Crafting Questions that Inspire Readers

Step ❶: Read the text carefully. Do you notice any of the following?

🞏 Words defined in the text
🞏 Claims or arguments made by the author
🞏 Inferences you are making
🞏 The author has an interesting purpose
🞏 The point of view changed or the organizational structure changed
🞏 Juicy (complex) sentences
🞏 Questions you are wondering about
🞏 Anything that makes you go, “Huh, that’s interesting.”

Step ❷: Formulate a question or questions based on what you noticed. The most complicated question will be the **last** question you will ask, though it may be the first one you think of.

Step❸: What key details will readers need to notice before answering your complex/interesting question(s)?

Step ❹: Revise the set of questions that came with the text so that students will notice the necessary key details and be prepared to answer your interesting question. Delete any questions that are no longer relevant for building an understanding of the key ideas.

Tips and Suggestions

* Aim to ask questions that build comprehension (not necessarily ones that check for it).
* You are on the right track if students need to reread a few times to answer your questions.
* It is ok to ask students about personal experiences so that they will make personal connections to the text, but try to **balance** these personal questions with others that ask students to dig deeper into the meaning of the text.
* Students may surprise you with the types of big thinking that they do when they are given the chance. Feel free to ask a big, challenging question as long as you start with questions that help them understand the necessary key details first.
* If students struggle with answering a question, rather than telling them the answer, try asking another question that breaks down the challenging one into smaller steps, or a question that helps them notice key information they are missing. And remind them to revisit and reread the text to find clues.
* Short on time? Haven’t read the text before class started? Ask students to read the text independently first, and as you read silently at the same time, notice interesting things to ask about. Write questions about these interesting things on the board for fast finishers to answer after completing the ones that came with the text.