



## QUESTIONING

Thinking  
strategies  
to enhance skills  
of analysis,  
creativity,  
and problem  
solving.

## MIND BOGGLING STORIES

**Brief Description of the Lesson:** Important information has been left out of several stories, making them very puzzling. Students use logical thinking to fill in the missing details so that the story makes sense. Students gather information by asking questions. The answers provide clues for solving the mini- mysteries. There is one suggested solution for each story, but students are encouraged to be divergent thinkers and come up with other possibilities that make sense. Students can only ask questions that can be answered “yes”, “no” or “does not compute- meaning a yes or no answer is not possible or would lead them off track.” Good listening skills and remembering the questions and answers prior to asking each new next question avoids repeating old information, gives new clues and helps students stay on track.

**SOL/POS Objective:** *(List number and specific objective.)*

**English 5.6**

The student will read and demonstrate comprehension of nonfiction.

**Instructional Strategy:**

Cues, Questions, and Advance Organizers- Students apply quality questioning skills to reveal missing details in a story.

**Materials:**

A copy of the sample mini mysteries “Country Wally” and “Mrs. Twinkle’s Ring” *Stories with Holes by Nathan Levy* (see website <http://www.storieswithholes.com>) or *Five- Minute Mysteries* by Ken Weber

**Enduring Understanding:**

- Questioning helps you gather information needed to solve problems.
- Working cooperatively rather than competitively is a good strategy for working on a common problem.
- Creative thinking allows for many possible solutions to problems.
- Good listening skills are as important as good questioning skills.
- Making assumptions can narrow thinking and limit possibilities.
- Being open minded increases possibilities for solutions.

**Introduction/Essential Questions:** *(What influences your reaction to an issue or a problem?)*

- How does effective questioning make you a better problem solver?
- What is the benefit of looking for more than one possible solution to a problem?
- Why is it helpful for people to work together to solve a problem rather than working on your own?
- Why is it good to be open-minded when working on solving a problem?

**Teach and Explore Strategy:** *(Steps in teaching the process and exploring applications)*

Prior to teaching this lesson, be sure to have taught or reviewed the introductory thinking process lesson on questioning. Help focus students’ thinking by reminding them of the metacognitive component of this lesson.



## QUESTIONING

*Thinking  
strategies  
to enhance  
skills  
of analysis,  
creativity,  
and problem  
solving.*

- Go over the **Enduring Understandings** and **Essential Questions**. Discuss what it is to make an assumption and what it means to be open-minded. Also to list the advantages of working on solving a mystery or similar problem with a group or team rather than on your own.
- Tell the class that you are going to read them a puzzling story- one that has very important information left out. Even though the story doesn't seem to make sense, there is a logical explanation. It is their job to figure out the missing information by asking questions.
- Explain the questioning rules: Only questions that can be answered "yes" or "no" are allowed. If a question cannot be answered with just yes or no, the leader will answer "does not compute."
- Take time to further explain "does not compute." If the question is not relevant to the situation the leader also answers "does not compute." Explain *not relevant* by giving an example- If the answer was... a monkey eating an apple and you asked "Is it very old?" age is not relevant to the missing information about a monkey eating an apple. A *relevant* question is "Is it about fruit?"
- Ask for any questions about the process. If there are none, read the puzzling story to the class. The reader is called the *leader* or *computer*. It does not always have to be the teacher. Students who suggest logical solutions can take turns reading new stories.
- Read the puzzling story, "Country Wally." You may read it a second time, but not more.
- Students think of questions to ask, raise their hands and are called upon. Remind them of the importance of remembering the answers to other students' questions.
- Take time after a series of questions to review the clues gathered so far by asking "What do we know so far?" As students get more skilled, they will make a habit of remembering past clues.
- When a student thinks they have a solution, they ask in question form- "In the story is or does ...? filling in their idea for the solution.
- To keep students interested, do not let the questioning go on more than 10 minutes for each story.
- Ask for alternate solutions that would also fit the story and emphasize the importance having of a many possibilities
- Repeat the process using the second story, "Mrs. Twinkle's Ring."

**Assessment Evidence:** (Discussion, teacher observation, completed product, student reflection...)

- Quality of the questions asked during the data gathering process
- Quality and originality of solutions offered

**Metacognition:**

- What was the hardest part about figuring out the puzzling story?
- How are good listening skills related to asking good questions?
- How did working with others help you find the solution?
- If you had worked on your own, how would the process of solving the problem been different?



QUESTIONING

*Thinking  
strategies  
to enhance  
skills  
of analysis,  
creativity,  
and problem  
solving.*

- Remind students that including words with double meanings, gender stereotypes, and other elements that might mislead the reader's thinking.

**Extension:**

- Challenge students to write their own puzzling stories to share with the class. Remind students that including words with double meanings, gender stereotypes, and other elements that might mislead the reader's thinking.

# Mind Boggling Stories

## Country Charlie

Charlie loved living in the country. He was content in his small home surrounded by big beautiful trees. His mother had left him when he was very small, but Charlie was happy anyway. He had everything he needed to live well. He didn't even need a job. No one bothered him and he felt very safe. Charlie had plenty of food so all summer long Charlie stayed in his house. By October his home and food were gone. Now Charlie's appearance was completely changed, and he only came out at night.

Solution:

*Charlie is a codling moth larva living in an apple on a tree in an apple orchard. He hatched from an egg laid on an apple branch, crawled into an apple forming and lived there until fall when the apple was ripe. The apple crop was harvested, but Wally had already crawled out, made a cocoon and emerged as a moth.*

## Mrs. Twinkle's Ring

Miss Twinkle was very wealthy, and she loved to buy nice things for herself. She especially loved buying jewelry. Rings were her favorite because she could wear lots of them at once. She often wore a different ring on every finger. There were dozens of rings in her jewelry box, but one day a ring caught her eye and she knew that she just had to get rid of it. She couldn't give it away or sell it, and she knew no one else would want it either. She didn't want her friends to see it either so Mrs. Twinkle came up with an idea. She worked really hard cleaning the ring and to her relief, it disappeared.

Solution:

*The ring was a soap ring left in her bathtub after draining the water out of the tub. She used a tub cleaner and scrubbed the ring until it disappeared. To keep the ring from forming again she wipes down the inside of the tub with a towel after the water drains out.*

## **Locked Out**

Mrs. Wicklow lost her car keys after driving home from the grocery store. She looked everywhere she had been since she came home, but no luck. She needed to bring in a bag of frozen food that she had put on the back seat. It was a hot day and soon the frozen food would melt and make a mess. Even though she didn't have a key she wasn't worried. Mrs. Wicklow didn't call a locksmith. Her husband was at work and couldn't get his key to her and no one else had a key. She went out to her car, took the grocery bag out and brought it in the house-even though all the car doors and windows were closed tightly and locked. She did not damage the car in anyway getting the bag from the back seat of the locked car. How was this possible?

Solution:

*Mrs. Wicklow's car was a convertible. The top was down so she reached in and got her bag off the back seat.*

## **The Thief**

MaryAnn's parents were very proud of her. She was an excellent student, polite and well-behaved. She always followed rules and respected the law. One day her parents saw her stealing. They had seen her steal many times as she was growing up. They were not disappointed or upset. In fact she had been taught to steal. Even though her father was a police officer, he encouraged her to steal whenever she could.

Solution:

*MaryAnn was a baseball player, and she was skilled at stealing bases.*