



## BEYOND THE LINE QUESTIONS

### DESCRIPTION

In this activity, adapted from Harvey & Goudvis's *Strategies that Work* (2007), students will create and use beyond-the-line questions that provoke deeper thinking and prompt lively student discussions. These are questions that can't be answered with one or two words or by referencing a single line of text, but arise in complex moments of the text. The purpose of this activity is to extend and deepen thinking in response to inferential questions.

**LEARNING STRATEGIES** Questioning, Inferring

**LESSON PLAN STAGE** Investigation, Synthesis, Reflection

**SKILLS** Author's Intent, Reading as a Writer, Clarifying Confusion vs HOT Questions,

### PREPARATION

- Select a text with complexities (symbolism, metaphors, complex relationships).
- Read the text.
- Create a few thought-provoking questions for the introduction.
- Create two or three sample beyond-the-line questions from the text to use in the mini-lesson.
- Gather index cards (two for each student).
- Decide on a grouping strategy for discussion groups.

### ACTIVITY STEPS

### TEACHING TIPS

1 Introduce Beyond-The-Line Questions.

Ask students two or three thought-provoking questions like "If you could invite any three people to dinner, past or present, who would you invite and why?" Students can turn and talk. Having a few of these types of questions to get students thinking will help make a connection with the benefits of deeper thinking and lively discussions. Discuss with students the types of questions and responses that emerged during the turn-and-talk. Were these easy questions to answer or did you have to really think about them? Why?



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### ACTIVITY STEPS

### TEACHING TIPS

- | ACTIVITY STEPS                                      | TEACHING TIPS   |
|---|---|
| 2 Conduct mini-lesson on beyond-the-line questions. | Transition from the thought-provoking questions in the introduction to a mini-lesson on beyond-the-line questions (BTLQ). Define beyond-the-line questions as questions that can't be answered with one or two words or by referencing a single line of text, but instead are questions that arise in complex moments of the text. They are questions that ask students to make inferences. A review of inferences may be necessary here. Share sample BTLQ with students. Think aloud with students and explain why these particular questions are BTLQ. What makes them more thought-provoking and/or are likely to lead to lively discussions?                                   |
| 3 Practice writing BTLQ.                            | Have students individually practice writing BTLQ based on the text.   |
| 4 Share-out of questions.                           | Ask for student volunteers to share questions. Discuss the quality of the questions. Are they BTLQ? Why?  |
| 5 Model written response to BTLQ.                   | Select one of the sample BTLQ questions used in the mini-lesson and model a written response. During the think-aloud point out how the answer shows deeper thinking. For example, "In this answer I had to think about the relationship between characters, instead of just discussing their actions."  |
| 6 Write response to individual BTLQ.                | Students will select their two best BTLQs, write them on the front of separate index cards, and write their responses on the back.  |
| 7 Conduct group discussion.                         | Students will form in groups of four or five. The groups can be formed purposefully or randomly. All of the index cards (two from each student in the group) will be shuffled into one pile. The students will select an index card, read the BTLQ, and discuss as a group. The group will continue to select the next question and discuss. Remind students that the purpose of the discussion is to think deeply and have a lively discussion about the content. The purpose is not to rush through and answer all of the questions. It may be necessary to review or explicitly teach general protocols and guidelines of scholarly discussion. See accountable talk techniques. |
| 8 Share out.  | Ask each group to summarize the BTLQ that provoked the most thought or liveliest discussion within the group.   |
| 9 Reflect.  | Ask students to individually reflect on BTLQ. Did the BTLQ push you to think more deeply about the content? Explain your answer with specifics from your written response or the discussion.  |