

## What is it?

The Concept Question Chain (Johnson, 1992) is similar to QAR in that both require students to use higher order thinking skills when they formulate responses to questions about what they have read. As such, it is a valuable tool for in-class and independent reading. The Concept Question Chain consists of three levels of questioning: literal, interpretive, and applied. All questions are designed to help students grasp the meaning of the text-based concept or theme and to apply it to another situation.

## How to use it:

1. Select one important concept or theme from the text about which you want students to have a thorough understanding.
2. Construct questions about this concept at each of the following three levels:
  - "Right There" or literal questions; the reader can literally put her finger on the answer in the text. Questions begin with phrases such as "who is," "where is," "list," "what is," "when is," "how many," "when did," "name," and "what kind of." There is one right answer to the question, and it can be stated in just a few words.
  - "Think and Search" or interpretive questions; the reader makes inferences and discerns relationships about the author's ideas. The answers are found in the text, but may require that the reader connect ideas located in different parts of the text. Questions begin with words such as "summarize," "contrast," "explain," "find two examples," "why did," "how did," and "what caused."
  - "On My Own" or applied questions; the reader is expected to evaluate text-based information, or apply it to a different situation or context. The answers to these questions are found beyond the text in conjunction with the reader's prior

knowledge. Questions begin with phrases such as "what do you think about," "prove," "apply," "what if," "what would you do if," "evaluate," "how would this be different if" and "suggest."

Begin by designing questions for the interpretive level, as this level provides direction for developing the appropriate literal and applied questions; the latter should encourage students to think about the text-based concept in a broader perspective and to apply the concept beyond the text selection. Write questions that will cause the students to connect ideas and interpret important information so they understand the concept. When developing questions, remember that quantity is not as important as the "thoughtfulness" of each question.

3. After preparing students for reading (i.e., activating background knowledge, introducing key vocabulary, and identifying the purpose for reading), assign the reading selection and tell students to focus on the concept as they read. Provide them with a question from each level to guide their reading and to show them that you want them to read at more than the literal level alone.
4. Encourage structured note-taking that addresses the questions you have posed.
5. After the students have read the selection, lead a discussion using the questions you have developed. Then, have students demonstrate their understanding of the concept by completing a performance task. For example, instruct students to
  - Develop a short script for a radio news broadcast that illustrates the concept in today's news.
  - Write a poem about the concept.
  - Select a song that you feel illustrates the concept. Share it with the class, explaining why it represents the concept for you.
  - Create a visual that depicts the concept. Be prepared to explain how it illustrates what the concept means to you.
  - Write an editorial expressing your views on how the concept is important to today's society.

Adapted from Barbara E. Johnson, 1992