

Ask Questions

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The great detective spent hour after hour asking questions. Each question brought him more information, and pointed to new questions. Finally, he asked just the right one. The answer led him to the solution to the mystery. Active readers are like detectives. They **ask questions** about what they read, instead of just answering them. Asking important questions as you read helps you to **synthesize**, or put together, information in new ways. Putting together the clues leads you to answers that may not have been obvious at first.

Ask What kinds of questions are important? You might ask questions that help you *predict* what will happen next in a story. For example, if you were reading “Jack and the Beanstalk,” you might ask: *What will Jack find at the top of the beanstalk?* You should also ask questions about things the story doesn’t tell you: *Why is Jack climbing the beanstalk in the first place?*

Some questions connect what you read to your own experience. You know a lot about how the world works. You can use what you know to help you understand what you read. You might make connections to—

- **Facts:** *The passage talked about Chinese noodles. I’ve never had them, but I eat spaghetti. How are they different?*
- **Feelings and motivations:** *The main character in this story is acting the way I do when I’ve got a secret. Is she hiding something?*
- **Judgments:** *This author is saying things that just don’t add up. What is he leaving out?*
- **What might happen next:** *When the last mayoral election was really close, they had to do a recount of all the votes. Will that happen here, too?*
- **Other selections:** *I read in science class that almost all of the water on Earth is saltwater. Is that why this author is so worried about running out of fresh water to drink?*

On the next page, you’ll see questions that one reader asked about “The Oldest Noodles in the World.” Think about the answers to his questions, and about the questions you’d like to ask.



Connections Asking questions can help you think actively about movies and television shows, too. Think about your favorite TV show. If you could have one question answered, what would you ask? What would you expect to learn by asking it?

Example

Reread this section of “The Oldest Noodles in the World.” In the space provided, Roberto asked questions about the passage.

Roberto’s Questions

The Oldest Noodles in the World

Ancient Noodles

Ask What is millet?

The bowl was upside down beneath 10 feet of clay and silt. When the archaeologists turned it over, they found a serving of noodles made of a grain called **millet**. It was probably a lunch or dinner that someone never got a chance to eat.

Ask How likely is this to happen?

The most shocking part of the discovery was that the noodles survived for so long. Anything as fragile as noodles should have decayed and disappeared. But the sediment from the flood had formed an airtight seal around the bowl. Trapped, the noodles were preserved for 4,000 years.

Ask What were the oldest noodles known before these?

The world’s oldest noodles quickly crumbled into dust. Still, they might end the ancient argument over who invented the noodle. In Italy, it is widely believed Italian **pasta** came first. But the noodles of Lajia are older than any previously known. China just might take the title of the birthplace of the noodle.

D Roberto asks three questions. They help him understand the passage as he reads, and they will also help him answer questions about it later.

I Roberto’s first question is what **millet** is. The passage gives some clues. The author says that it is a kind of **grain**. We might know from experience that *grains* are used to make cereal and bread. It makes sense that a grain would be used to make noodles. Also, the word “millet” is in **bold**, so we know it’s important.

C Roberto’s second question is how common airtight seals are. The seal is important, because it is the reason the noodles survived. The passage calls the discovery “shocking,” which suggests it’s pretty rare.

U Roberto’s last question is very specific. He wants to know what the oldest noodles had been. The article doesn’t give an answer. If Roberto wants to learn more, he could consult a reference source, such as an encyclopedia.