

What's A Good Question?

There are several types of questions that you can ask while reading good literature. Some questions help with comprehension and can check for specific information to see if you understand what you read. These factual questions do not lend themselves to the best literature circle discussions. To help you come to your literature circle meetings prepared with questions that will inspire lots of quality discussion learn how to write a good discussion question.

Discussion Question:

This is the type of question we're looking for in our literature circle meetings. An example of a good discussion question based on a Harry Potter book would be: "Why do you think Harry stuck the python on Dudley when they were at the zoo?" You'll know you have a good discussion question when these two things are true:

- 1) There are many different opinions about the possible answers to this question.**
- 2) These opinions can be backed up with examples from the book.**

For example, some people might say that Harry did it to get back at Dudley for all the mean things he'd done to him. They could back that up by listing the mean things that Dudley did, and how mad it made Harry. Other people might say that Harry did it because he was experimenting with his new magical powers, and they could back it up by saying that he hadn't even been to Hogwarts yet, so he didn't know much about magic. And still other people might say that Harry thought it would be funny, and they could back it up by saying that he was laughing after it happened. So, as you can see, there are many opinions about the answer, and none are any more "correct" than any other because they can all be backed up with evidence from the book.

Evaluative Question:

This type of question may have different answers, but the answers are all based simply on personal opinion, not based on evidence from the book. An example of this type of question would be, "Did you like this book?" While there are many answers to this question, the answers are referring back to your own personal experience and opinion, not to examples you find in the book. Another example of an evaluative question would be, "What would you do if that happened to you?" Again, everybody could come up with a different answer, but it would be based on your own experiences in life, not on the book you've been reading. A few of these kinds of questions are good, but too many will pull the group discussion away from learning about the characters, plot, or setting of the book you are reading and discussing.

Factual Questions:

A third type of question is a factual question. Here's an example of a factual question based on a Harry Potter book: "What shape is the scar on Harry's forehead?" You'll notice that this question has only one answer: a lightning bolt. It's a fact. There would be no lasting discussion around this question or any other factual question. This is not the kind of question that would promote a lively group discussion, but it would help you remember things about the book.