

“Thick Questions” **Assessment Notes**

Grade Span: 3-4

Discipline: ELA

Maine Learning Results: H1

Standard H: Research Related Writing and Speaking

Students will work, write, and speak effectively when doing research in all content areas.

Performance Indicators:

1. Ask and seek answers to questions

Assessment Summary:

Students will develop and record knowledge and analysis level questions to research on a given topic, then find and record answers. They will develop additional questions as they read. (Bloom’s Taxonomy)

Materials and Resources:

Teacher approved classroom books (narrative nonfiction and nonfiction) at an appropriate reading level for each student

(Narrative nonfiction: memoirs, articles, editorials, histories, biographies, autobiographies, diaries, letters and commentaries)

Graphic organizer to record questions and answers - provided

Project specific rubric aligned with MLR - provided

Instructional material – provided

Suggested Timeframe:

Varies depending on the depth of the research.

Suggestions for Prior Instruction:

See suggested instructional material

Students should be familiar with the scoring rubric prior to beginning the project

Source of Original Assessment:

Local Assessment Development Institute for ELA, 2002

Thick Questions – Student Directions

Task

In the past few weeks we have been identifying and creating good “thick and thin” questions about a chosen topic. Today you will choose a topic that you want to know more about and use this inquiry process to develop good inquiry questions.

Inquiry Process:

1. Choose a topic by selecting a book from the group your teacher has provided.
2. Before you read your chosen book, record “what you know,” and “what you think you know,” on the chart.
3. Before you read your chosen book, record any questions. Try to make them thick questions like we learned about.
4. Read your book to find answers to your questions and continue to record new questions that arise from your research. Use the worksheet in this packet.
5. Put a check mark next to at least four “thick” questions you have recorded.



Remember that the goal of this task is to create good “thick” inquiry questions.

Before You Read

Name: _____
What you know

Theme: _____
What you think you know

--	--

Questions and Answers

Thick and Thin Questions

Answers I have found

Name: _____

Theme: _____

Questions I Have

**your thick questions*

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

Thick Questions: DRAFT SCORING GUIDE

3-4 ELA

	1 attempted demonstration (does not meet standards)	2 partial demonstration (partially meets standards)	3 proficient demonstration (meets standards)	4 sophisticated demonstration (exceeds standards)
<p>H. Research Related Writing and Speaking</p> <p>H1. Ask and seek answers to questions.</p> <p>Source of evidence: Question and Answer Chart</p>	<p>Questions are at the knowledge level only. Answers contain incorrect information.</p>	<p>Questions are primarily knowledge questions with limited analysis level questions. Answers contain some correct information.</p>	<p>Questions are varied in depth with a mixture of knowledge and analysis level questions. (e.g., questions that start with why? How come? I wonder, etc.) Answers are clear and contain correct information.</p>	<p>Questions are varied in depth with a mixture of knowledge and analysis level questions. (e.g., questions that start with why? How come? I wonder, etc.) Answers indicate an understanding of the topic that exceeds developmental level.</p>

Prior Instruction / Teacher Notes

Some children have to do two or three formal reports before they sense how to choose a subject and how to formulate effective questions. There is no need to rush to help children succeed. Rather, a tone of discovery, sharing in community, and a sense of wonder about the information is what the teacher seeks to foster in the children. The process of learning how to learn-to formulate questions, read, and finds an area of knowledge unique to yourself-eludes a majority of students over a lifetime. (Investigating Nonfiction, p.90)

Whole Class Instruction:

- Teacher needs to choose a topic that would be of high interest to most or all of the students in the class. It should be a topic about which the students have some prior knowledge because most questions come from already knowing something about the topic.
- The teacher will ask the students for information on the chosen topic, and will list this information on a chart (“What I Know/What I Think I Know”).
- The teacher will tell the class that they already know something about the chosen topic, but there is still much more information to be learned (Model-“2 would be interested to know if...”). The teacher would then chart 6 – 8 questions from students and ask “Which questions will give us the best information about the chosen topic?” This activity will help students to see the difference between “thick and thin” questions. (Strategies That Work, pg. 89)

Strategies That Work

A technique that helps students sift large global questions from smaller clarification questions is the thick and thin question approach. Thick questions are those that address large, universal concepts and often begin with Why? How come? I wonder? Or they address large content areas, such as What is photosynthesis? The answers to these questions are often long and involved, and require further discussion and research.

Thin questions are those primarily ask to clarify confusion, understand words, or access objective content. Questions that can be answered with a number or with a simple yes or no fit into this category. How many moons does Neptune have? is an example of a thin question. The answers are typically shorter than those for thick questions. Page 90

- The teacher will then provide an informational piece related to the chosen topic. This text could be read aloud or text read together while displayed on an over-head transparency. The teacher will introduce this activity and suggest that, as the students are reading, they should think about other questions they might have. These questions should be charted by the teacher. Students then will be asked to note which questions are the “fat” questions.

- The teacher will do whole-class practice of multiple-choice questions with the “Moon” example.
- The teacher will construct a similar list of questions from local curriculum.
- The local curriculum questions will be completed by students, scored, and returned to the students as feedback before they do the independent constructed response.

Moon Example

	What We Want to Know About the Moon:
Thin	1. What is the Moon made of? When was it made?
Thin	2. When did people start counting how many asteroids hit the Moon? Did they start with zero?
Thick	3. How did the Moon get in the sky?
Thick	4. How did people find the Moon?
Thick	5. Why is the Moon called the Moon?
Thick	6. Why does the Moon have no gravity?
Thin	7. Is the Moon close to a satellite?
Thin	8. Do scientists have another name for the Moon?
Thick	9. Why do we sometimes see only a half moon, full moon and quarter moon?
Thin	10. How many moons are there?
Thick	11. Why does the moon revolve around the Earth?
Thin	12. Who was the first person on the Moon?
Thin	13. What’s inside the Moon?
Thick	14. Why is the Moon white?

Writers Grades 3-6, pg. 433

Multiple Choice Tasks

You have had the opportunity to practice identifying and creating good inquiry questions about a chosen topic. Today you will identify “Thick” and “Thin” types of questions.

In the spaces below identify the type of question by writing either the word THICK or the word THIN on the blanks for each question.

Remember that thick questions call for broader answers and may start with words like Why? How come? I wonder. Thin questions call for shorter answers like a number, yes or no, or a single word.

Teacher Developed Questions from local curriculum here.

Resources:

Graves, Donald H.

The Reading/Writing Teacher's Companion: Investigate Nonfiction. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1989.

Harvey, Stephanie, and Anne Goudirs.

Strategies That Work. York, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers, 2000.

Fountas, Irene C. and Gay Su Pinnell

Guiding Readers and Writers Grades 3-6. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001

Books that show students how to pose questions:

Once a Wolf (Swinburne, 1999)

Stones, Bones and Petroglyphs (Goodman, 1998)

Guiding Readers and Writers Grades 3-6, pg. 433