

SCIENTIFICALLY PROVEN READING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES: QUESTION ANSWERING

by John Schacter, Ph.D.

In my last two columns, I introduced summarizing and questioning reading comprehension strategies. For my third installment on how to improve your students' understanding of what they read, I want to share a remarkably successful question answering strategy.

When you implement question answering strategies in your classroom, try to follow these research-based guidelines:

1. Require all students to answer questions throughout the entire reading process, not just the end.
2. Have students discuss and answer questions with a peer or small group rather than through whole class discussion.
3. Build mechanisms where students receive immediate corrective feedback on the questions they answer.
4. Demand that students first identify what the question is asking before they attempt to answer it.

When the above four question answering conditions are in place, students comprehend 15 to 36 percent more on standardized reading assessments.

The storyboards on the following pages outline how to teach the **Question-Answer-Relationships** strategy, also known as QARs. If you use this strategy consistently, not only will your students better recall what they read, but they will also be able to make better inferences, draw more sound

conclusions, and use their own knowledge more effectively.

Teachers Learning Together

As I stated in my last piece, I believe—and research supports my contention—that teachers learn best when they have an opportunity to discuss what they are doing with peers.

To learn and implement the QARs strategy, I urge teachers to form a study group. Then, reading, discussing, and collaboratively planning how to teach this strategy. Not only will planning with your peers help you better understand the approach, but it will also generate dialogue on how to adjust the strategy to meet your students needs.

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Our book and DVDs titled, *The Master Teacher Series: Reading Comprehension*, are aligned to the California content standards. They also augment the state adopted reading texts.



Question Answer Relationships (QARs)

The big idea behind the Question Answer Relationships (QARs) strategy is that there are essentially three types of comprehension questions (i.e., fact, integrate, inference). If students can identify the question type, they will be more likely to produce an appropriate answer.

Step-by-Step

1. Inform students that there are three different types of comprehension questions.
2. Create a QARs Chart and student Cue Cards (see storyboard #1).
3. Model how to use the QARs strategy (see storyboards #4-7):
 - a. Select a short passage and develop three QARs comprehension questions.
 - b. Place the passage on an overhead projector and read it aloud.
 - c. Classify each QARs question as a Green Light, Yellow Light, or Red Light question.
 - d. Require students to answer each QARs.
 - e. Repeat this process with another short passage.
4. Assign students a passage to read either in pairs or in small groups. Make sure you have prepared QARs questions for students to identify and answer after each page.
5. Instruct students to use their QARs Cue Cards to classify, then answer each question (see storyboard #8).