

QUESTION STARTERS

The purpose of Question Starters is to help students formulate thoughtful questions, improve critical thinking skills, differentiate between thoughtful questions and questions that require little to no thought, and begin to think about a text in meaningful ways. Question Starters are the beginnings of questions, both good and bad questions. The role of the teacher is to begin to point out the difference between questions that leave no room for thoughtful response or depth of response and questions that promote a thoughtful response. To enhance clarity between the two, teachers may want to label the thoughtful questions "good" or "two million dollar" or "thoughtful" or whatever term the teacher feels comfortable with. Teachers should label the non-thoughtful questions "bad" or "one dollar" or "little thought" or any term the teacher feels comfortable with that distinguishes between the two types of questions.

First, explain to students that "good" questions are questions that make others think or that elicit more than a one-word response. Tell them questions that require a one-word response are not "good" questions. Ask them if they can think of any "good" questions. Make two columns on the board. At the top of one column, write the word "good" and at the top of the other column, write the word "bad" or "one dollar" or whatever would indicate that these aren't strong questions. As students call out their questions, talk to them about whether or not the questions begin with words that cause listeners to think about their responses and answer with more than one word. Questions that begin with *why*, *how*, and *what* are often questions that require a thoughtful answer. Point these words out to students as you write them on the board in the "good" column. Questions that start with *did*, *when*, or *where* often do not require more than one word as an answer. Place those words in the "bad" column. Often questions that contain the words *explain* or *describe* call for thoughtful responses. Ask students how they might use those words in a sentence as you add them to your "good" column. When you are finished, ask if students can think of any more good or bad question starters. Add them to your list and post the list somewhere highly visible in the class as students will be referring to them during reciprocal teaching, re-vision, and many other activities where they will need to generate good questions that will cause others—and themselves—to think.