

# How Can We Extend Discussions About Texts?

By Jackie Jacobs | Categories: Making Meaning, Teaching Tips

*You can read Jackie's previous thinking around this topic here and here.*

Being armed with questions and strategies that help students think more deeply about text is great, but what do we do when the students aren't taking the bait? I'm sure you can think of a time when you asked a really good, thought provoking question-one that should have started a riveting discussion about a text-and all you got in return were surface level answers, answers that didn't make sense, or blank stares. Argh!! What can we do to save or extend those discussions? Here are some ideas:

1. Ask questions that will probe students' thinking. For example:

- *Do you agree or disagree with [Yvonne's] thinking? Why?*
- *Who has another idea about...?*
- *What might you add to what [Yvonne] said?*
- *What in the text makes you think that...?*

2. Ask students to explain their thinking using examples from the text. You might ask questions like:

- *What in the text makes you think that?*
- *What evidence from the text can you use to support your thinking?*

3. Be prepared to reread parts of the text or provide an example from the text that will support students' thinking (if you're teaching Making Meaning, you can use the "Students Might Say" feature for support). Then repeat the question. For example, if the original question was:

- *From the part of the story you just heard, what did you learn about the [main character]?*  
You might point out part of the text or an illustration and say something you learned. Then ask:
  - *What else did you learn about the [main character]? What in the text makes you think that?*

What other tips and tricks do you use for extending discussions about texts?