Text-Type Writing Study: Narrative—Question-and-Answer

This text-type writing study introduces students to the use of the question-and-answer text form for storytelling. Questioning is a natural tendency of young students: in this writing study they will learn that they can use this form to give information and help move a story along.

Teaching Tip: Before beginning this text-type writing study, collect a range of resources (books, children’s magazines, simple brochures) that use a question-and-answer format on a page or throughout the text. Make the texts available for student research or in the classroom library. Text suggestions include:
- *Is This a Moose?* by Jenny Armstrong (Shared Reading text from *Literacy Place for the Early Years Grade One*)
- *Whose Teeth Are These?* by Wayne Lynch (Read Aloud text from *Literacy Place for the Early Years Grade One*)
- *What Can Walk on Walls?* by Tony Stead (Guided Reading text from *Literacy Place for the Early Years Grade One*)
- magazines such as *Let’s Find Out, Chickadee, Chirp*
- *Is Your Mama a Llama?* by Deborah Guarino and Steven Kellogg: Scholastic Inc.
- *Stella, Star of the Sea* by Marie-Louise Gay: Groundwood Books
- *Mama, Do You Love Me?* by Barbara Joose: Chronicle Books

1. IMMERSION INTO THE TEXT TYPE

*Time:* approximately 15 minutes (Can be combined with Pre-Assessment)
*Grouping:* whole class
*Materials:* *What Do You Do in the Cold?* (text or digital book version)

- Recall with students how we learned how daily and seasonal changes affect living things. Show *What Do You Do in the Cold?* and explain how the repeated question in the book helps the frog find out the information he needs to solve his problem and helps to move the story along.

- Reread the text with students, focusing on the differences between the questions and answers.
• Discuss the format of several pages of the text by offering prompts and think-alouds such as the following:
  - (pages 4-5) Here we see the questions that the frog asks the bird. How do we know these are questions? [Analyzing]
  - (page 6) Let’s read bird’s answer together. How do we know this is not a question? [Analyzing]

2. PRE-ASSESSMENT (Optional)

_Time:_ approximately 15 minutes
(Can be combined with Immersion Into the Text Type)

_Grouping:_ small groups or partners (if enough resources are available)

_Materials:_ collected resources and sticky notes

• This activity will allow students to practise their understandings of the question-and-answer form and provide you with necessary information as to whether or not another reading of the text is required.

• Select pages in _What Do You Do in the Cold?_ that clearly demonstrate the question-and-answer text form (e.g., pages 9–10).

• Provide pairs or small groups of students with 2–4 sticky notes in two different colours (one colour for questions, another colour for answers) and one of the collected samples of question-and-answer texts from the Teaching Tip at the beginning of the lesson. (If no other samples are available, have students use _What Do You Do in the Cold?_ ) Ask students to look for and mark clear examples of questions and answers with the sticky notes of each colour.

• Circulate as students work and prompt as needed, for example:
  - Do you see a question mark in that sentence?
  - Is there a question word that helps you find the question?
  - How do you know that is the answer to the question?
  - What does the punctuation tell you about whether it is a question or an answer?
  - Are there words that help you know it is the answer?

• As you circulate, note any students who are not contributing to the discussion or seem to be having difficulty sorting the questions from the answers.

_Teaching Tip:_ Ensure that students who need more support hold the sticky notes and are responsible for placing them in the spot that the group or partner decides on. These students can also be responsible for holding up the text when the group or partner explains their understandings.

• Provide time for each group or pair of students to share their findings. Have students explain how they know what is a question and what is an answer.
Teaching Tip: During the sharing time, you may wish to begin a reference chart of question words with students (what, how, where, why, when, who).

- If you choose, assess each student’s response using the Assessment Rubric for Question-and-Answer to identify levels of key skills and understanding. Look for common needs among students to help plan future instructions and demonstrations to strengthen students’ existing knowledge.

3. MODELLED AND SHARED WRITING

_Time:_ three sessions of approximately 20 minutes each  
_Grouping:_ whole class  
_Materials:_ chart paper and markers

**Choose a Topic**

- Tell students that as a group you will be deciding on a topic for writing by thinking of a question that they would like to know the answer to.

- Brainstorm with students and record questions that may have come up during an activity, a reading of another text, or a viewing of a media text. As you record, point out the conventions of questions (question word at the beginning, beginning word capitalized, question mark at the end).

- Ask students to look at the recorded questions and think about which questions could be part of a good story. As a group, select a question to answer in the writing piece. Depending on the story idea, it may work better to select a few or series of related questions, in order to tell the story.

**Set a Purpose for Writing**

- Tell students that as a group you are going to write a story that will use the selected question to help tell the story. Inform students that the story will use the same structure as the story _What Do You Do in the Cold?_

**PLANNING AND RESEARCHING**

- Review the structure of _What Do You Do in the Cold?_, noting the beginning, middle (containing questions and answers), and ending. Read and point out how the author has used an introduction to get us ready for the purpose of the story (pages 2–3) and an ending to give the answer to the problem and conclude the story (pages 15–16). Note how the questions and answers make up the majority of the story, and how these move the story along.

With a partner, think of a question you would like to know the answer to. You might think about some of the living things we have read about or seen video clips of. Is there a living thing you would really like to know more about?

The author has started this book with a beginning that helps us know what the book is about. In the middle of the story, the frog asks many questions, and the other living things give their answers. At the end of the story, the frog figures out the answer to his question and solves his problem.
Together with students, plan how to use the selected question(s) within the story, to move the story (plot) along. Ideas may include asking different characters the same question, or asking the same character many questions.

Have students work with a partner or small-group to brainstorm ideas for other story elements, such as the setting, beginning, characters, and ending. After they have had time to discuss, invite students to share their ideas with the class.

**Supporting Writers:** Remind students needing more support that elements of a question-and-answer story are the same as in other stories they’ve read. Give prompts such as:
- the setting is ‘where’ the story takes place
- the characters are ‘who’ are in the story
- the beginning lets readers know what the story is going to be about
- the ending gives a conclusion to the story

**Extending Writers:** Some students may have many ideas to share. Remind them that they can use their ideas when they write their own question-and-answer narratives later on.

**DRAFTING**

**Write the Story**
- Begin to write a draft based on the story elements decided upon in the Planning and Researching section. As students volunteer their ideas, write them down, sharing the pen with them occasionally and weaving in prompts for writing concepts. Vary your prompts to meet the range of writing development demonstrated in your classroom. Prompts might include:
  - How can we write our introduction to let readers know what the story is about?
  - Is this an introduction that makes the reader want to keep reading?
  - Have we got our questions and answers in the right places in our story?
  - Do our answers do a good job of answering the questions?
  - Are we using words that help our readers visualize what we mean?
  - What information do we need in our ending?
  - Can we use our question as the title?

**Supporting Writers:** Use prompts that revisit print concepts, for example, "Where do we begin to write? Does this word need a capital? What punctuation do we need at the end of a question?"

**Extending Writers:** Many of these writers can share the pen, provide better word choices, and suggest a variety of different sentence beginnings.
REVISING

- Reread the text with students to check that all of the elements of a question-and-answer narrative have been included.

**Supporting Writers:** Help students needing support by checking the inclusion of the elements of question-and-answer narratives one at a time.
- Do we have a title?
- Do we have a beginning for the story?
- Do we have questions and answers?
- Do our questions and answers make sense?
- Do we have an ending for the story?

**Extending Writers:** A small guided-writing group can look at extended revisions of the class story, such as considering different word suggestions and writing more questions and answers that go with the same story.

EDITING

- Read over the revised story, checking the spelling and punctuation.

- Reread the story out loud, checking each item, one at a time. Consider some of the following prompts:
  - We need to check that word on the Word Wall. Can you find it?
  - Let’s say that word slowly to hear the beginning sound.
  - Did we use capitals at the beginning of each sentence?
  - Is our punctuation correct? Did we use question marks at the ends of the questions? Did we use periods or other punctuation at the ends of the answer sentences?

**Supporting Writers:** Support students in rereading and correcting punctuation and spelling in the story. Model the use of the Word Wall to check spellings.

**Extending Writers:** Encourage more advanced writers to underline spellings they’re not sure of and use the Word Wall to check. They can also check the appropriate use of uppercase and lowercase letters and punctuation.

SHARING AND PUBLISHING

**Make a Final Copy**
- Prepare a final version of the story on chart paper. You may also consider writing the story out on separate pieces of blank paper, allowing space for students to illustrate the story. Pages can be bound to create a class book. Reread the final version with students.

**Reflect on the Story**
- Take time to reflect on the story. Offer prompts:
  - What happens in the story?
  - Do you think it’s a good story? What makes you think so?
  - What would you like to have changed in the story?
4. GUIDED AND INDEPENDENT WRITING

Time: approximately 45 minutes (additional time will be needed for sharing)
Grouping: individuals
Materials: writing paper and pencils

PLANNING AND RESEARCHING

- Tell students that they will be writing their own story using a question-and-answer form.

- Review the elements of a question-and-answer narrative with students, using the class story from the Modelled and Shared Writing section as a reference. Use coloured strips of paper to highlight the different elements as you reread the story together (e.g., read the title and apply a strip that says ‘Title’). Identify the introduction or beginning, the questions and answers, and the ending, highlighting each element with the coloured strips.

Teaching Tip: Using such identifiers for the text elements helps students to see what should be included in their stories. They can also be used as a reference when speaking to parents or guardians about student writing.

- Have students choose a question from the list recorded in the Modelled and Shared Writing section, or encourage them to think of a new question to use in their story.

- Ask students to think of and/or jot down the different story elements to go with their selected story question (setting, beginning, characters, and ending).

Supporting Writers: Ask these students to look back at What Do You Do in the Cold? To see what question word the author used. Encourage them to format their questions like the author.

Extending Writers: Refer students who are ready for extension to the chart of Question Words and encourage them to begin their question with a different word than the author used.
DRAFTING

Write the Story
- Ask students to write their story using their ideas from the Planning and Researching section. Circulate to offer support.

Supporting Writers: Form a small guided writing group for students needing extra support. For these students, it may be useful to write a text innovation on What Do You Do in the Cold? Using the text as a reference, ask students to write a new title, for example, 'What Do You Do in the Heat?' Together, work through the introduction and, if desired, the first interaction with the Canada goose before leaving them to try on their own.

Extending Writers: Encourage these writers to try using more than one question and one answer in their story and to think about their word choices. Ask students to consider if they are painting a picture that their readers could see in their minds.

REVISING

- Ask students to reread their stories and consider whether they have included all of the elements of a question-and-answer narrative. You may wish to have pairs of students reread their stories and provide feedback to one another. Some prompts for students to consider include:
  - Do all of my sentences make sense?
  - Should I add more details to help tell the story?
  - Should something be deleted that is not necessary?

Supporting Writers: Form small groups as necessary to reread each story and provide group suggestions for adding or deleting information and checking that each sentence makes sense.

Extending Writers: Invite these students to revise by checking word choice and the features of a question-and-answer narrative.

EDITING

- Ask students to check their stories for spelling and punctuation using the Word Wall and other resources.
- Ask students to check that each sentence is complete and starts with a capital.
- Remind students of proper punctuation: questions should end with question marks and statements should end with periods.

Supporting Writers: Form small groups as necessary to reread and correct punctuation and spelling. Model the use of the Word Wall.

Extending Writers: More advanced writers can check spellings, the appropriate use of uppercase and lowercase letters, and punctuation.
SHARING AND PUBLISHING

*Time:* two sessions of approximately 15 minutes
*Grouping:* small groups

- Divide the class into small groups and encourage all students to share their writing with the members of their group. Emphasize the importance of listening to each other and providing positive feedback.

**Teaching Tip:** You may wish to provide an author’s chair for each writer to sit on as they read. Any assorted small chairs, carpet squares, or small pillows can work. Arrange turn-taking by assigning a number to each member of each group, or ask students to go in alphabetical order by the first letter of their name.

- Ask students to make final copies of their stories to be placed in the class library.

5. ASSESSMENT AND SELF-EVALUATION

*Time:* approximately 10 minutes if done as a class, or a few minutes per student if done with individuals
*Grouping:* whole class and individuals
*Materials:* Self-Assessment: Question-and-Answer BLM and Assessment Rubric for Question and Answer BLM

**Reflection and Self-Evaluation**

- Ask students to reflect on their writing using the *Self-Assessment: Question-and-Answer BLM*. Circulate about the room to provide prompts and be available for student queries. Possible student prompts include:
  - What did you do well?
  - What would you like to get better at doing?

**Assessment**

- Using the *Assessment Rubric for Question and Answer BLM*, document each student’s growth in writing, noting the skills and understanding that he or she is demonstrating.