# Sample Text-Dependent Questions: Secondary Level

Virginia Department of Education – 2018

* Analyze paragraphs on a sentence by sentence basis and sentences on a word by word basis to determine the role played by individual paragraphs, sentences, phrases, or words
* Investigate how meaning can be altered by changing key words and why an author may have chosen one word over another
* Probe each argument in persuasive text, each idea in informational text, each key detail in literary text, and observe how these build to a whole
* Examine how shifts in the direction of an argument or explanation are achieved and the impact of those shifts
* Question why authors choose to begin and end when they do
* Note and assess patterns of writing and what they achieve
* Consider what the text leaves uncertain or unstated

1. Identify the core understandings and key ideas of the text. As in any good reverse engineering or “backwards design” process, teachers should start by identifying the key insights they want students to understand from the text—keeping one eye on the major points being made is crucial for fashioning an overarching set of successful questions and critical for creating an appropriate culminating assignment.
2. Opening questions should be easier helping orientate students to the text and be sufficiently specific enough for them to answer so that they gain confidence to tackle questions that are more difficult.
3. Locate key text structures and the most powerful words in the text that are connected to the key ideas and understandings, and craft questions that draw students’ attention to these specifics so they can become aware of these connections. Vocabulary selected for focus should be academic words “(Tier Two”) that are abstract and likely to be encountered in future reading and studies.
4. Find the sections of the text that will present the greatest difficulty and craft questions that support students in mastering these sections (these could be sections with difficult syntax, particularly dense information, and tricky transitions or places that offer a variety of possible inferences).
5. The sequence of questions should not be random but should build toward more coherent understanding and analysis to ensure that students learn to stay focused on the text to bring them to a gradual understanding of its meaning.
6. Take stock of what standards are being addressed in the series of questions and decide if any other standards are suited to being a focus for this text (forming additional questions that exercise those standards). Backmap to SOL.
7. Develop a culminating activity around the key ideas or understandings identified earlier that reflects (a) mastery of one or more of the standards, (b) involves writing, and (c) is structured to be completed by students independently.
8. Paired passages. Find nonfiction texts to pair with the fiction passages. Develop a set of questions for the pair.