**Creating Text-Dependent Questions for ELLs: Examples for Second Grade (Part 2)**

[Diane Staehr Fenner and Sydney Snyder](http://blog.colorincolorado.org/author/dsfss/) / [February 7, 2014](http://blog.colorincolorado.org/2014/02/07/creating-text-dependent-questions-for-ells-examples-for-second-grade-part-2/)

In [Part 1](http://blog.colorincolorado.org/2014/01/24/text-dependent-questions-for-ells/) of my series on text-dependent questions (TDQs) and English language learners, I provided an overview about what these questions are and some guidelines in writing TDQs for ELLs. This week, as promised, I’ll provide examples of TDQs based on a a second-grade text, and we will follow up with more examples for middle and high school in the future!

**Note:** I wrote this week’s post in collaboration with [Dr. Sydney Snyder](http://blog.colorincolorado.org/guest-bloggers/#snyder), my colleague and a former ESOL teacher.  We also received helpful feedback and guidance from David Pook, a New Hampshire teacher who helped shape the Common Core ELA standards.

**Text: *So You Want to Be President?***



Our TDQs focus on three paragraphs of Judith St. George’s text [*So You Want to Be President?*](http://www.amazon.com/So-You-Want-Be-President/dp/0399243178)(2000). The text is suggested for the second grade in the [CCSS’ Appendix B](http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf) and is also timely with Presidents’ Day coming up (and President Obama’s recent [State of the Union Address](http://blog.colorincolorado.org/2014/01/29/state-of-the-union-latino-students-in-the-spotlight/), covered on the blog last week).

We’ll first provide you with the text, and then we’ll use the TDQ guidelines that we adapted from Achieve the Core to walk you through our considerations in creating TDQs for ELLs.

Next, we’ll provide some scaffolds and supports that ELLs at different levels of English language proficiency could use to help them answer the TDQs and unlock the meaning of the text. (These are an important step – as we worked through the guidelines, we quickly realized we couldn’t create TDQs for ELLs in a vacuum!)

Finally, we’ll share some suggested TDQs for this text as well as a culminating activity for students and leave you with some takeaways from our process.

**Featured Text Excerpt: *So You Want to Be President?***

Every single President has taken this oath: “I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States.”

Only thirty-five words! But it’s a big order if you’re President of this country. Abraham Lincoln was tops at filling that order. “I know very well that many others might in this matter or as in others, do better than I can,” he said. “But…I am here. I must do the best I can, and bear the responsibility of taking the course which I feel I ought to take.”

That’s the bottom line. Tall, short, fat, thin, talkative, quiet, vain, humble, lawyer, teacher, or soldier—this is what most of our Presidents have tried to do, each in his own way. Some succeeded. Some failed. If you want to be President—a good President—pattern yourself after the best. Our best have asked more of themselves than they thought they could give. They have had the courage, spirit, and will to do what they knew was right. Most of all, their first priority has always been the people and the country they served.

**Writing TDQs for ELLs: Step by Step**

The following guidelines and examples are based on Student Achievement Partner’s [Achieve the Core Guidelines](http://www.achievethecore.org/page/710/text-dependent-question-resources) for using text-dependent questions (TDQs).  These guidelines, along with the questions that follow, are also available in a [PDF Format](http://ccweta.files.wordpress.com/2014/02/tdqs_president1.pdf).

**Step 1: Consider These Guidelines**

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| --- | --- |
| **Achieve the Core Guideline** | **ELL Interpretation/Suggestion** |
| **Guideline:** Think about what you think is the most important learning to be drawn from the text. Note this as raw material for the culminating assignment and the focus point for other activities to build toward. | **Ideas for ELLs:** Depending on their level of English language proficiency, ELLs will need different amounts of scaffolding to comprehend the text on a deep level. ELLs may require some additional steps to get to this level of learning. |
| **Examples:*** Students should understand that it is the responsibility of the President to execute the mandates of the Constitution.
* ELLs need scaffolding to understand what the President’s responsibilities are and what the Constitution is.
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| **Guideline:** Determine the key ideas of the text.  Create a series of questions structured to bring the reader to an understanding of these. | **Ideas for ELLs:** ELLs might need to be provided some concise [background knowledge](http://blog.colorincolorado.org/2013/12/12/determining-how-much-background-knowledge-to-provide-for-ells/) to access the key ideas of the text. TDQs will need to be scaffolded so that ELLs at different levels of English language proficiency can understand them. ELLs might need sentence frames or sentence starters to support their answers to the questions. |
| **Examples:*** The President takes an oath of office to faithfully serve and do his best.
* President Lincoln is an example of a President who took his responsibility seriously. Although he thought others might do a better job, he worked very hard and is now considered one of the greatest presidents in our history.
* The most successful Presidents give a great deal of themselves and put the people and their country first.

Background Knowledge* Constitution
* Abraham Lincoln
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| **Guideline:** Locate the most powerful academic words in the text and integrate questions and discussions that explore their role into the set of questions above. | **Ideas for ELLs:** Teachers of ELLs will need to decide which academic words to teach ELLs. Some resources include Colorin Colorado’s [“Selecting Vocabulary Words to Teach ELLs”](http://www.colorincolorado.org/educators/content/vocabulary/) and the University of Nottingham, New Zealand’s [Academic Word List Highlighter.](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/alzsh3/acvocab/index.htm) |
| **Examples:*** The Academic Word List Highlighter identifies the words **Constitution** and **priority** as the most powerful academic words in the text.
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| **Guideline:** Take stock of what standards are being addressed in the series of questions above. Then decide if any other standards are suited to being a focus for this text. If so, form questions that exercise those standards. | **Ideas for ELLs:** In addition to Common Core standards, English language proficiency/development standards will also need to guide the creation of TDQs. ESL teachers will need to[collaborate with content teachers](http://blog.colorincolorado.org/2013/03/06/ells-are-everyones-kids-the-role-of-collaboration-in-the-ccss/) to help them integrate English language proficiency/development standards into their TDQs. |
| **Examples:*** CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.2.2 Identify the main topic of a multiparagraph text as well as the focus of specific paragraphs within the text.
* CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.2.5 Know and use various text features to locate key facts or information in a text efficiently.
* CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.2.6 Identify the main purpose of a text, including what the author wants to answer, explain, or describe.
* CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.2.8 Describe how reasons support specific points the author makes in a text.
* WIDA ELD Standard 5: ELLs communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of Social Studies.- Grade 2 Cognitive Function: Students at all levels of English language proficiency ANALYZE the connections between different historical times and people.- Grade 2 Topic-Related Language: Students at all levels of English language proficiency interact with grade-level words and expressions, such as: historical times, communication
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| **Guideline:** Consider if there are any other academic words that students would profit from focusing on. Build discussion planning or additional questions to focus attention on them. | **Ideas for ELLs:** Teachers of ELLs will need to decide which other academic words to teach ELLs. They must be careful not to teach too many words in the text or ELLs could become overwhelmed. |
| **Examples:*** affirm, execute, preserve, defend, succeeded, failed
* oath, order, responsibility, pattern
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| **Guideline:** Find the sections of the text that will present the greatest difficulty and craft questions that support students in mastering these sections. These could be sections with difficult syntax, particularly dense information, and tricky transitions or places that offer a variety of possible inferences. | **Ideas for ELLs:** The sections of text that will present the greatest difficulty to ELLs may differ from those which will present the greatest difficulty for non-ELLs. Teachers should analyze the [academic language found in each text](http://www.colorincolorado.org/educators/academic/) and teach the academic language to the ELLs – as well as the non-ELLs. |
| **Examples:*** The oath and the Lincoln quote both contain challenging vocabulary and sentence structure.
* The author uses some colloquial expressions which may be unfamiliar to students such as: “a big order,” “that’s the bottom line”
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| **Guideline:** Develop a culminating activity around the idea or learning identified in #1. A good task should reflect mastery of one or more of the standards, involve writing, and be structured to be done by students independently. | **Ideas for ELLs:** The culminating activity should incorporate CCSS as well as English language proficiency/development standards for ELLs. [Classroom-based assessments should be scaffolded](http://blog.colorincolorado.org/2013/09/06/instructional-suggestions-for-ells-parcc-assessment-task-part-2/) so that ELLs can demonstrate what they know and can do. In order for ELLs to take part in the task, they will need scaffolding in order to do so. The amount and type of scaffolding needed will depend on their level of English proficiency. |
| **Examples:*** Students describe in writing what a President must do to be considered a good President in writing.
* They answer the writing prompt, “What must a President do to be considered a good President?”
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**Step 2: Provide Additional Support for ELLs**

Here we include a glossary of vocabulary ELLs might need to know. Depending on how abstract the word is, the teacher could embed the meaning of the word into instruction or pre-teach the words. Also, the teacher would need to address the colloquial expression “it’s a big order” in instruction for ELLs who don’t know its meaning. For ELLs at lower levels of proficiency who are literate in their first language, the definitions of the words could be given in their first language.

**Glossary**

1. Affirm – to state or declare as true
2. Oath – a promise
3. Execute – carry out; put into action
4. Preserve – to keep safe
5. Defend – protect from harm; guard
6. Constitution – the written record of the basic laws of a country
7. Order – a job; a responsibility
8. Responsibility –something that a person is responsible for; duty
9. Succeeded – to have good result; do well
10. Failed – to not success in trying to do something
11. Pattern – to copy or follow a model
12. Priority – something that is more important than something else

**Background Knowledge**

We make sure that the two pieces of background knowledge teachers would pre-teach ELLs are concise and don’t give away the text. For ELLs at lower levels of proficiency who are literate in their first language, the background knowledge could be provided in writing in their first language.

* **U.S. Constitution:** The law is the set of rules that we live by. The Constitution is the highest law. The U.S. Constitution was written in 1787. It says how the government works. It creates the Presidency. The Constitutions lists some rights, or things that all people have just because they are alive. (from <http://www.usconstitution.net/constkidsK.html>)
* **Abraham Lincoln:** He was the 16th President of the United States. He is one of the most famous Presidents.

**Step 3: Provide a Guiding Question to Frame Instruction**

Guiding Question: What must a President do to be considered a good President?

**Step 4: Outline the TDQs and Provide Sentence Starters for ELLs**

We provide TDQs that map to each close read of the text. In the first close read, we created one TDQ per paragraph of the text. We make sure that the TDQs address the CCSS and WIDA standards students will be working toward. (We chose to work with WIDA standards here but hope to develop TDQs that integrate different ELD standards in the future.) We also scaffold TDQs for ELLs at different levels of English language proficiency by embedding some vocabulary definitions into the question itself and by providing sentence starters. If the ELLs were at a lower level of proficiency, we’d give a sentence frame and leave some words blank.

**TDQs: First Read (Key Ideas and Details)**

**What is the oath or promise that U.S. Presidents make?**

The President promises to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**What example does the text give about a U.S. President who worked hard to keep his promise?**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is an example of a U.S. President who worked to keep his promise.

**What does the third paragraph say that good U.S. Presidents do?**

The third paragraph says that good U.S. Presidents \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Second Read (Craft and Structure)**

**Why did the author include Lincoln’s quote in paragraph 2?**

The author included Lincoln’s quote to show \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**When the text says, “That’s the bottom line,” what point does the author make?**

The author uses “That’s the bottom line” to mean \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**What does “pattern yourself after the best” mean in this text?**

In this text, “pattern yourself after the best” means that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**What does the author of this text explain about what a President must do to be considered a good President?**

The author explains that a President must \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to be considered a good President.

**Third Read (Integration of Knowledge and Ideas)**

**How does the President’s oath guide him to do his best?**

The President’s oath guides him to do his best by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**What is the author’s main point in this text?**

The author’s main point in this text is that Presidents \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Step 5: Have Students Take Part in a Culminating Activity**

Answer the guiding question.

**What must a President do to be considered a good President?**

A President must \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to be considered a good President.

I know this because (give an example from the text) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Takeaways**

We’d like to leave you with a few takeaways from creating these TDQs.

* First of all, we recognize this is very demanding, challenging work – both for the teacher and the students! We are sure there are ways to improve our TDQs, and we found it very helpful to work together to create them. We suggest that ESL and content teachers use the development of TDQs as a way to collaborate.
* We want to underscore that the TDQs ELLs will use can’t be used in isolation. While the questions themselves might not be too different for ELLs than for non-ELLs using this text, we needed to provide multiple supports for ELLs so that they could actually make meaning from the text and be able to answer the TDQs. Our supports included concise background knowledge, a glossary, and sentence starters to support ELLs’ answers. We suspect these supports would also benefit some non-ELLs as well.
* One final takeaway is that we might not work through all of these TDQs in one lesson; it might take a couple of lessons for students to work with this text to gain a deeper understanding of its meaning.

We’d love to hear what you think about these TDQs and to see some examples you’ve created. Please let us know!

**References**

Achieve the Core: [Text-Dependent Question Resources](http://www.achievethecore.org/page/710/text-dependent-question-resources)

*So You Want to Be President?* Philomel: 2000. Written by Judith St. George and Illustrated by David Small.