Text-Dependent Questions and *The New Jim Crow*

Even the best and most experienced teachers may find themselves leading very engaging discussions about a book, but ones that don't necessarily require all of their students to read or understand the main idea of that text. In order for students to benefit most from *The New Jim Crow*, they must engage closely with its important and complex ideas and themes. In addition to the powerful content of *The New Jim Crow,* Alexander provides teachers and students an exemplar of what strong argument and rich research looks like in writing.

This teacher's guide relies on asking and answering text-dependent questions to facilitate student comprehension of this complex text. Text-dependent questions build students' comprehension skills by requiring they read each excerpt closely and identify and refer to evidence from the text in their discussions and writing.

Text-dependent questions ask students to:
• Analyze texts sentence by sentence or word by word to uncover meaning.
• Focus on complex portions of text, like challenging vocabulary and syntax, to enhance reading proficiency.
• Investigate how changing words can alter meaning.
• Probe arguments in persuasive sections and each idea in informational sections, and observe how these build to a whole.
• Examine how Alexander achieves shifts in the direction of an argument or explanation and the impact of those shifts.
• Question the choices Alexander makes to open and close sections (i.e., paragraphs and chapters).
• Note writing patterns and assess what these achieve.
• Consider what the text leaves ambiguous or unstated.

Anti-bias education challenges us to question authors, texts, our peers and ourselves. Effective text-dependent questions put all readers on an equal footing by focusing on the text rather than assigning privilege for prior knowledge or background. Culturally responsive instruction, however, engages students by building on their lived experiences; enhance a text-dependent approach by integrating "connector questions" (text-to-self, text-to-text and text-to-world questions).

Examples:

NON TEXT-DEPENDENT QUESTIONS	TEXT-DEPENDENT QUESTIONS	TEXT-CONNECTOR QUESTIONS
Rely on students' prior knowledge, experiences or opinions unrelated to the text.	*Require students to rely on and reference the text.*	*Ask students to connect the text to their own lives, communities and world.*
In your opinion did the idea of white supremacy lead to the enslavement of Africans or did the institution of slavery instill the idea of white supremacy?	Alexander writes, *"The history of racial caste in the United States would end with the Civil War if the idea of race and racial difference had died when the institution of slavery was put to rest."* What does she mean? Specifically, what does this suggest about emancipation?	Bacon's Rebellion led to a multiracial alliance. What united people in this alliance? Give an example of a similar alliance that exists today, or make the case for an area where one is needed in your community.

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Writing and Sequencing Text-Dependent Questions with *The New Jim Crow*

Lessons 3-10 are based upon abridged excerpts of *The New Jim Crow* and include well-developed sets of text-dependent questions to help guide student reading and discussion. You are also encouraged to create your own text-dependent questions. Focus on important and difficult portions of the text when writing text-dependent questions. Your questions should invite readers to uncover details and meaning they could miss in a cursory reading.

Plan and sequence questions in a way that engages students to think more deeply over time. Start with clarifying or "right there" questions. These will help situate all students, alert you to any basic misunderstandings and help students build confidence. Move on to asking more interpretive and analytical questions that require re-reading, discussion and substantive textual evidence to answer.

Use strategically sequenced questions to engage students in increasingly complex thought and analysis. This practice provides a model for students to follow when independently making sense of a text. The following question types will help you to sequence increasingly complex text-dependent questions.

Content questions ask what the text states.
• Ask students to think about text details and nuances.
• Ask students to clarify the meaning of new vocabulary.
Example: *Who was involved in Bacon's Rebellion?*

Meaning questions ask what the text means.
• Ask students to summarize, paraphrase and synthesize the text.
• Ask students to ponder and analyze the text's significance.
Example: *Describe the economic impact of emancipation on the South.*

Connector questions ask how the text is relevant to our lives and world.
• Ask students to relate the text to something they have experienced.
• Ask students to enter into a dialogue with the author or text.
Example: *On the whole, how does "The Color of Justice" characterize law enforcement officials? How does that assessment compare with your view of the police? Your family's? Your community's?*

Style questions ask how Alexander's arguments are achieved through writing.
• Ask students to examine syntax, structure and literary devices.
• Ask students to analyze how the construction of language informs the strength of claims and the presentation of supporting evidence.
Example: *Give an example of how Alexander uses historical research as evidence to support her claim about racial profiling.*

English language learners need a language frame to translate thought into oral language. Think aloud, and model each strategy before asking students to participate.

• For **content** questions, offer a "launch" question, such as: "What is the main idea of this text?" "What are some details that support it?" or "What are three important words in the text and what do they mean?" Next, model an example orally, so that English language learners can see and hear the thinking in a visible manner. "I think the main idea is ____ because ____. Some things that seem important and that support this are ____. I know three key words in this section are ____, ____ and ____."

• For **meaning** questions, reiterate how to paraphrase by taking one sample sentence and restating it orally. Next, to reach deeper levels of significance, offer sentence starters such as, "This makes me wonder about ____."

• For **connector** questions, use metamodeling by stating, "This reminds me of the time I ____," to verbalize an experience that explicitly models a connection.

• For **style** questions, select one sample sentence and break it down grammatically. Students should analyze it orally to explain the semantic features that give it "voice."

Teaching Students to "Challenge the Text" with *The New Jim Crow*

Challenge the Text helps students ask and answer their own text-dependent questions by taking multiple perspectives and uncovering assumptions and biases within a text. Asking critical questions encourages students to examine the validity of *The New Jim Crow* and Alexander's arguments.

In order for students to determine what is *not* included in the text, they must first understand what *is* found in the text. By considering and challenging what is said in a text, students enter their voices into the textual discourse and develop agency. Student engagement in the reading process increases when they explore their own interests.

Challenge the Text can be structured in a number of ways, incorporated into other strategies and implemented during shared reading and after-reading discussions.

1. First, model how to challenge the text with critical questions.

2. Then have students create their own critical questions.

3. During reading, remind students to pause and ask critical questions as they encounter perplexing areas, suspicion or contradiction. These questions should point to specific instances in the text, and their answers should rely on textual evidence and reasoning.

4. During re-reading, ask students to generate more questions and give responses grounded in evidence from the text.

5. Finally, use after-reading discussions to have students reflect on which of their questions were answered by the text and which ones remain. Use the after-reading discussion activities (Fishbowl, Socratic Seminar, or Text Talk Time) to address those questions and to discuss how they might find answers.

Provide English language learners with sentence starters and question stems to help them structure effective and critical questions. The five W's (who, what, when, where and why) can offer a great place to begin an interrogative sentence. English language learners benefit from visual cues; post those sentence starters and question stems on an anchor chart they can see from their desks.

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Challenge the Text Sample Questions

These questions model a critical literacy approach to examining the role of power and privilege. Craft your questions so students defend their responses by referencing to the text. *(Where applicable, the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy are noted.)*

Textual Purposes
• What is this text "saying"? Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support your analysis. (R.1)
• What is Alexander's point of view or purpose? How does she convey it throughout the text? How does she develop her argument? (R.6)
• What are the central ideas of the text and how they are developed? (R.2)

Textual Structures and Features
• How does Alexander structure or organize the text? How do specific sentences or paragraphs contribute to the development of Alexander's ideas or claims? (R.5)
• To what genre does this text belong? How does this genre affect Alexander's message?
• What do the images suggest? How do they work together with the text to provide meaning?
• How does Alexander's use of particular words and language affect the meaning or tone of the text? (R.4)

Construction of Individuals, Ideas and Events
• How do individuals, ideas and events develop and interact over the course of the text? (R.3)
• How do these constructions influence the reader's understanding of the individuals, ideas or events? (R.3)
• Why is the influence of these constructions significant? (R.3)

Power and Interest
• What cultural knowledge does the reader need to understand this text?
• Describe the relationship between the reader and Alexander.
• How does the text depict age, gender or cultural groups? (R.3)
• Whose views are excluded or privileged in the text? Who is allowed to speak? Who is quoted? How do the excluded or privileged views affect Alexander's claims and reasoning?

Gaps and Silences
• How does Alexander use rhetoric to advance her ideas? Are there silences in this text that leave out certain viewpoints or voices? What effect do the gaps and silences have on the text and reader? (R.6)
• How does Alexander acknowledge or respond to conflicting viewpoints? (R.6)

Whose View? Whose Reality?
• What views of the world does the text present? How does Alexander construct this version of reality? (R.3)
• How would the text be different if it were told in another time, place or culture?

• Interrogating the Author
• What can you infer about Alexander's interests and values based on this text? (R.1)
• What view of the world and values does the author assume the reader holds? How do we know?

Multiple Meanings
• What different interpretations of the text are possible?
• How do contextual factors influence how the text is interpreted?
• How does the text rely on intertextuality (its relationship to other texts) to create its meaning?