

### The Purpose and Value of Questioning Students

According to the Hickman, Cotton, and Brualdi, there are several purposes for questioning students. They also found that there is a high value placed on questioning students. It allows the teacher to assess the students, impart knowledge on the students, and create a cognitive based thinking within the students' minds, among other things.

Several purposes were discussed, especially within the article by Cotton. Of the purposes presented, developing interest, developing critical thinking skills and curiosity, stimulating students to pursue knowledge on their own, and assessing achievement seemed most important.

Developing interest in students is one of the toughest jobs a teacher can have. If the student is not interested in the class, they will not learn anything. Boredom is education's worst enemy. Questions can help conquer the boredom. Questioning students makes them involved in the lesson instead of just listening to a person standing in front of the class. Movies and video games are more interesting than a person talking, unless that person has superior oratory skills, which is not necessarily the case among teachers. Asking the right questions helps the students become involved. They begin to play the "game" of answering, which can lead to in-depth discussions about the material which not only sheds light on the subject within the student who's answering, but also among his/her peers as they listen to the answers and slowly mold their own answers based on what they hear.

This leads to the development of critical thinking skills and curiosity. The students become curious about the material when the right questions are asked. The right questions are not necessarily those of just spouting off factoids, unless the teacher's goal

is to assess that particular knowledge of the students. But when the right questions are asked, based on the level of the students involved, then the curiosity level goes up and the student becomes interested in the material. They also begin to truly start thinking critically of the question. “How does this make me feel?” “Haven’t I learned something about this in another class that I can apply here?” “Is there a story I could tell that might explain my answer better?” These questions pop up in their minds as they work to present their answers. They begin comparing and contrasting, evaluating, theorizing, and many of the other high order activities from Bloom’s Taxonomy.

With these questions in their head, some students become very interested in the topic. For example, a student may become interested in learning more about Huey P. Long after having a history lesson about him because the teacher asked questions that got the student interested. Or the teacher may pose a question about math that seems impossible, but a student decides to try working it out on his/her own. This is stimulating students to pursue knowledge on their own. It creates a love for learning. It helps to create good researchers and curious students.

Finally, comes the assessing. Students hate tests. Tests, however, are necessary. But oral questioning is not necessarily testing, at least not in the sense that the student is aware of the test taking place. If asked the right questions, the teacher can easily assess if the students understand the information that they have been provided. Do they understand the poem? Did they understand yesterday’s math lecture?

Without questioning, these purposes can not be fulfilled. Sure, some of these purposes can be fulfilled with pure statements, or simply asking questions on piece of paper. But this does not involve the student in the process. It also does not allow for peers

to learn from each other. The learning environment is cold and boring without oral questions.

There are guidelines for questioning. Bloom's Taxonomy is one. It is a great reference to allow a teacher to create high-order or low-order questions that meet the needs of their students and help create a learning environment. Cotton points out that it is very necessary to balance the types of questions with the students. Younger or less able students need more low-order. Older or more able students need more high-order. Increasing or decreasing wait time between question and requesting an answer also has an impact on different students.

My own questioning seems to fall within the IRE mold that Hickman points out. I ask the question, wait for the answer, and then normally evaluate the question with a negative, positive, or indifferent response. Before reading this information, I never realized there was a mold like this that one could fall into. My praise also comes off as insincere, even though I know otherwise. I believe that problem is in the presentation, and not the praise itself. I believe I come up with good questions. But according to these articles, there is timing to the questions that I'm not adhering to. Watching Ms. McAbee, I have found that she relates her questions to the students and allows for the proper wait times between asking and prompting for an answer. I never realized why her questioning was so much more effective. Using the guidelines provided, especially in Cotton's article, I believe I could modify my questioning techniques to be more useful to elicit the purposes of developing interest, developing critical thinking skills and curiosity, stimulating students to pursue knowledge on their own, and assessing achievement.

### Bloom's Taxonomy and How It Relates to Goals, Objective, and Essential Questions

The goal of my lesson was “To help the students analyze poetry by Sara Holbrook and to have them connect that poetry to their own lives.” Along those lines I came up with the following three essential questions:

1. Is poetry a viable means of presenting advice?
2. What kind of poetry does Sara Holbrook write?
3. Does her poetry connect to real life? Why?

While creating the questions I did for each of the different poems, I looked at how best to ask questions that would lead the students to be able to understand the poetry presented to them. After looking at this chart of the questions that not only I prepared, but also that I improvised during the course of the lesson, I found that I did a relatively decent job of using different level questions to accomplish my goals.

Question 9 specifically showed that advice could be given or at least inferred from poetry. Throughout the questioning process, the students were able to deduce the kind of poetry that Sara Holbrook was writing. Questions such as 9, 10, 31, and a few others helped to connect the poetry to the lives of the students.

My objectives of introducing the poetry, analyzing the poetry, and applying it to their lives are quite evident throughout the questioning. A few knowledge questions were used to introduce the poetry. The comprehension, knowledge, and analysis questions helped with the analyzing objective. Many of the application level questions and evaluation level questions helped accomplish the life application objective.

So, overall, my goal of analyzing and connecting the poetry to students' lives was accomplished because I designed the questions appropriately using Bloom's Taxonomy.

Each type of question helped me reach an objective or helped them answer an essential question. The levels of questions do matter to determine how those goals are reached.

The lower level questions connected the poetry to their knowledge while the higher level questions connected to poetry to their lives and allowed for even greater comprehension.

The questions were also interesting enough, because of the variety, to keep them truly involved in the discussion. It was a wondrous experience for me.

	QUESTION	BLOOM'S TAXONOMY
1	(After giving them the bellwork question of "What's your greatest fear of growing up?") What's the answer to the question?	Knowledge
2	(After reading "The Prick" and telling them I wrote it about a fear of mine) What do you think my fear was?	Comprehension
3	(Of being rejected) Does anyone else have that fear?	Knowledge
4	(After reading "Cocoon" and telling them I wrote it about a fear of mine) So, what do you think my fear was at that point?	Comprehension
5	(After reading "The Storm That Was") What is the storm the speaker is referring to?	Comprehension
6	Explain who "you" is in the poem.	Analysis
7	Apply the knowledge you got from the previous two questions and explain how the storm blew away.	Application
8	Compare and contrast the "you" and the "me". What kind of people are they?	Analysis
9	Suppose you were "you". How would you have handled the situation?	Application
10	What did y'all think of "The Storm That Was"? Does it speak of things that happen to you?	Knowledge
11	(After reading "Wrong") What does the speaker want to hide from?	Comprehension
12	(After telling story) Do you think that's how this feels?	Knowledge
13	Who are the possible people "you" could be referring to?	Comprehension
14	Does the speaker like it when "you" is right?	Knowledge
15	So why not?	Analysis
16	Compare and contrast the "you" from this poem and the other poem.	Analysis

	Are they different people?	
17	So, have you ever felt like my 4 year old and felt the same way as the speaker?	Knowledge
18	Ok. Why? Give me some examples.	Application
19	(After reading "A Step") Who are the two people in the poem?	Comprehension
20	What's going on in the poem?	Comprehension
21	Identify the fear portrayed in the poem.	Comprehension
22	Analyze the second stanza. Is "it" really a step? If not, what is "it"?	Analysis
23	So what do you think would happen if the step is taken?	Evaluation
24	(After reading "Private Property") What does the title, "Private Property", mean?	Analysis
25	Who does the speaker refer to when they say "others"?	Analysis
26	What kind of person do you think "she" is?	Evaluation
27	So do you think she is dependent or independent?	Comprehension
28	So now that we've put it in that reference, who's the "others"?	Analysis
29	So why does the speaker choose trashcan, road, and beach as things they are not?	Analysis
30	So what's the theme of this poem?	Analysis
31	So going back to our discussion on school uniforms, does this poem reflect your thoughts on them? How does it, or doesn't it?	Application
32	(After reading "Scream Bloody Murder") So what does this poem make you feel about violence in the news?	Knowledge
33	So answer the questions that the speaker asks in stanza 2 for me.	Application
34	So can we pretend that everyone is nice and that all lives have happy ends?	Application
35	What does the speaker mean by "die twice"?	Analysis
36	What's the first time?	Knowledge
37	What's the second time?	Comprehension
38	Do you feel that turning your back on the horror can cause the "wronged" to "die twice"?	Evaluation

### Wait-Time and Teacher Response: How They Effect Students

Most of my wait-time during this particular class was, according to Stahl, Student Task-Completion Wait-Time. They were given handouts with questions on them and then allowed to think about those questions for 3 to 5 minutes. They were then called on and asked to answer questions. When they were not answering such questions, they were calling out answers to the questions I asked outside of the handouts, so therefore, appropriate wait-time was not provided.

According to the chart below, there is not a significant difference in the wait-time provided and the level of questions. There are possibly a few more high-level questions using the Student Task-Completion Wait-Time than the 0 wait-times, but otherwise, they are mostly 50 percent of each.

My wait-time is sufficient for the handouts, but not nearly sufficient enough otherwise. I know the reason is because I allowed choral responses like Ornstein mentions should not be done. There are a few other mistakes I seemed to make. On the chart I mention that I clarify. Parts of that were repeating the answers so the other students could hear them. According to Ornstein that creates a situation where the students are not nearly attentive enough. I also asked a few double questions, which is another thing Ornstein believes is wrong because the students don't answer both, instead they choose one of them to answer, and normally pick the easiest and focus on that one.

How I believe I could improve my wait-time would be to begin with my classroom management. Instead of choral responses, I need hand-raising or teacher-choice students to answer the questions. The room needs to be controlled so that the 3

second pauses actually contain silence. Choral responses don't lend themselves well to that environment. Call-outs are frequent and interfere with the wait-time suggested by Stahl.

Another way to improve my wait-time would be to make sure after the classroom is managed, to take the 3 second Teacher Pause-Times that Stahl speaks of. That way, I can gather my own thoughts and make sure that I am contributing better through the questions I create off-the-cuff. On the chart I mention many times that my response was a "non-response." It's not that I didn't respond. It's that I responded with simple comments such as "ok." I did not take enough time to create a response that would lead the students to where they needed to go next within their thinking. They probably also felt a little cheated at those points because they either did not receive the praise they had earned or their minds were going one direction with the flow of discussion and I abruptly changed the topic by moving on to the next question.

That leads us to teacher responses and student achievement. Listening to the tape, I felt that the enthusiasm that was in the air at the beginning of class waned a little by the end. I feel it was because my responses did not fit as well as they should have. My praise was probably not so authentic to them especially with the number of "oks" I spoke. I also noticed that I had many "non-response" and "clarify" moments which were not conducive to a learning environment. I need to have more of the probing and redirecting moments. Those were the moments where I would ask a question and then notice they needed a little help, so I'd redirect and probe until I saw the "a-has" on their faces. Those were enjoyable moments for me and I believe they were for the students also.

In conclusion, my wait-time needs work for impromptu questions; however, I believe that the Student Task-Completion Wait-Time was quite sufficient. From the previous activity I learned that I am good at creating questions and lesson plans on paper, but that my delivery and responses are lacking. This activity has helped me move closer to my goal of pinpointing the exact issues I need to work on that would help me to improve overall on my delivery of the lessons I create.

For *wait-time*, I placed a “C” on questions that were given out as handouts so the students had a lot of time to think about them. This was done as a class. The “G”s represent questions that were given as handouts to one of four groups. So each group worked separately on the questions, but they were given plenty of time to think of their answers. The pauses were 3-5 minutes.

	QUESTION	BLOOM'S TAXONOMY	LEVEL	W A I T - T I M E	TEACHER RESPONSE
1	(After giving them the bellwork question of “What’s your greatest fear of growing up?”) What’s the answer to the question?	Knowledge	Low	0	Praise
2	(After reading “The Prick” and telling them I wrote it about a fear of mine) What do you think my fear was?	Comprehension	Low	1	Praise
3	(Of being rejected) Does anyone else have that fear?	Knowledge	Low	0	Non-response
4	(After reading “Cocoon” and telling them I wrote it about a fear of mine) So, what do you think my fear was at that point?	Comprehension	Low	0	Praise
5	(After reading “The Storm That Was”) What is the storm the speaker is referring to?	Comprehension	Low	C	Praise
6	Explain who “you” is in the poem.	Analysis	High	C	Praise
7	Apply the knowledge you got from the previous two questions and explain how the storm blew away.	Application	High	C	Praise

8	Compare and contrast the “you” and the “me”. What kind of people are they?	Analysis	High	C	Praise
9	Suppose you were “you”. How would you have handled the situation?	Application	High	C	Praise
10	What did y’all think of “The Storm That Was”? Does it speak of things that happen to you?	Knowledge	Low	0	Clarify
11	(After reading “Wrong”) What does the speaker want to hide from?	Comprehension	Low	C	Redirect
12	(After telling story) Do you think that’s how this feels?	Knowledge	Low	0	Non-response
13	Who are the possible people “you” could be referring to?	Comprehension	Low	C	Clarify
14	Does the speaker like it when “you” is right?	Knowledge	Low	C	Non-response
15	So why not?	Analysis	High	C	Clarify
16	Compare and contrast the “you” from this poem and the other poem. Are they different people?	Analysis	High	C	Clarify
17	So, have you ever felt like my 4 year old and felt the same way as the speaker?	Knowledge	Low	0	Probe
18	Ok. Why? Give me some examples.	Application	High	0	Non-response
19	(After reading “A Step”) Who are the two people in the poem?	Comprehension	Low	G	Non-response
20	What’s going on in the poem?	Comprehension	Low	G	Praise
21	Identify the fear portrayed in the poem.	Comprehension	Low	G	Praise
22	Analyze the second stanza. Is “it” really a step? If not, what is “it”?	Analysis	High	G	Praise
23	So what do you think would happen if the step is taken?	Evaluation	High	G	Praise
24	(After reading “Private Property”) What does the title, “Private Property”, mean?	Analysis	High	G	Non-response
25	Who does the speaker refer to when they say “others”?	Analysis	High	G	Redirect
26	What kind of person do you think “she” is?	Evaluation	High	0	Probe
27	So do you think she is dependent or independent?	Comprehension	Low	0	Clarify

28	So now that we've put it in that reference, who's the "others"?	Analysis	High	0	Clarify
29	So why does the speaker choose trashcan, road, and beach as things they are not?	Analysis	High	G	Praise
30	So what's the theme of this poem?	Analysis	High	G	Praise
31	So going back to our discussion on school uniforms, does this poem reflect your thoughts on them? How does it, or doesn't it?	Application	High	0	Redirect
32	(After reading "Scream Bloody Murder") So what does this poem make you feel about violence in the news?	Knowledge	Low	G	Praise
33	So answer the questions that the speaker asks in stanza 2 for me.	Application	High	G	Redirect
34	So can we pretend that everyone is nice and that all lives have happy ends?	Application	High	0	Clarify Probe
35	What does the speaker mean by "die twice"?	Analysis	High	G	Redirect
36	What's the first time?	Knowledge	Low	0	Probe
37	What's the second time?	Comprehension	Low	0	Praise
38	Do you feel that turning your back on the horror can cause the "wronged" to "die twice"?	Evaluation	High	G	Listened Non- response

## The Six Views of a Class

The following students attended the class that the seating chart (Fig. 2) on the last page refers to:

**Student Chart - Figure 1**

Name <removed for privacy>	G	E	L	T O A	Special Needs	Codes
	E N D E R	T H N I C I T Y	O C A I O N	Y F P E L I T I E S		
	M	C	BR	N		V 1
	F	AA	BR	N		V 2 NV 1
	F	C	FR	H		V 1
	F	C	BL	N		NV 1
	F	C	FR	H		V 13
	F	C	FL	N		0
	M	C	BL	N		V 8 NV 1
	F	C	BR	N		V 13
	F	C	BL	N		V 5
	F	C	FL	N		C 1
	F	C	FR	N		V 12
	F	C	FL	?		V 12
	M	C	BR	L	Multiple ways of viewing the information. (Handouts, PowerPoint, etc.)	V 4
	M	AA	FL	L		V 1
	F	C	BL	H		V 14
	M	C	FR	H		V 9

A few explanations are necessary. First, ethnicity is categorized as either Caucasian (C) or African-American (AA). Location is according to a 4 square grid of front-left (FL), front-right (FR), back-left (BL), or back-right (BR). These locations are according to looking at the seating chart (Fig. 2).

Type of abilities is categorized by normal (N), high achievement (H), low achievement (L), and unknown (?). Those who tend to make the best grades are high achievement. Those who tend to make low grades are low achievement. Normal is everyone else. Unknown only pertains to one student in this class: <removed>. She's a new student, so I have not had the time to get to know her or her achievement level. I categorized according to the levels mentioned by Ornstein.

There is only one special needs student in this class: <removed>. His information is noted on the chart, so it is rather self-evident. The codes column is also self-evident if viewed in conjunction with the seating chart (Fig. 2).

According to the student chart (Fig. 1), there were 16 people in attendance. That is actually the majority of the students enrolled in the class. Only one student was absent. Of those 16, 5 are male and 11 are female. 2 are African-American and 14 are Caucasian. 4 are high achievers, 2 are low achievers, 9 are normal, and 1 is unknown. Exactly half sat in front and half in back. The interesting part to note here is that out of all of the volunteers, the ones who volunteered more than 9 times were all female, all Caucasian, mostly in the front of the room, and contained 2 of the 4 high achievers. It's not surprising because of the number of females and Caucasians in the class, but it does tend to agree with the research that says that high achievers tend to be exploited when a choral or strictly volunteer system is used. It also shows a trend of front row students being the ones who feel more part of the class. This is a small sampling, but the pattern for high achievers and front row students would probably continue.

Another statistic of note is that there are 23 volunteer responses among the 5 males and 72 volunteer responses among the 11 females. If my math is correct, that

would mean there are approximately 6.5 responses per female and 4.6 responses per male. So females are 1.5 times more likely to volunteer an answer. From my own experience in high school, I would have to agree with the data and believe that a larger sample would support the same hypothesis. It also fits with the fact that of the 4 high achievers, only 1 is male.

The problem with the data is that it supports my theory from the previous activities of this assignment: My questioning strategy needs a lot of work. One student was not even involved in the questioning. One third of the students in the class answered most of the questions and therefore that third of the class received the most responses and attention. Whether the answers were call outs, volunteered, or not volunteered, there truly should have been equal, or close to equal, hash marks next to every name. Once again, this goes to the lack of classroom management I employ during the questioning and discussion portions of the class. If I continue the methods I currently employ, I would have mostly females sitting in the front row that make good grades answering my questions. I need to make sure I use wait-time, teacher/random selection of responders, and any other methods I may come upon to increase the responses of the males, back-row students, and low to normal achievers.



