</p>
<p>110.34.b.19. Oral and Written Conventions/Spelling. Students spell correctly. Students are expected to spell correctly, including using various resources to determine and check correct spellings.</p>
<p>110.34.b.24. Listening and Speaking/Listening. Students will use comprehension skills to listen attentively to others in formal and informal settings. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity. Students are expected to:</p> <p>110.34.b.24.A. Listen responsively to a speaker by framing inquiries that reflect an understanding of the content and by identifying the positions taken and the evidence in support of those positions.</p> <p>110.34.b.24.B. Assess the persuasiveness of a presentation based on content, diction, rhetorical strategies, and delivery.</p>
<p>110.34.b.25. Listening and Speaking/Speaking. Students speak clearly and to the point, using the conventions of language. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity. Students are expected to formulate sound arguments by using elements of classical speeches (e.g., introduction, first and second transitions, body, and conclusion), the art of persuasion, rhetorical devices, eye contact, speaking rate (e.g., pauses for effect), volume, enunciation, purposeful gestures, and conventions of language to communicate ideas effectively.</p>
<p>110.34.b.26. Listening and Speaking/Teamwork. Students work productively with others in teams. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity. Students are expected to participate productively in teams, offering ideas or judgments that are purposeful in moving the team towards goals, asking relevant and insightful questions, tolerating a range of positions and ambiguity in decision-making, and evaluating the work of the group based on agreed-upon criteria.</p>

# Interrogating the Text: Reading Closely, Reading Critically

## *Introduction*

In this assignment, you will learn how to analyze a text by breaking it up into its component parts and examining how each part contributes to the text's overall performance. First, you will be asked to work with an assigned passage using the *Interrogating the Text* handout. Then, you will work in groups to discuss, challenge, and sharpen each other's answers.

## *Directions*

### **Getting Started**

1. Read through the *Interrogating the Text* handout, If you have any questions about it, bring them up immediately.
2. Read through the passage, and address any questions you might have about it immediately.
3. After reading and discussing the *Interrogating the Text* handout in class and quickly reviewing the passage to be analyzed, you will answer the questions on the handout as fully as possible in writing.

### **Investigating**

1. Answer the questions in the handout thoroughly with your partner or in your small group. All members of the group should have a part in explaining their thoughts. They should have one or more examples of textual evidence from the passage to support their responses. You need either to come to some consensus about your group's responses, or make sure that differing answers are included in your group's response to each question.
2. One at a time, each group will take turns presenting its response to a question. Once a group has finished presenting, you should be prepared to ask its members questions about what they said. You might consider questions such as:
  - a. What led you to believe that?
  - b. Can you explain more about what you meant by...?
  - c. Do you believe that it might also be true that...?

3. You will then return to your original groups, and discuss whether you would change any of your responses, based on the larger class discussion.

### **Drawing Conclusions**

1. Prepare written answers to all the questions on the *Interrogating the Text* handout, making any additions or changes to your original answers that you feel are necessary in light of your discussions about them.
2. Write a 1-2 page essay in which you describe the larger insights gained by interrogating the passage. These insights can be about the text or about yourself as a reader.

## Interrogating the Text

1. Can the text be divided into parts? Please mark these divisions on your copy of the text.

If you're reading an expository passage, is there a clear Introduction? A thesis statement or explanation of its argument? Are there individual points made in the middle sections? Is there a clear concluding section?

If you're reading a narrative, is there an Introductory section of sorts? Can the action of the middle section be divided up in some way? Is there a concluding act?

2. Are there moments in the text when you think the argument (for expository texts) or the action (for narratives) changes significantly? Mark those spots in the text.

3. Are there places in the text that are confusing to you? Mark them.

4. Now take each section you've marked off, and for each one answer the question:

(For an expository text) What is the argument here?

(For a narrative text) How would I describe what happens here?

5. Are there figurative devices or images used in the text? Circle them. Are there repeated elements, images, or phrases? Mark them.

6. Look at the differences between your answers in Question 4 and the actual language used in the text, especially differences in the language used in the text as opposed to your paraphrases of it. How and why are these differences significant? How do the figurative language and images you circled contribute to the text? What is the effect of the repeated elements that you noted in Question 5?

7. Now, thinking about the text as a whole, how would you answer these questions:

(For an expository text) What is this text's argument?

(For a narrative text) What is this story about?

8. How do the individual sections you marked off in Questions 1 and 2 contribute to your answer to Question 7? Specifically:

(For an expository text) How does this text go about making its argument?

(For a narrative text) How does each individual action contribute to the story overall?

9. What is the tone, mood, or effect of the passage?

10. What conclusions do you take away from this passage?