

ANTICIPATION QUESTION STEMS: BAITING THE HOOK FOR STRUGGLING READERS

By Kaye Hagler

Teachers who use well-focused anticipation question stems can find that special hook, which will lead to a successful reading encounter. To be effective, however, anticipation question stems must avoid two pitfalls: questions that are too broad or those that lead to a one-word response.

Example One (Broad): "What makes you happy?"

Answer

Skiing

Example Two (One-word response): "How would you feel if someone close to you moved away?"

Answer

Sad

Imagine the following dilemma between a teacher and a student as the teacher is trying to springboard into Andrea Cheng's *The Honeysuckle House* (a story that follows the tentative relationship between two girls: one is a new arrival from Shanghai and the other is a Chinese-American).

"How would you feel if you moved to a new city?"

"Sad," the student responds.

"Yes, but why would you feel sad?" the teachers tries again.

"Because I'm moving away," the student truthfully answers.

Listed below are **15 Anticipation Question Stems**. Teachers can select one that best applies to a text and then complete the statement with the specific connection.

What would you do if you suddenly discovered ...

How would life be different if ...

Why do people ...

Why would anyone want to ...

What would you do if ...

What might cause someone to ...

How do some people handle/react to ...

What characteristics do you associate with someone who you consider to be ...

What would you do if you suddenly found yourself ...

How could you convince someone to ...

What might cause you to suddenly become ...

What are some of the difficulties and or dangers associated with ...

Why do some people feel they must always ...

What if you were forbidden to ...

Why do people always assume that ...

To introduce *The Honeysuckle House*, a teacher might look over the list of question stems and then select the following:

- *Why do people* sometimes overlook or ignore people who are different from us?
- *What would you do* if your teachers paired you with the new kid in school just because you looked alike on the outside?

These questions will be more meaningful to students who know what it is like to feel different from others around them—physically, culturally, or even economically.

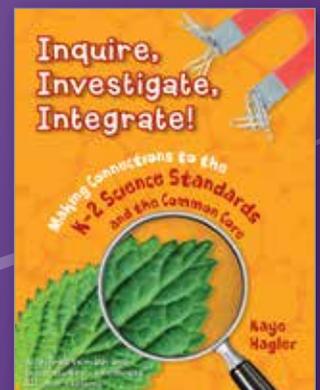
The background story of Robert Cole's *The Story of Ruby Bridges* might be foreign to many young students, but there are mental connections that can be made. From the question stems, a teacher selects *How do some people handle/react* to major changes in their lives. The answers teachers receive to this stem can help pave the way to a better understanding of the racial discord of the 1960s.

In another example, students about to discover the dystopian society of Ayn Rand's novella *Anthem* could be prompted to respond to *How would life be different if you were assigned a number instead of a name at birth?* This conversation has room to grow as opposed to *How would you feel if you were only a number and not a name?* This answer might well be "sad" on many levels.

Kaye Hagler is the author of:

Inquire, Investigate, Integrate!: Making Connections to the K-2 Science Standards and the Common Core, 2014, Capstone Professional.

Take Five! for Language Arts: 180 bell-ringers that build critical thinking skills, 2011, Capstone Professional



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