

Guided Reading Questions and Additional Lesson Plans – Aligned to the California English Language Arts Standards

Simple One-Page Question Guides for Grades 1–3 and Grades 4–6

Aligned Focus: These questions support California Common Core ELA reading skills, including asking and answering questions, identifying key details, retelling or summarizing, explaining the main idea or theme, analyzing characters or ideas, using text evidence, and understanding vocabulary in context.

Teacher Use: Select a few questions before, during, and after reading. Use with literature or informational text during small-group, partner, or independent reading.

Grades 1–3 Guided Reading Questions

Before Reading	What do you notice about the title, cover, pictures, or headings? What do you already know about this topic or kind of story? What do you predict this text will be about? What question do you have before reading?
During Reading	Who or what is this text mostly about? What important details help you understand? What problem, event, or main idea is developing? How does a character feel, act, or respond? What word or phrase do you need to figure out?
After Reading	Retell the story or summarize the text in your own words. What was the lesson, message, or main idea? What details from the text support your answer? What did you learn, notice, or still wonder?
Text Evidence / Notes	

Key Standards

- **RL/RI.1.1–3.1:** Ask and answer questions about key details in literary and informational texts.
- **RL/RI.1.2–3.2:** Retell stories, summarize texts, and identify the main topic, central message, or main idea.
- **RL.1.3–3.3:** Describe characters, settings, major events, and character responses.
- **RI.1.5–3.5:** Use headings, captions, and other text features to build understanding.
- **L.1.4–3.4:** Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown words and phrases.

Grades 4–6 Guided Reading Questions

Before Reading	What clues do the title, headings, images, captions, or text features give you? What do you predict, and what evidence supports your prediction? What background knowledge connects to this text? What question or purpose will guide your reading?
During Reading	What is the central idea, theme, or main conflict? How does the author develop the idea or theme across the text? How does a character, speaker, event, or idea change? What words, phrases, or details affect meaning, tone, or point of view? What evidence best supports your thinking?
After Reading	Summarize the text objectively. What is the theme or central idea, and how is it developed? How do characters, events, ideas, or text structure contribute to meaning? What claim can you make about the text, and what evidence supports it?
Text Evidence / Notes	_____ _____ _____ _____

Key Standards

- **RL/RI.4.1–6.1:** Refer to details, quote accurately, and cite evidence from the text.
- **RL/RI.4.2–6.2:** Determine theme or central idea and summarize objectively.
- **RL/RI.4.3–6.3:** Analyze characters, events, ideas, and relationships.
- **RL/RI.4.4–6.4:** Determine word meanings, including figurative, academic, and domain-specific vocabulary.
- **RL/RI.4.5–6.6:** Analyze text structure, point of view, and author’s purpose.

Lesson Plan: Story Elements

Lesson Focus	Students identify and describe the characters, setting, problem, major events, and solution in a children's book.
Best For	Fiction texts; Grades 1–4, with support or extension as needed.

Materials	Any children's book, chart paper or board, student paper or graphic organizer.
Before Reading	Preview the cover and title. Ask: Who might the story be about? Where might it take place? What problem might happen?
During Reading	Pause to ask: Who are the characters? Where is the story happening? What problem is beginning? What important event just happened?
After Reading	Have students complete: The characters are _____. The setting is _____. The problem is _____. The solution is _____.
Assessment / Exit Ticket	Students retell the story using beginning, middle, and end, or draw and label one story element.
Differentiation	Support: Provide picture cards or sentence frames. Extension: Explain how one event caused another event in the story.

Key Standards

- **RL.1.2–RL.4.2:** Retell stories, summarize, and identify the central message or theme.
- **RL.1.3–RL.4.3:** Identify and describe characters, setting, major events, problem, and solution.
- **RL.1.1–RL.4.1:** Ask and answer questions using details from the text.
- **SL.1.1–SL.4.1:** Participate in collaborative discussions about the story.
- **W.1.8–W.4.9:** Recall or use text details to support written responses.

Lesson Plan: Character Traits

Lesson Focus	Students describe a character's traits using the character's words, actions, thoughts, and feelings as evidence.
Best For	Fiction texts: Grades 2–6, with simplified language for younger students.
Materials	Any children's book with a clear main character, sticky notes, a character trait word list, a student paper, or a graphic organizer.

Before Reading	Introduce the idea that a trait describes what a character is like on the inside. Preview the main character and ask students to predict one possible trait.
During Reading	Pause to ask: What did the character say or do? What does that show about the character? How is the character feeling? What evidence supports your idea?
After Reading	Have students complete: I think the character is ____ because _____. Another piece of evidence is _____.
Assessment / Exit Ticket	Students choose one trait for the main character and support it with one or two details from the text.
Differentiation	Support: Provide a short list of traits such as bravery, kindness, curiosity, honesty, or determination. Extension: Compare how the character changes from the beginning to the end.

Key Standards

- **RL.2.3–RL.6.3:** Describe characters' traits, feelings, motivations, actions, and how characters respond or change.
- **RL.2.1–RL.6.1:** Use text evidence to support ideas about a character.
- **RL.4.3–RL.6.3:** Analyze character development and compare character changes or responses.
- **W.2.8–W.6.9:** Support written character analysis with evidence from the text.
- **SL.2.1–SL.6.1:** Discuss character traits and evidence with peers.

Lesson Plan: Theme / Lesson Learned

Lesson Focus	Students identify the lesson, message, or theme of a children's book and support their thinking with text evidence.
Best For	Fiction texts: Grades 3–6, with oral discussion support for younger students.
Materials	Any children's book with a clear message or lesson, chart paper or board, student paper or response sheet.

Before Reading	Explain that many stories teach a lesson or message about life. Ask students to listen to what the character learns or what the author may want readers to understand.
During Reading	Pause to ask: What problem is the character facing? What choice does the character make? What does the character learn? What events seem important?
After Reading	Have students complete: The lesson or theme is _____. I know this because _____. This lesson could apply to real life because _____.
Assessment / Exit Ticket	Students write one theme statement and support it with evidence from the beginning, middle, or end of the story.
Differentiation	Support: Provide theme sentence starters such as “Be kind,” “Never give up,” or “Friends help each other.” Extension: Explain how the author developed the theme through character choices and events.

Key Standards

- **RL.1.2–RL.6.2:** Identify the lesson, moral, message, theme, or central idea of a story.
- **RL.3.2–RL.6.2:** Explain how the theme is developed through details, events, and character choices.
- **RL.3.1–RL.6.1:** Support theme statements with text evidence.
- **W.3.9–W.6.9:** Write responses using evidence from literary texts.
- **SL.3.1–SL.6.1:** Discuss theme, lesson, and evidence in collaborative conversations.