Creating Text-Dependent Questions for Close Analytic Reading of Texts

An effective set of text dependent questions delves systematically into a text to guide students in extracting the key meanings or ideas found there.

While there is no set process for generating a complete and coherent body of text dependent questions for a text, the following is a good guide that can serve to generate a core series of questions for close reading of any given text.

Prior to beginning a close read:

- *Identify the Core Understandings and Key Ideas of the Text*
  As in any good reverse engineering or "backwards design" process, teachers should start by identifying the key insights they want students to understand from the text—keeping one eye on the major points being made is crucial for fashioning an overarching set of successful questions and critical for creating an appropriate culminating assignment.
- *Think about how this text fits into the culminating assessment* Remember, any culminating activity should integrate the key ideas or understandings identified at the onset and should include (a) mastery of one or more of the standards, (b) involves writing, and (c) is structured to be completed by students independently.
- *Identify the Standards That Are Being Addressed*

Create Coherent Sequences of Text Dependent Questions
The sequence of questions should not be random but should build toward more coherent understanding and analysis to ensure that students learn to stay focused on the text to bring them to a gradual understanding of its meaning.

- *Start Small to Build Confidence*
  The opening questions should be ones that help orientate students to the text and be sufficiently specific enough for them to answer so that they gain confidence to tackle more difficult questions later on.
- *Target Vocabulary and Text Structure* Locate key text structures and the most powerful academic words in the text that are connected to the key ideas and understandings, and craft questions that illuminate these connections.
- *Tackle Tough Sections Head-on* Find the sections of the text that will present the greatest difficulty and craft questions that support students in mastering these sections (these could be sections with difficult syntax, particularly dense information, and tricky transitions or places that offer a variety of possible inferences).
- *Use Text Dependent Question Frames to Assist in Crafting Questions*