

Useful Reading Prompts

Parents often wonder how they can help to develop the reading skills of children who are already fluent readers. The best way is to continue to share books with your child, regularly listening to them read, sometimes reading to or with them, but also discussing books read in increasing depth. To become good readers children need to develop skills in seven key areas and it can be useful to think about these when reading with your child.

Examples of questions linked to these areas are included. It is not necessary to ask every question each time your child reads, of course, but they may prove to be useful prompts to start a more focused discussion. By choosing 2 or 3 of the questions to ask your child before, during and after the reading of their book, it will support their developing comprehension of what they read and ultimately, their enjoyment of the books that they choose.

Decoding: this is the skill that parents are generally most familiar with, and deals with the varying strategies used by children to make sense of the words on the page. Even fluent readers can be stumped by an unfamiliar word, and it is useful at these times to discuss the range of strategies used to make a sensible guess.

Support Phonics teaching in Key Stage 1 – segmenting and blending to decode

Retrieval and recall: early readers need to develop this skill, in order to locate important information and to retell stories and describe events.

What has happened in the story so far? Tell me about ...

Find two sentences which describe the setting or character

Who is your favourite character? Why? Who is the character you like least? Why?

Which part of the story is your favourite / least favourite? Why?

Find two things the author wrote about this character that made him / her likeable?

Which part of the story was the funniest/scariest/ saddest/ happiest? Find some evidence in the text to support your opinion.

Pick three favourite words or phrases from this chapter. Can you explain why you chose them?

What facts have you read? What does this page tell you about? Which page would tell you about...?

Inference: reading between the lines. Encouraging children to make inferences based on clues in the text and their understanding of the context of the book will help them to develop this important skill.

What do you think will happen next? Why?

Do you think the author intended you to like / dislike this character? How do you know?

What do think the.....(place, setting, character, weather, atmosphere) is like? Why do you think that?

Structure and organisation: as children read a wider range of text types, they need to be able to comment on the features of each and how they are organised. Discussing the presentation of the text, e.g. the use of subtitles to assist reading of a non-fiction text, and the author's reason for organising the text in this way, will support children's development in this area. Making links between the *purpose* of the text and its *organisation* is a useful place to start.

What is the purpose of this book? How do you know?

Why is this page laid out in this way? Could you improve it?

Discuss the layout – front cover, use of pictures or illustrations, how to use content and index pages

Language: specifically, thinking about the language choices made by writers, their possible reasons for making those choices and the effect the choices have on the reader. Discussing alternative choices and their effects can be a good way to begin discussion about the author's language and an opportunity to develop vocabulary generally.

Would you change any part of the story? How? Would you change any of the characters? How?

When do you think this book was written? How do you know? Does it matter? What would it be like if it was written now?

Is the plot fast or slow moving? Find some evidence in the text which supports your view.

What is the genre of the book: sci-fi, mystery, historical, fantasy, adventure, horror, comedy?

What are the features that make you think this?

Purpose and viewpoint: Who is the narrator of this story? What does the writer of this biography feel about his/her subject? Children need to understand that writers write for a purpose, and to be able to recognise that this will have an impact on the way a text is written. Newspapers and advertisements are perfect examples of this and can lead to lots of lively discussions.

Does your opinion of this character change during the story? How? Why?

If you met one of the characters from the story, what would you say to him / her?

Making links: as adults, we are constantly making links between ideas and experiences. Good readers connect the book they are reading with real life experiences; with other books read and stories heard; with films; and with the context in which they were written. A child reading 'Goodnight Mister Tom', for example, will need to place the story within the context that it was written to fully understand it. They might also link it with other stories read, such as 'Friend or Foe' or 'Carrie's War'.

If the author had included another paragraph before the story started what do you think it would say?

Would you like to read another book by this author? Why/ why not?

Have you read anything else by this author? Is anything similar?

Does this book remind you of anything else? How?

Does it remind you of anything that has happened to you?