

# Ask Questions

B.1.2.1

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Active readers don't just answer questions—they also ask them. Asking questions about what you are reading will help you understand the passage. As you read, think like a detective solving a crime. You may not begin with the right questions. Some questions may never be answered. But asking and answering questions leads you to ask better questions. Your questions will lead you to important answers.

**Ask** Practice asking your own questions. Important questions help you understand what's going on in the story right now (*"What will happen to Cinderella if she doesn't get home by midnight?"*). Even less critical questions may be interesting and worth asking (*"Hmm... why were the stepsisters so mean to Cinderella?"*).

You know a lot about how the world works. Connecting what you read to your own experience helps you ask good questions. You might make connections to—

- **Facts:** *"This passage is about bats. I know bats come out at night. Is that what the author means when he says they are 'nocturnal'?"*
- **Hints and feelings:** *"Roberto seems upset that his grandma had never told him that story before. How would I feel if that happened to me?"*
- **Judgments:** *"I think the author is wrong about school uniforms. I wonder if the author ever wore a school uniform?"*
- **Other things you have read:** *"This editorial says that kids should watch a lot less TV. But that other article says that many shows are educational. Is there some middle ground where they would both agree?"*



**Connections** Read the following sentences and think of a question that you would like to ask the person who wrote them. Write your question on the lines below.

He wasn't the first movie star I had known, but he was the smartest.  
For 20 years, he fooled people into thinking he had a wooden leg.

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## Example

Reread this section of “Introducing...Stamps!” In the space provided, Timothy asked questions about the passage.

### Timothy’s Questions

**Ask** Why did we need stamps?

## Introducing... Stamps!

Anyone who wants to mail a letter today can simply stick a stamp on an envelope and drop it in a mailbox. But things weren’t always so easy. Before stamps were used, the person getting the letter had to pay for delivery. Often, the cost was too high. Many people refused to accept and pay for their letters. That drove up the price for those who did pay. It seemed like paying for postage *before* the letter was sent might be the best solution.

**Ask** Why were Franklin and Washington on the stamps?

### The First U.S. Stamps

In 1847, the United States government printed the nation’s first stamps. The original 5-cent stamp was brownish-red. It featured a picture of Benjamin Franklin. The original 10-cent stamp was black. It showed a portrait of George Washington.

**Ask** What does illegal mean?

Even though these were the first government stamps, no one had to use them. Many letters still made their way to the sender without a stamp. It wasn’t until 1855 that the government made it illegal to send a letter without a stamp.

**D**

Timothy asks three questions. They help him make sense of the passage as he reads. They may also help him after he is done.

**I**

*Timothy’s first question* is why we needed stamps. This is a strong question because it is directly related to what the passage is about. Keeping it in mind, he should be able to figure out the answer by the end of the passage.

**S**

**C**

*Timothy’s second question* is why Benjamin Franklin and George Washington were on the stamps. The passage does not fully answer this question. To find an answer, he might look in other reference sources, like an encyclopedia or a history book. He might also think about what he already knows about Franklin and Washington to guess why they were chosen.

**U**

**S**

**S**

*Timothy’s last question* is very specific. He wants to know what illegal means. This is a good question to ask because it will help him fully understand the story. He might use vocabulary strategies like *Context Clues* (Lesson 8) or *Word Structure* (Lesson 9) to figure it out.