

Question Stems to Scaffold and Support Vocabulary Development

Below are suggested question stems to incorporate during and after reading activities, allowing English learners (ELs) to further language development, practice academic vocabulary, and use critical-thinking skills. Questions are aligned with the stages of second-language acquisition and can be tailored to each student’s language ability level.

Level 1: Pre-Production (0–6 months in school)

- Ask questions ELs can answer by pointing at pictures in the book.
 - Show me the . . .
 - Where is the . . . ?
 - Point to the . . .

Level 2: Early Production (6 months–1 year in school)

- Ask questions ELs can answer with one or two words.
 - Who was . . . ?
 - What did . . . ?

Level 3: Speech Emergence (1–3 years in school)

- Ask “why” and “how” questions ELs can answer with short sentences.
 - Why does the . . . ?
 - How does the . . . ?

Level 4: Intermediate Fluency (3–5 years in school)

- Ask questions that require more thought and might require extended responses.
 - What would happen if . . . ?
 - Why do you think . . . ?
 - Imagine if you were . . .

Level 5: Advanced Fluency (5–7 years in school)

- Ask the student to retell the story, including the characters, the plot, the problem, and the solution.
 - Retell the story’s ending.
 - Tell me what would change if . . .
 - Describe the problem, and provide a solution.