

Text-Dependent Questions: So You Want to be President?

This material written by Diane Staehr Fenner and Sydney Snyder originally appeared on the *Colorín Colorado Common Core and ELLs* blog in February 2014:

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Additional feedback was provided by consultant David Pook.

Guidelines for Writing Text-Dependent Questions with ELLs

The following guidelines and examples are based on Student Achievement Partner's Achieve the Core Guidelines for using text-dependent questions (TDQs). The questions are based on an excerpt from *So You Want to Be President?* (2000) by Judith St. George, suggested for the second grade in the [CCSS' Appendix B](#). Additional information is available from the blog post where this table appeared.

Every single President has taken this oath: "I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States."

Only thirty-five words! But it's a big order if you're President of this country. Abraham Lincoln was tops at filling that order. "I know very well that many others might in this matter or as in others, do better than I can," he said. "But...I am here. I must do the best I can, and bear the responsibility of taking the course which I feel I ought to take."

That's the bottom line. Tall, short, fat, thin, talkative, quiet, vain, humble, lawyer, teacher, or soldier—this is what most of our Presidents have tried to do, each in his own way. Some succeeded. Some failed. If you want to be President—a good President—pattern yourself after the best. Our best have asked more of themselves than they thought they could give. They have had the courage, spirit, and will to do what they knew was right. Most of all, their first priority has always been the people and the country they served.

Achieve the Core Guideline	ELL Interpretation/Suggestion	Example(s) from <i>So You Want to Be President?</i>
<p>Think about what you think is the most important learning to be drawn from the text. Note this as raw material for the culminating assignment and the focus point for other activities to build toward.</p>	<p>Depending on their level of English language proficiency, ELLs will need different amounts of scaffolding to comprehend the text on a deep level. ELLs may require some additional steps to get to this level of learning.</p>	<p>Students should understand that it is the responsibility of the President to execute the mandates of the Constitution. ELLs need scaffolding to understand what the President’s responsibilities are and what the Constitution is.</p>
<p>Determine the key ideas of the text. Create a series of questions structured to bring the reader to an understanding of these.</p>	<p>ELLs might need to be provided some concise background knowledge to access the key ideas of the text. TDQs will need to be scaffolded so that ELLs at different levels of English language proficiency can understand them. ELLs might need sentence frames or sentence starters to support their answers to the questions.</p>	<p>Key ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The President takes an oath of office to faithfully serve and do his best. • President Lincoln is an example of a President who took his responsibility seriously. Although he thought others might do a better job, he worked hard and is now considered one of the greatest presidents in our history. • The most successful Presidents give a great deal of themselves and put the people and their country first. <p>Background Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitution • Abraham Lincoln

<p>Locate the most powerful academic words in the text and integrate questions and discussions that explore their role into the set of questions above.</p>	<p>Teachers of ELLs will need to decide which academic words to teach ELLs. Some resources include Colorin Colorado’s “Selecting Vocabulary Words to Teach ELLs” and the University of Nottingham, New Zealand’s Academic Word List Highlighter.</p>	<p>The Academic Word List Highlighter identifies the words Constitution and priority as the most powerful academic words in the text.</p>
<p>Take stock of what standards are being addressed in the series of questions above. Then decide if any other standards are suited to being a focus for this text. If so, form questions that exercise those standards.</p>	<p>In addition to Common Core standards, English language proficiency/development standards will also need to guide the creation of TDQs.</p> <p>ESL teachers will need to collaborate with content teachers to help them integrate English language proficiency/development standards into their TDQs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.2.2 Identify the main topic of a multiparagraph text as well as the focus of specific paragraphs within the text. • CCSS.ELA-Literacy RI.2.5 Know and use various text features to locate key facts or information in a text efficiently. • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.2.6 Identify the main purpose of a text, including what the author wants to answer, explain, or describe. • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.2.8 Describe how reasons support specific points the author makes in a text. • WIDA ELD Standard 5: ELLs communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of Social Studies.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Grade 2 Cognitive Function: Students at all levels of English language proficiency ANALYZE the connections between different historical times and people. ○ Grade 2 Topic-Related Language: Students at all levels of English language proficiency interact with grade-level words and expressions, such as: historical times, communication
Consider if there are any other academic words that students would profit from focusing on. Build discussion planning or additional questions to focus attention on them.	Teachers of ELLs will need to decide which other academic words to teach ELLs. They must be careful not to teach too many words in the text or ELLs could become overwhelmed.	Other academic words for ELLs: affirm, oath, execute, preserve, defend, order, responsibility, succeeded, failed, pattern
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.	The sections of text that will present the greatest difficulty to ELLs may differ from those which will present the greatest difficulty for non-ELLs. Teachers should analyze the academic language found in each text and teach the academic language to the ELLs – as well as the non-ELLs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The oath and the Lincoln quote both contain challenging vocabulary and sentence structure. ● The author uses some colloquial expressions which may be unfamiliar to students such as: “a big order,” “that’s the bottom line”
Develop a culminating activity around the idea or learning	The culminating activity should incorporate CCSS as well as English	Students describe what a President must do to be considered a good President in

<p>identified in #1. A good task should reflect mastery of one or more of the standards, involve writing, and be structured to be done by students independently.</p>	<p>language proficiency/development standards for ELLs. Classroom-based assessments should be scaffolded so that ELLs can demonstrate what they know and can do. In order for ELLs to take part in the task, they will need scaffolding in order to do so. The amount and type of scaffolding needed will depend on their level of English proficiency.</p>	<p>writing. They answer the writing prompt, “What must a President do to be considered a good President?”</p>
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Text-Dependent Questions (Samples)

First Read (Key Ideas and Details)

1. **What is the oath or promise that U.S. Presidents make?**

The President promises to _____.

2. **What example does the text give about a U.S. President who worked hard to keep his promise?**

_____ is an example of a U.S. President who worked to keep his promise.

3. **What does the third paragraph say that good U.S. Presidents do?**

The third paragraph says that good U.S. Presidents _____.

Second Read (Craft and Structure)

4. **Why did the author include Lincoln’s quote in paragraph 2?**

The author included Lincoln’s quote to show _____.

5. **When the text says, “That’s the bottom line,” what point does the author make?**

The author uses “That’s the bottom line” to mean _____.

6. What does “pattern yourself after the best” mean in this text?

In this text, “pattern yourself after the best” means that

_____.

7. What does the author of this text explain about what a President must do to be considered a good President?

The author explains that a President must _____ to be considered a good President.

Third Read (Integration of Knowledge and Ideas)

8. How does the President’s oath guide him to do his best?

The President’s oath guides him to do his best by _____.

9. What is the author’s main point in this text?

The author’s main point in this text is that Presidents _____.

Culminating Activity

Answer the guiding question.

What must a President do to be considered a good President?

A President must _____ to be considered a good President.

I know this because (give an example from the text) _____.

References

Achieve the Core. Text-Dependent Question Resources. Retrieved 2/5/14 from <http://www.achievethecore.org/page/710/text-dependent-question-resources>.

St. George, J. and Small, D. (2000). *So You Want to Be President?* Philomel Books.