

Section 8.8 - Understanding question words using stories

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Why is this important?

Children need to be able to process a variety of question words in a range of different situations. Questions are a way of finding out what children know/can remember about an activity/event, etc. and also a means of encouraging reflection and thinking skills.

What to do

- Read a simple story together. Choose favourite books, about animals perhaps, or favourite characters (e.g. 'Harry and the Bucketful of Dinosaurs').*
- Ask questions about the story (e.g. for 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarves', ask:
 - 'Where did the dwarves go to work?'
 - 'What were the dwarves digging for?'
 - 'Why did Snow White go to sleep?'
 - 'Who gave Snow White the poisonous apple?'
 - 'How did the dwarves feel when Snow White went to sleep?')
- If the child doesn't answer or answers inappropriately, try:
 - Offering a choice of answers (e.g. 'Where did the dwarves go to work? Was it in a shop or down the mine?').
 - Re-read part of the story where the answer is and then repeat the question.



Step up

- Use longer stories with more detailed story-lines.
- Ask questions relating to emotions and facial expressions, and information which has to be inferred from the story rather than read in the text.



Step down

- Make sure the child understands the vocabulary used in the story (e.g. if the child doesn't know what a 'mine' is, then introduce and describe the word showing the pictures that go with the story).
- Use short stories where the answers are very clear from the text. Some of the Stage 1 'Oxford Reading Tree**' stories have no text so the child can 'read' the story with you and you can ask questions as you go along.
- Use picture books and pop-up books.
- Use one composite picture.