

Asking Essential Questions

Read the levels of questions below and examine the model drawn from Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close. This will be your “professional” model. Use it as a reference for constructing levels of questions for the rest of the year.

Level 1: Questions of Fact. The information in the text provides a specific and “quotable” answer for these questions. While basic, they are asking that you quote the text and accrue evidence that could be later used in creating an argument. They shouldn’t be questions asked just for the sake of asking. Instead, consider asking questions that require examining sections of the text that bears rereading.

Level 2: Questions of Interpretation. Questions of this type require a close reading of the text. They ask that you consider what the text implies. While there is more room for interpretation, level two questions ask that you use inference to determine author purpose, tone, a speaker’s sensibilities, implication of character traits/relationships, etc.

Level 3: Synthesis. These are the most difficult. They demand that you use the text as a stepping-stone to question the values and expectations of society. You must consider everything as representative of a larger real world issue. Synthesis requires that you identify the big picture issues at stake in the text.

Example

So for those eight months when I went looking around New York, and she would ask where I was going and when I’d be back, I would just say, “I’m going out. I’ll be back later.” What was so weird, and what I should have tried harder to understand, was that she never asked anything else, not even “Out where?” or “Later when?” even though she was normally so cautious about me, especially since Dad died. (She had bought me the cell phone so we could always find each other, and had told me to take cabs instead of the subway. She had even taken me to the police station to be fingerprinted, which was great.) So why was she suddenly starting to forget about me? Every time I left our apartment to go searching for the lock, I became a little lighter, because I was getting closer to Dad. But I also became a little heavier, because I was getting farther from Mom. (52)

Level One

- What did Oskar say to his mother when he went on his “adventures” around New York City?
- What his “mom’s” response to Oskar when he leaves the apartment?

Level Two

- How does Oskar’s word choice in the passage develop his distinct voice as a narrator?
- What does Mom’s behavior suggest about her relationship with Oskar?

Level Three

- What type of home “environment” is necessary to encourage exploration?
- What responsibility do parents have towards their children? How does circumstance change those responsibilities?