

Questions to Reveal Thinking for Using Background Knowledge

Have your students mastered the concept of using what they already know to better understand what they read? Here are some questions to assess their progress:

- Think out loud about what you did to activate what you already knew before you started reading the book. Could you share what you did to get ready to read?
- As you read that passage, did anything remind you of your own life? How does thinking about what you already know help you understand this part of your reading?
- You've just built your background knowledge about (whatever you've discussed). What do you know about this topic now that you didn't know before you read this book?
- What do you know about the way a poem is organized? How does that knowledge help you make sense of this particular genre?
- Look at all these connections you've made! Are there some that help you better understand these facts? When you think about your thinking, what do you notice about how background knowledge helps you decide what's important to remember?
- Good for you! You've just thought about how these two books are related. Why is it important to use your understanding about one book to get at the meaning of another book?
- How did thinking about what you already know help you figure out this word?
- How did remembering the last book you read in this series help you better understand this book?
- You've just underlined words that remind you of a personal memory. How does this connection help you think more deeply about the meaning of this piece? Does it make you come away with a bigger idea not directly stated by the author? What is your new thinking now? What have you learned about yourself as a reader?
- How does your background knowledge help you predict what will happen next? Could you share this new finding with the rest of the class?
- It was great to hear about your past experience with this information in the story. I noticed that after connecting with text with you life, you raised a question. Questions often come to us when we think about what we already know. Please share this with the group today!
- You've just described a memory related to these words. Could you see the scene in you mind? What do you notice about how our background knowledge creates mental images as we read?
- As you write your report, your duty is to provide the background knowledge for your reader. What information will you include? What does your reader need to know and understand?
- You've done a great job activating and applying your background knowledge to better understand this chapter. What advice about how this strategy helps you as a reader would you give to someone outside this class?