

Text-Based Questions for Writing or Discussion

7TH GRADE

SHORT STORY

- In “The War of the Wall,” Mama’s reaction to the painter changes over the course of the story. Explain how and why her opinion changes. Support your ideas with examples from the text.
- In what ways does the boys’ friendship in “Amigo Brothers” both help and hurt them during the fight? Is it more difficult to compete against a friend than a stranger? Use information from the text and a second reliable source (personal experience, observation, history, etc.) to support your position.

POETRY

- The poem “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening” has a far deeper meaning than just the literal meaning. Contrast the literal meaning with the complex, deeper meaning of the poem. Provide support and make a connection to another poem or provide personal examples.
- Compare and contrast the war images and feelings presented in “The Charge of the Light Brigade” and “St. Crispian’s Day Speech.” Summarize the poets’ messages to the reader.

NONFICTION

- In “The Noble Experiment,” Jackie Robinson paved the way for racial equality in sports. Explain how he did this and what character strengths he possessed to achieve success in a segregated world. Mention the personal sacrifices he made in the face of adversity.
- In “Exploring the Titanic,” analyze the behavior of the captain and crew before and after the disaster. Use details and facts from the article to show how their actions hurt or helped the rescue effort.

DRAMA *A Christmas Carol*

- Explain what the changes in Scrooge teach about life. Make a connection to another piece of literature or a movie.
- Identify symbols and recurring images in the play and explain their significance.

8TH GRADE

SHORT STORY

- After reading “Raymond’s Run,” explain the unique relationship between Squeaky and Raymond. Be sure to include what they learn from each other’s words and actions and what others learn from them. Support your ideas with details from the story.
- Charlie Gordon in “Flowers for Algernon” and Raymond in “Raymond’s Run” face challenges because they are different from the people around them. Compare and contrast their similarities and differences, and explain how they each face adversity.

POETRY

- As you read “Paul Revere’s Ride,” make a list of the historical events in which he plays a significant role. Use these points to develop an essay or oral report on the poem. Include the dangers he faces, the heroism he exhibits, and the role he plays in our nation’s independence. Be sure to also explain how Longfellow captures the excitement of the events through sensory imagery and word choice.
- Compare and contrast “The Wreck of the Hesperus” and “The Centaur.” Discuss the similarities and differences in the poems’ subject, mood, tone, and sensory imagery. Elaborate with examples and supporting details from the poems.

NONFICTION

- “Hokusai: The Old Man Mad About Drawing” and “Not to Go with the Others” are biographical narratives. Compare and contrast how both subjects embody the characteristics of creativity and courage. Decide which character you admire most and defend your choice with details from the text(s).
- Both the literary selections “Sharing in the American Dream” by Colin Powell and “The American Dream” by Martin Luther King, Jr. are inspirational speeches designed to elicit an emotional response in the listeners. Compare and contrast the use of language and sensory imagery as well as the speakers’ messages. Explain which speech appeals to you the most and support your position with details from the text(s).

DRAMA *The Diary of Anne Frank*

- Compare and contrast the changes in Anne throughout the play. Explain the internal and external conflicts she experiences and explain how she handles the stress of her living situation. Provide examples of her words and actions and how others react to her. What advice do you think Anne would give young people today?
- Compare and contrast the historical events that occur between Acts I and II. Mention the political forces and cultural attitudes of the people during this time period. Explain Anne’s reactions to these forces and attitudes.

Questions for Analyzing Poetry

- What parts interest or puzzle you?
- How would you describe the poem's speaker (sometimes called the **persona** or the **voice**)? (The speaker may be different from the author.) What tone or emotion do you detect--for instance, anger, affection, sarcasm? Does the tone change during the poem?
- What is the structure of the poem? Are there stanzas (groups of lines separated by space)? If so, how is the thought related to the stanzas?
- What is the theme of the poem: what is it about? Is the theme stated or implied?
- What images do you find--evocations of sight, sound, taste, touch, or smell? Is there a surprising pattern of images--say, images of business in a poem about love? What does the poem suggest symbolically as well as literally? (Trust your responses. If you don't sense a symbolic overtone, move on. Don't hunt for symbols.)

Questions for Analyzing Drama

- Does the plot (the sequence of happenings) seem plausible? If not, is the implausibility a fault? If there is more than one plot, are the plots parallel, or are they related by way of contrast?
- What kinds of conflict are in the play? How are the conflicts resolved? Is the resolution satisfying to you?
- How trustworthy are the characters when they describe themselves or others? Do some characters serve as foils, or contrasts, for other characters, thus helping to define the other characters? Do the characters change as the play proceeds? Are the characters' motivations convincing?
- What do you make of the setting, or location? Does it help to reveal character or theme?
- Do certain costumes (dark suits, shawls, stiff collars) or properties (books, pictures, candlesticks) strike you as symbolic?
- If a film has been made of the play, what has been added? What has been omitted?

SOURCE: Fowler, H. Ramsey, and Jane E. Aaron, eds. *The Little, Brown Handbook*. 7th ed. New York: Longman, 1998.

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