More Than Twenty Questions To Ask While Reading

Carrie Stell (stellc@grayson.edu)

1. What does this word mean? How can you tell from the context (words and sentences around it)?
2. Does the word have a positive or negative connotation (the emotions associated with the word in addition to its definition)?
3. Is there a figurative or hidden meaning behind the usual or literal meaning (what the words actually or literally say)? When words say one thing but mean another, you must figure out the meaning of the figurative language.
4. What are synonyms (words that are the same or similar in meaning) and antonyms (words that aren’t alike or are opposite in meaning) for the word?
5. What is the main (or most important) idea?
6. Is there a topic sentence in the paragraph which contains the main idea?
7. What details (descriptions, examples, reasons) support or give more information about the main idea?
8. How can you summarize this piece of writing? A summary makes a long story short by including the main idea and just a few of the most important details.
9. How can you restate this? A restatement says the same thing using different words.
10. What do you learn from the reading because it is explicit (in other words, the author has directly stated it or told you so)?
11. What is being implied? An implication indirectly states (or hints at) something that is implicit (or not actually said in words).
12. What can you infer or read between the lines? An inference is what you figure out from the hints or suggestions when the information is not stated directly.
13. What can you conclude from your reading? When you reach or draw a conclusion, you decide the meaning of the information given and suggested. The author’s direct (or explicit) statements and indirect (or implicit) statements lead you to draw conclusions based on what you have been told or have guessed from the writing plus what you already know from life.
14. What is the sequence (or order) of events?
15. Can you predict an outcome that you think will happen next or in the future?
16. What action (or cause) is making something else happen as a result (an effect)?
17. What is being compared (shown to be alike) or contrasted (shown to be different)?
18. Are the things being compared really very different? Figures of speech compare different things and show how they are alike by creating images (or pictures) in your mind. A simile compares two different things by saying one is like (or as) the other. A metaphor compares two different things by saying or implying one is the other. Personification gives human characteristics to something that is not human.
19. What is the mood of the passage? What emotions does it make you feel?
20. What is the tone of the writing? What seems to be the author’s attitude toward the subject?
21. What is the theme of the writing? The theme reveals what the author believes about life or human nature even though it is not usually stated directly.
22. What words could describe the characters (people in the story)? Clues are in the actions, words, thoughts, feelings, and even looks of the characters.
23. What is the author’s purpose (or reason) for writing - inform/explain, describe, persuade, or entertain?
24. What is the author’s position (claim, argument, or opinion - which is a belief or judgment)?
25. What evidence (data from multiple sources or facts known to be true) supports the author’s position?
26. Does the author assume you already know something? An assumption is an idea believed to be true even though there is little or no evidence.
27. Can you look at one or a few specific details and make a broader, more general statement about them? A generalization is a statement about a group of people or things that is based on only a few people or things in that group.