



# AUTHOR INTERVIEW

## DESCRIPTION

Author Interview is an activity used to deepen readers' understanding of character, plot, the author's message, or theme. By questioning the author's choices in narrative development, students consider the author's craft and the impact it has on theme. In this activity readers select the point of view of a character and develop questions from their perspective. They develop higher-level, open-ended questions about the author's purpose for the development of specific character traits, or why the events or conflicts that impacted them were written. Students can then answer their own questions from the point of view of the author, using their understanding of the text to make inferences. Alternatively, students reading the same text can work in pairs taking turns pretending to be the author and responding to each other's letters.

**LEARNING STRATEGIES** Inferring, Questioning, Synthesizing

**LESSON PLAN STAGE** Investigation, Synthesis

**SKILLS** Experience a Text

## PREPARATION

- This activity works well with short stories, picture books, or once students are a few chapters into or have finished a novel.
- Before you begin decide the specific purpose of this author interview is—what you want readers to question. Creating a bank of sample questions or question stems is useful.
- Decide if students will be assigned or choose characters whose point of view they will adopt for the question creation. Creating a graphic organizer for questions, a model author interview letter, and response would all be appropriate modeling tools or scaffolds.

## ACTIVITY STEPS

## TEACHING TIPS

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| 1 Introduce the purpose of the Author Interview: analyzing author's purpose, theme, plot, or characterization.  | Select a purpose the students have experience thinking about and have different strategies for analysis already. This is a higher-level activity that will build on other approaches. |
| 2 Discuss questioning the author as an activity that will help interpret the importance of author's choices. You might discuss how authors often prefer that readers interpret the meaning of stories and support multiple interpretations. | This could be a great time to play an audio/visual of an interview with authors, especially if you can find interviews that focus on specific texts.                                  |



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| 3 | As a class, re-read a brief section of text from the previous day or from a shared reading to model identifying points that motivate questions, and connect them to questions from the bank.  | This step might not be necessary after the first time you introduce author interviews, or for students highly skilled at questioning.   |
| 4 | Allow students to select, or assign to them, the character whose point of view they will adopt as they develop questions. As students read they should be clear on the events or descriptions that might trigger a question for the author. | The first time you try this assignment it might be beneficial to reserve one character to use as a whole group model.   |
| 5 | Allow time (15-30 minutes) for identification and annotation of details that might generate questions for their specific category.  |   |
| 6 | Ask students to collect their questions and write them up in a letter to the author that explains how those details impacted the character or why they want to know more.   | Have a sample letter available for students to use as a model.  |
| 7 | Students can share their letters with partners who wrote from a different characters' point of view. An extension activity would allow partners to write responses from the author's point of view.   | Students must have a shared text to answer each other's letters.  |
| 8 | Students can reflect orally or in writing, in pairs, groups, as a class, or individually.   | Students respond to questions including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How did thinking about the author's purpose in creating certain characters or events help to understand the theme, character, and narrative?</li><li>• How can I incorporate this type of questioning into my regular reading practices?</li></ul> |