**Comprehension Question Starters**

In our daily instruction at Longfellow, we emphasize understanding what we read by dividing comprehension questions into two categories – Within the Text and Beyond the Text. Within the Text questions simply focus on what was read - a retelling of the story or facts learned after reading a text. Beyond the Text questions incorporate inferential thinking - the why or how questions. In grades 2-5, students are introduced to About the Text questions. These questions are more evaluative and examine how/why the author wrote the piece. Although students may not refer to these types of questions by their names (Within, Beyond, and About the Text), they do learn and practice the skills necessary to respond and discuss what was read to each classification of questions.

Our goal is to reinforce these higher order thinking skills at school and at home. We’ve created a list of sample discussion questions for both fiction and non-fiction text that parents can use with students at home when discussing what was read. With parents’ help, we can work together to help all students become proficient readers.

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| **Within the Text Questions** | |
| *Fiction* | *Non-Fiction* |
| What was the story about? | What did you learn about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (the topic)? |
| What was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_’s problem in the story? | What are some of the important facts you read about? |
| What did \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ do to try and solve the problem? | What did you learn from the picture/photograph/chart/etc? |
| Summarize the main events in the story. | Give an example of a word from the glossary. (Located at back of book) |
| Tell some things the characters like to do. | What were the important points made in the text? |

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| **Beyond the Text** | |
| *Fiction* | *Non-Fiction* |
| Why did the character \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_? | What is so important about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_? |
| How would you describe the character? | What information does the photograph/heading give you? |
| How did the character’s feelings change and why? | What was the most important idea in this text? |
| What was surprising to you in the story? | Why do you think the author wanted to tell you about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_? |
| Does this story remind you of anything? | Does this text remind you of anything else? |

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| **About the Text** | |
| *Fiction* | *Non-Fiction* |
| Is this a good title for the piece? Why or why not? | Is this a good title for the piece? Why or why not? |
| What did the character(s) learn? | Look at the sections and read the headings. Do you think this was a good way to organize the information? Why/why not? |
| What was the most important part of the story? Why? | How did the author make this text interesting? |
| How did the author start and end the story? Why did he/she do that? | Look in the text to find some powerful descriptive words. Explain what they mean and why the writer chose to use them. |
| Why did the author write this? | Why do you think the author wrote this text? |