



TI-AIE

Whole-class reading routines

Secondary English

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What this unit is about



At secondary level, my students are expected to read long and difficult passages in English. The textbooks and supplementary readers feature lots of stories and poems, but also biographies and travelogues. How can I help them to read and understand English texts independently?

Teaching reading in English is emphasised in the National Curriculum Framework (2005). Students need to be equipped with good reading skills for their own success and in order to contribute to their community. If you can help students to develop skills for reading English independently, you will be helping them in later life. Reading is also a transferable skill, so improving students' reading skills in English will help them to be better readers in their other languages as well.

Good readers of any language use certain techniques to help them understand what they are reading. They ask themselves questions as they read a text. They use what they know about the world to make sense of what they are reading. They identify which points are more important to understand and remember. In your English lessons, you can help your students to learn some of these techniques.

In this unit you will look at techniques that you can use to help students to become independent readers, particularly when reading silently on their own. These techniques will help them to understand the varied and complex texts that they have to read for their classes and exams, and also in their lives beyond school.

What you can learn in this unit

- Techniques for reading for understanding in English.
- Classroom activities to encourage deeper student engagement with English texts.
- Groupwork activities to support reading.

1 Asking questions as you read

One way to help students deepen their understanding of what they are reading is to encourage them to ask questions of a text themselves while they read.

There are broadly two types of questions that students can ask themselves: factual and inferential. Answers to factual questions can easily be found in the text. These kinds of questions usually begin with words such as 'what', 'who', 'where', 'how many' and 'when'. Inferential questions ask readers to draw conclusions based on what they have read. Answers to these questions are not explicitly stated in the text. To answer these kinds of questions you need to think more deeply and make connections between what is in the text and what you know about the world. These kinds of questions begin with words and phrases such as:

- 'What do you think ...?'
- 'Why do you think ...?'
- 'How do you know ...?'
- 'What if ...?'

There are not always right or wrong answers to these questions. These kinds of questions make students become more involved in the text, and make them think more critically. (See Resource 1, 'Using questioning to promote thinking', for examples of these types of questions.)

Read Case Study 1 to hear how one teacher uses student-generated questions in a reading task.

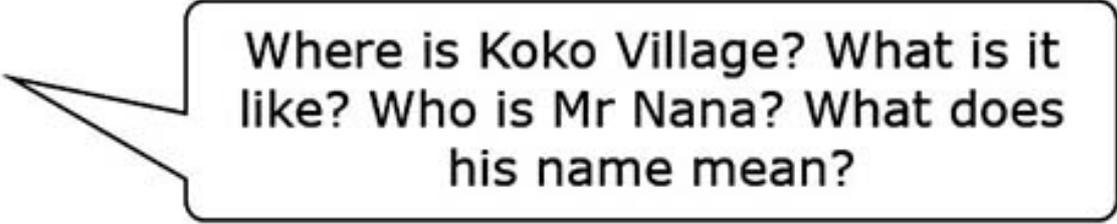


[Video: Using questioning to promote thinking](#)

Case Study 1: Mr Chakratodi helps his students to ask different kinds of questions about a text

Mr Chakratodi teaches English at a secondary government school. He tried to get his students to question while they read.

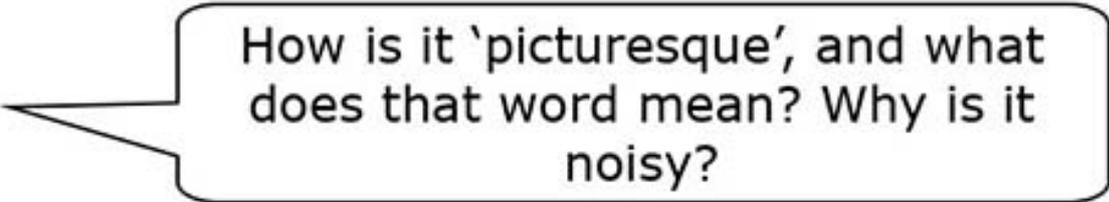
When we were doing a lesson from the textbook [Central Board of Secondary Education, 2011a], I read the first line of the passage – 'Mr Sunday Nana, his wife and four small children live in Koko Village, Nigeria' – and asked them to think of questions that they could ask about it:



Where is Koko Village? What is it like? Who is Mr Nana? What does his name mean?

Then I read the next line: 'The village is like any other African village – picturesque, colourful and noisy.'

I asked the students if any of their previous questions were answered and they said that they now had a little more information about the village. Then I asked them to think of some more questions about the second sentence.



How is it 'picturesque', and what does that word mean? Why is it noisy?

I told students to spend the next 15 minutes reading the passage and noting down questions they had as they were reading it. As they worked I walked around the room and helped any students who were having problems. It was interesting to look at the questions that the students were asking, and it also helped me to see which students had a better understanding of the text.

Activity 1: Helping your students to ask questions about a text

In Case Study 1, the teacher asked students to note different kinds of questions as they read a passage from the textbook. Follow these steps to do this with your students:

- 1 Before the class begins, select a lesson or a part of one. It can be any kind of passage, such as a literary text, a travelogue or a factual text. It could be the next lesson in the textbook, or a passage from the supplementary reader.
- 2 In class, ask your students to say words or phrases that can be used at the beginning of questions (giving examples if necessary). Write the suggestions on the blackboard in two columns, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Examples of words or phrases that can be used at the beginning of questions.

Factual

What ...?

Inferential

How ...?

Where ...?	How do you know ...?
When ...?	What if ...?
Who ...?	What do you think ...?
Which ...?	Why do you think ...?
How many/much/often ...?	Can you tell me more about ...?

- 3 Tell the students to read the selected text (or part of a text) individually and silently. As they read, they should note down questions that occur to them about the text. Read out the first couple of lines and give some examples, as in Case Study 1.
- 4 Give them ten minutes to note down as many questions as they can. As they work, walk around the room and help any students where necessary.
- 5 After ten minutes, tell the students to stop writing and ask for some examples of questions. Write these on the blackboard.
 - Read through the questions and ask students:
 - Which questions are easier to answer? Why?
 - Which questions are more difficult to answer? Why?
 - Are any questions impossible to answer?
 - Do these kinds of questions help you to understand the lesson? Why (not)?

