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KRISTIN ZIEMKE & KATIE MUHTARIS

READ THE WORLD

*Rethinking Literacy
for Empathy and Action
in a Digital Age*

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*For Meghan and Moey.
From before to beyond.
We carry you with us always.*



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Read the World Online Resources

To access the online resources for *Read the World*, either scan this QR code or visit Hein.pub/RTW-Resources.



Hein.pub/RTW-Resources

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From Kristin

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To my retro Burley crew—I carry you with me every single day.

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From Katie

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I will be forever grateful to my Burley crew and the magic we made.


A Letter to Readers

Dear Reader,

When we first began the journey of this project, we were driven by the idea of stories and how the world and our students were desperately in need of the power of story. Stories connect the past to the present and individuals to one another; stories bring the human experience to life. We believe stories can save us from the hyper-inflamed, fast-paced mistruths of the internet. Stories can save us from living closed-off lives, believing that one experience—ours—is the only one that matters. Stories can inspire us toward a more caring, engaged, and contemplative citizenry. As the world around us changes, the human story endures. This book represents a chapter of our story and we invite you to be a part of it. We hope that you will see the connection between the practical lessons and suggestions in this book and the power of people to take the tools we've created and master them in a way that benefits humanity.


In 1987, Paulo Freire, author of the transformational text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, published a lesser-known title, *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World*. He believed that literacy and the impact of literacy went far beyond merely reading words on the page, extending to reading the world; a juxtaposition of text and context. We cannot understand or use what we read, without comprehending the people, events, social movements, and inequalities that impact us. Freire states, “We need to go beyond the rigid comprehension of literacy and begin to view it as the relationship of learners to the world” (viii). These ideas take on even more significance in a digital age. His work still inspires us, and even inspired the title for this book! Today we ground ourselves in pedagogy as we rethink literacy, adapt and adopt our practices to meet the needs of today's learner, and embrace the relationships and social connections that develop along the journey to understanding. Together, we strive to redefine what it means to read and find our humanity in doing so.

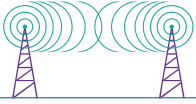
As we rethink literacy, we ask you to interact with this book in a way that balances text and tech. You will see interactive pages where we invite you to coauthor this book with us. In these interactive pages, we ask you to write with us, to be our think partner as we tackle familiar and new ideas. As you read and write, we also ask you to connect with others; share your thinking and questions with the education community on social media using the hashtag #ReadTheWorldNow, reach out to us directly, or share something you've tried with students.



**Changing language is
part of the process of
changing the world.**

—Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of
the Oppressed*, 1970 (68)



**Join the Conversation:**
Welcome and Explanation

"Please come join us.
Let's go read the world."

#ReadTheWorldNow**Hein.pub/RTWLR.1**

This book is about stories and we want to hear yours. You'll also find a series of links and QR codes that will take you to audio recordings of our candid conversations as we add on to ideas in the book, talk through our struggles, question that which we're still unsure of, and anticipate next steps as the tools and times continue to change.

As you read, we hope that you will find an entry point into this book—something that feels accessible and familiar. We hope that you unpack some of the Try Its within and think, "Yes! This is what I've been looking for!" We also hope that you find classroom work that you question or challenge, because it's in this dissonance that we know real growth occurs. If we aren't challenged, we aren't changed. Open your heart and your mind to this journey, allow yourself to evolve, and leave this book a different person than when you entered. We're excited to have you join us as we update our vision, understanding, and practice of what it means to "read the world."

**A Note About Student Photos in This Book**

As we have captured photos of the students in the schools where we work, we have been mindful to represent the varied populations of those schools. While we realize that these populations may not represent the full continuum of student diversity, we continue to work toward equitable representation in our projects while honoring families' wishes with respect to their children.

1

Laying the Groundwork Foundational Structures for Today's Learner

When we—Kristin and Katie—were in elementary school, there weren't many options for discovering new information beyond what was presented in a textbook. Perhaps this sounds familiar? A teacher would assign you a topic related to whatever you were studying, and you would march down to the library, note cards in hand, to sift through the card catalog, a mysterious contraption made up of tiny drawers. Despite encouragement from the librarian to use multiple sources, you almost certainly stuck to the encyclopedia for the bulk of your information, peppering it with tidbits from other books. Or, if you were really lucky, a newspaper article from the microfiche machine. Students today have the collective knowledge of humanity (practically!) on a smartphone in their pocket. Not only can they access this information with their device, but they can produce, publish, and connect with the world to build and share knowledge.

Now, recalling our half-hearted attempts at research strikes us with equal parts nostalgia for the good ol' days and awe at what's possible for students in this digital age. Things sure have changed. In today's classrooms, you will still find cups with pencils sharpened to the nub and chewed erasers, stacks of colorful paper, and glue bottles with dried glue plugs that you have to peel off before using. But today's classrooms give equal real estate to smart technology with computers or tablets, interactive whiteboards, projectors, and robotics.

And still, this modern-day picture is changing—evolving as schools move toward more minimalistic and flexible classrooms and teachers wonder: Is this the new vogue of education or something here to stay?

But it's not just our rooms and our technology that are different. We are different too. Look around; the educators who surround us carry a wide span of experiences and ideas about technology. We have worked with early adopters, teachers who have taken a more conservative approach to technology, and everyone in between. Yet, in our students' worlds, there is no line between the tech world and the nontech world. To best serve the students

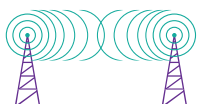
Technology alone is not enough. It is technology married with the liberal arts, married with the humanities that make our hearts sing. When you keep people at the center of what you do, it can have an enormous impact.

—Tim Cook, Apple CEO, 2017



The question has to do with how do we harness this technology in a way that allows a multiplicity of voices, allows a diversity of views, but doesn't lead to a Balkanisation of society and allows ways of finding common ground.

—President Barack Obama, 2017 (quoted in Meixler 2017)



Join the Conversation:
How Things Have Changed!

“That’s why I’m so excited about technology, because it gives me the opportunity to learn right alongside students.”

#ReadTheWorldNow



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in our classrooms today, we educators can all be aware of each other, the strengths we bring, and the gaps that others can help us fill. We build our story together with learning from all sides and a clear focus on our students.

What Can We All Agree On?

When pedagogy and technology meet, it can feel polarizing at times. On one hand, there is the drive for innovation, the reimagining of what currently exists, and a sense of trying to keep up with new tools, strategies, or mindsets. On the other hand, there is the anchor of practices that are proven to work: structures, strategies, and scaffolds that endure time and time again. It can be easy to sort people into “tech savvy” or “not tech savvy.” These kinds of judgments can quickly divide us and prevent us from the practices that will help us all grow: listening to one another, listening to our students, and considering what the purpose of education is in the first place.

We all come to this digital teaching life from a different place. With our experiences, we bring biases and memories of our own prior successes or flops in the classroom. So how can we come together? We can anchor ourselves by considering how each learning experience our students engage in promotes their own sense of agency in the process.

Promoting children’s sense of agency is not a new idea—it is central to the work of visionary educators such as John Dewey and Maria Montessori. However, as technology continues to shape our daily lives, the tools and methods we use to promote agency in children must also evolve.

Realizing the Promise of Technology

Today, we find ourselves in an era in which information is ubiquitous and processed and distributed faster than ever before (Berger 2014). Ninety-eight percent of US homes with children under the age of eight have access to a mobile device (up from 52 percent in 2011). Seventy-four percent of lower-income households (below \$30,000) surveyed report access to high-speed internet in 2017 (Rideout 2017, 9).

Technology, and the ability to share information quickly on a large scale, has grown our collective knowledge repository to a point where there is more and more to sift through as we access, form opinions, and build new understanding. Because there are more “bits” to sort through, we are forced to evaluate, summarize, and synthesize a larger body of work—and that body of work often contains more than the printed word. All of us—we teachers and our students—can see, hear, and feel stories from around the world in many different formats. We can view successes, failures, and struggles in live time. We can interact with those like us and those who may be different from us with just the push of a button. As we look at the young faces sitting on our rugs, we recognize that, to be truly literate in today’s society, they must learn

to evaluate all the information they encounter to make sense of the world.

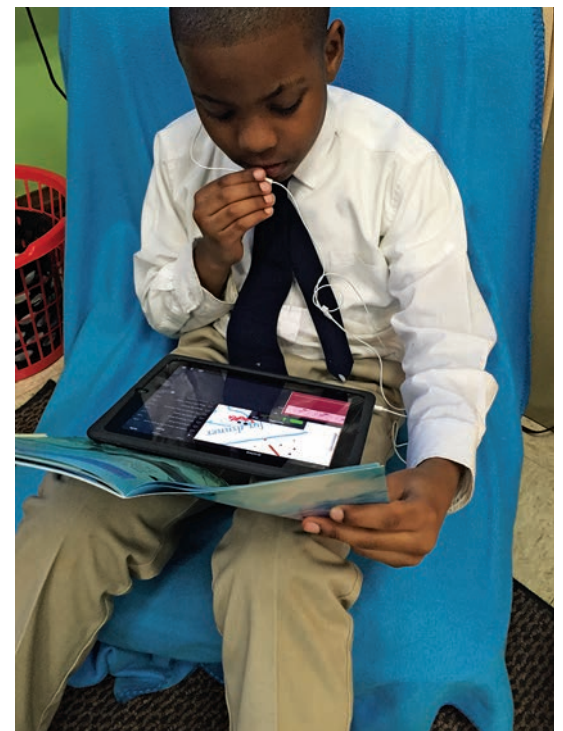
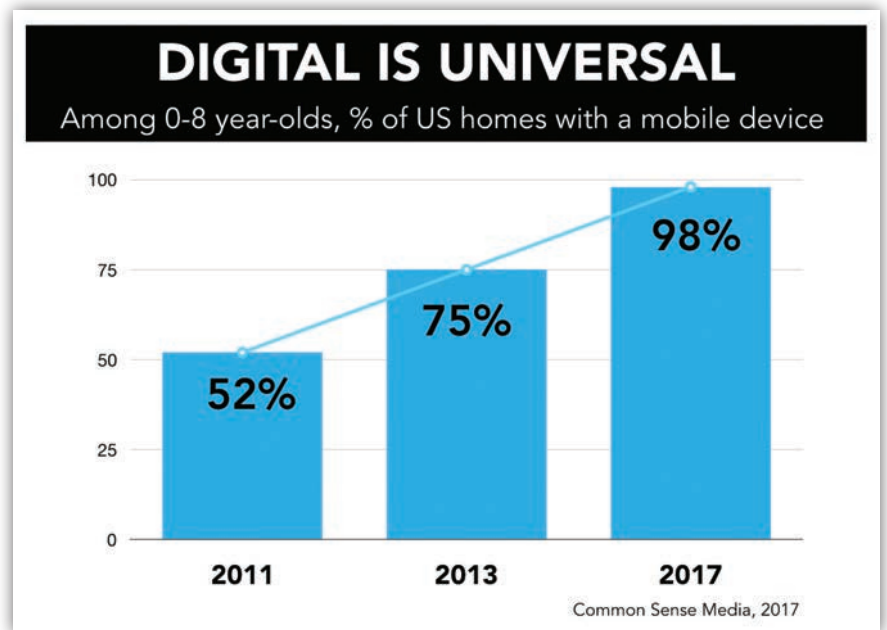
Technology brings us an infinite number of bits of information, but human beings do not understand the world in terms of bits of information. Instead, we shape those bits of information into stories. Story links information to emotion and creates meaning (Furedi 2015). A new headline might become part of the stories we tell ourselves about what is wrong—or right—about the world. So, when technology brings us voices we've not heard before, information that challenges our views, or material from another person's perspective, it is bringing us new stories and affecting the stories that we use to make sense of our lives. As a vehicle for story, technology gives us new opportunities to learn, consider, communicate, empower, and tell.

Of course, there are dark stories in the digital realm. The anonymity of technology seems to amplify the very weaknesses of human society. From a US election riddled with accusations of fake news to bots that drive online content to online bullying that threatens our children, many have proclaimed that digital interconnectedness may be the end of humanity as we know it.

Yet, if we look at the quotations at the beginning of this chapter from two of the most powerful and influential leaders of our time, we see that they share the same view of technology: it is not the tools of technology that matter but how people leverage them to affect the world. Obama and Cook share an optimism that technology can bring people together, can give everyone a voice on a global scale, and can, ultimately, enrich our lives. It's all about how we use it.

This optimism is neither new nor unfounded.

Paulo Freire, author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and Donald Macedo explained, "Reading does not consist merely of decoding the written word or language; rather, it is preceded by and intertwined with knowledge of the world" (1987, 29). Prior to ever reading print, we are surrounded by a multitude of stimuli that help us comprehend the world. Freire and Macedo saw that reading, alone, was not enough: it is art, music, architecture, and modes of communication that influence one's perspective and comprehension of life. Their words are as true today as when they wrote them, but now we have much more to "read"—digital videos, texts, infographics, images, art, audio, virtual reality, social media, and more. Freire reminded us that it is our own experience, input, and actions that give meaning to the stories we encounter.



2

Reading Today's Texts Comprehension and Thinking in a Digital Age

Sun shines through the window, casting long shadows as students sit in small groups around the classroom, some grabbing their books and others grabbing tablets. As Mr. B works his way around the room to confer with students, he keeps glancing at two boys on the carpet whose body language reveals that they are struggling to find engagement with the day's work. It is not the typical getting up, talking, and fiddling avoidance behavior, but rather flicks of the fingers, tense bodies, and stolen glances around the room.

Mr. B reflects, as we all do during these moments, "Maybe I shouldn't let them read on the tablets. They are too distracted. But the app they are on offers a wide variety of books they are interested in and that they can access." Many of us have found ourselves in Mr. B's shoes, grappling with how to best engage our readers, which tools will best meet their needs, and how to give them the instruction and support they need to use technology in a way that will amplify the work they are doing.

What Do We Now Need to Teach That We Didn't Need to Teach Before?

It is easy to make assumptions about the knowledge and experience students are coming to us with, for example, that students already inherently know how to use technology as a tool for learning. Yet Common Sense Media (2015, 21) reports that while seventy-eight percent of tweens spend their time on devices for consumption-based activities (viewing videos, watching TV, playing games, browsing websites), only three percent of their time is related to creative activities (digital art, coding, writing). In short, students today come into our classrooms familiar with some aspects of mobile devices. They know how to use them as a tool for entertainment. They may know how to use them as a tool to communicate. But they don't necessarily know how to use them as a tool for thinking.

So students might, at first, appear to be the mythical "digital natives" we've heard about: it may seem that they understand and can navigate technology effortlessly. But, upon closer inspection, we see that their expertise is often

Learn how to learn. That needs to be the norm of education moving forward. Jobs will change but learning is forever. That's how we prep for the future.

—Dr. Anne-Marie Imafidon, 2018



Join the Conversation: *Digital Reading in the Classroom*

"The reading experience is now so complex because it varies by format. . . . There are so many more combinations of how to read."

#ReadTheWorldNow

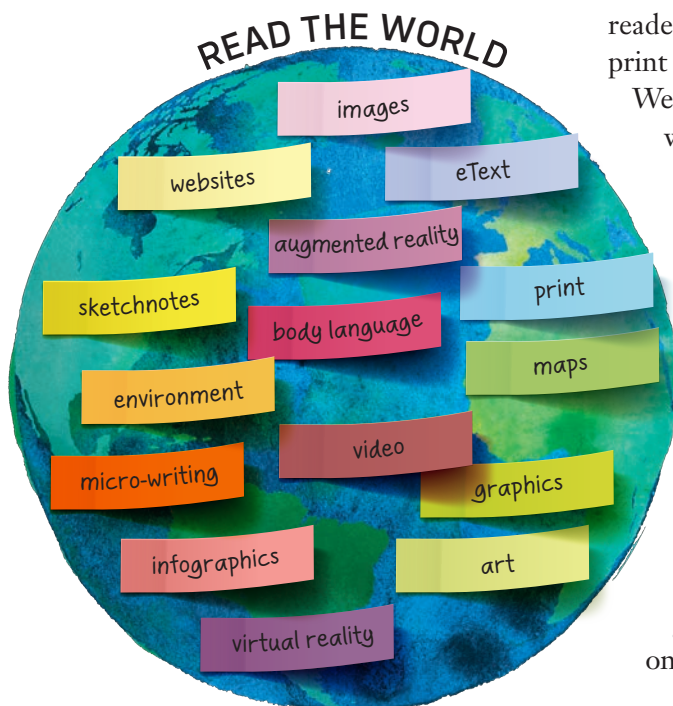


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Digital reading experiences must be part of the opportunities we give students on a regular basis. If not, we're discounting much of the reading they will engage with in the future.

—William L. Bass II and Franki Sibberson, *Digital Reading*, 2015 (4)



limited to technology that provides entertainment. Students still need instruction, coaching, and guidance when it comes to learning, reading, and creating in digital spaces. They are ready and willing to learn about new tools and even to support teachers in learning about tools, but they need to be taught how to use devices in a way that amplifies positive learning experiences.

Take a moment to visualize the last website you viewed. Think deeply about what it looked like. If you're unable to gather a clear picture of a site in your mind, we invite you to engage in a moment of digital distraction and put down your book to take a look at CNN, ESPN, Amazon, or your favorite social media site. Go!

Chances are the website you visited opens with an image or a short video clip. If you take a look at web design and media content, you'll notice a shift away from text boxes on a page and print intended to be read from top to bottom to layouts that are dominated by images and short video clips. In fact, in many places, text is a click away and the viewer has to link to long-form print via a caption or headline. This visual layout asks the reader to use classic nonfiction features—captions, headings, titles—and depend on them as a signal to read on. Furthermore, we read the visuals and use them to decide what content we pursue. These visual messages are layered with information and are constructed to send a host of messages to the reader about bias, intent, values, and persuasion—evidence students must analyze to determine the purpose in a media message (Center for Media Literacy, n.d.). Once you start looking, you'll find examples all around that indicate we need to teach kids to read beyond text—images, video, graphics, and more—and critically analyze the message to comprehend deeply.

For the past fifty years, educators have studied how kids become effective readers in print text. We've crafted minilessons to support a diverse range of print readers, and we continue to refine these lessons on an ongoing basis. We've provided students time and choice with a variety of texts because we know this increases their ability to read. But have we done the same with text on screen? Images? Infographics? Video?

While the student-centered practices behind strong instruction are just as powerful when working with technology, minilessons for print don't always translate to building strategic on-screen readers. In some cases, attempting to apply skills honed for print to digital media without support from teachers may cause more confusion to the reader (Ciampa 2014). Therefore, we need to craft lessons based on our observations of students, on the areas where understanding breaks down, and on evolving technologies. In short, we need to redefine what it means to read: the mere act of reading words in a digital medium is far more complicated than previously thought.

In print reading, we teach the characteristics that define various genres as well as the structures and nuances of those genres, focusing on specific strategies needed to access and comprehend the information

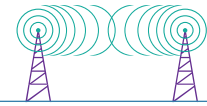
presented. It's common practice that, even for emergent readers, we take note of genre and begin to build a mental map or checklist of what to expect from that genre. This mental mapping supports readers in comprehending increasingly complex texts as they progress through their educational careers.

Yet, with devices, we tend to group all forms of digital reading under the umbrella category of “reading on-screen.” However, there are many formats and permutations of eText: even more than there are for print. With digital texts or eTexts—words, images, and graphics in non-paper-based formats (Mills 2016)—students need to not only navigate the subtleties of the traditional print genres but also take into account the delivery method. Anne Mangen's research suggests that reading eText varies by format (e-book, PDF, social media feed, etc.) as well as the device that it is delivered upon (e-reader, laptop, tablet, etc.). In short, reading a PDF on your phone is a different reading experience than reading it on your laptop or tablet device (Mangen and Kuiken 2014).

Similarly, reading an e-book provides a very different experience than reading a PDF or a social media feed, and again that experience varies across devices. We now have significantly more formats in which we must access and interpret new information. Thus, Mangen (2016) concludes, “The future of literary reading in a time of increasing digitization is too multifaceted, complex, multilayered to be studied entirely within disciplinary boundaries.” The dynamic nature of digital text is so variable and complex that we must teach it in all subject areas, not just reading.

As technology provides countless new ways to access information, it also requires us to identify new strategies that will help us acquire and build knowledge. One path forward, according to Maryanne Wolf, director of UCLA's Center for Dyslexia, Diverse Learners, and Social Justice, is for young readers to develop a biliterate brain—learning the needed skills and dispositions for paper and digital reading in tandem—much in the way children who are raised to speak two languages develop their skills (2018).

While some of the research in this burgeoning field illuminates new understandings about how our brains interact with and respond to varied digital reading situations, much of it confirms what we have already observed about digital reading: students need explicit instruction in both the skills *and* habits of reading on devices, students need ample time and opportunity to practice applying skills to varied digital reading scenarios, and students still need robust reading instruction in print texts to further deep reading skills. Yet, startlingly, the majority of educators have not had professional development geared toward applying existing literacy strategies to this new reading format (Schugar and Schugar 2018). Above all, our students need educators who are researching and observing, while keenly applying all they know about teaching and learning to help them navigate these new mediums and act as tech mentors in our connected world. The Try It lessons in this chapter are designed to help you on your own journey of rethinking reading today.



Join the Conversation:
*An Expanded Definition
of Reading*

“We have so much input coming in. We want to be able to help our students synthesize all of that input into a way that makes sense.”

#ReadTheWorldNow



Hein.pub/RTW2.2

In general, the lessons build upon each other. However, the lessons do not need to be used only in the order presented. You can use the *Try This When . . .* notes and the comments at the beginning of each lesson to determine which lessons to use and when to use them.

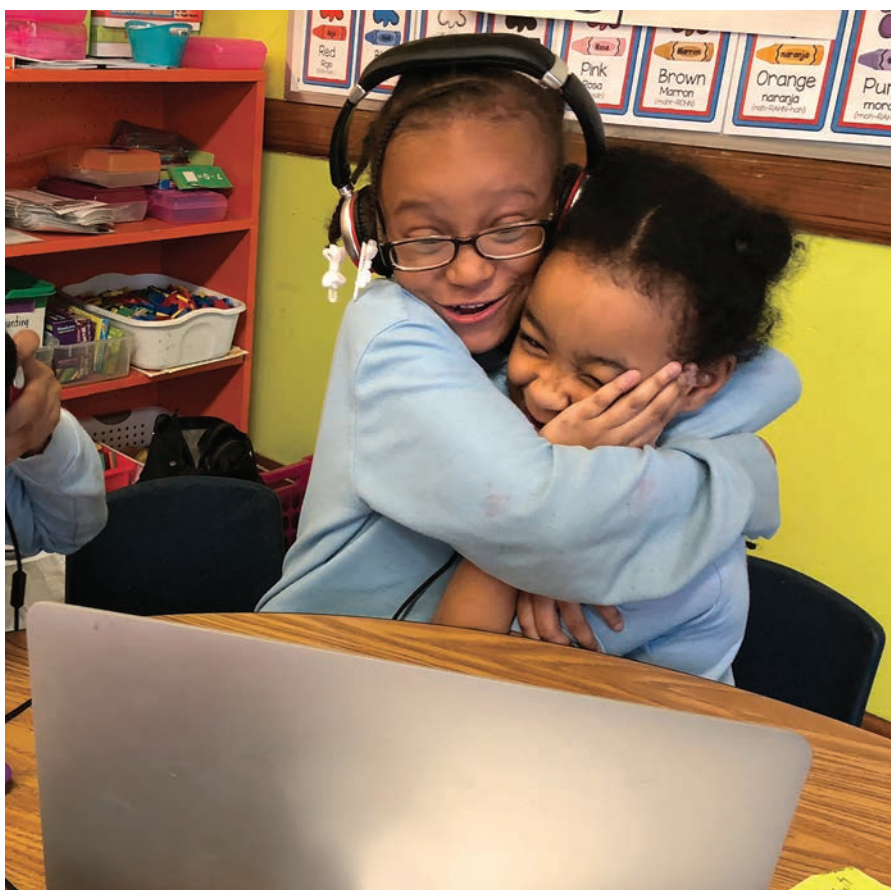
It's important to note that we often use the term *read* interchangeably with the term *view*. When we read, there is always a thinking component. Therefore, “reading” media other than text also reminds us that there is a thinking component: we don't just look at images and video; we consider, we analyze, we question, we connect, we synthesize . . . we *read*!

Several of the lessons also emphasize digging beyond the text itself to understand who has written it, why, and what perspectives or biases they might have. In the past we've reserved this skill for older grades, but new research and the inflow of digital content suggest it is now vital to understand authorship of text and media, even at a very young age.

These lessons are by no means an exhaustive list; we hope that they will be an entry point into this work and an inspiration for you to write your own lessons. You'll find a blank lesson planning page located in the book's online digital resources at Hein.pub/RTW-Resources.

Let's get to work. As Debbie Miller (2018) says, “What's the best that could happen?”

This printable tool
can be downloaded at
Hein.pub/RTW-Resources.



RESPONDING AND CONNECTING USING VISUAL TOOLS: Comment Productively and Kindly



TRY THIS WHEN . . .

- students begin to use video responses as a tool to document and share learning
- you want to enable or allow students to make digital comments on each other's work
- you notice students leaving a string of short and general comments (like "good job")
- you want to showcase that digital publication is often a two-way conversation.

Peer feedback gives students opportunities to have digital conversations, build on each other's thinking, and consider fresh viewpoints and ideas. In this lesson, we establish clear guidelines that maintain a supportive and productive classroom culture. Students learn the classroom expectation: to give each other respectful, kind, helpful, and thoughtful comments that further conversations and support comprehension.

WHAT TO DO

Begin by sharing a variety of examples of digital comments with students as a genre study. You might use digital comments from previous years' student work—names removed, of course—or you might create your own examples. Comments may be text, audio, or video, depending on the tech tools that your students will be using. Include a range of comments for students to explore, like the ones listed in the chart on the right. Ask students to view all the comments and rate each on the following criteria:

- ▶ Are the comments **clear**?
- ▶ Are the comments **kind**?
- ▶ Are the comments **helpful**?
- ▶ Are the comments' suggestions **possible**?

Example Comments for Students to Analyze

- I really liked your video.
- This was good, but you should talk louder.
- I read this book too and I enjoyed it. What was your favorite part?
- This is too short.
- Something you said about this picture got me wondering: Do you think . . . ?
- You were very detailed and gave some good examples from the article. One question I had was . . . ?
- I learned a lot from your video. Do you know how . . . ?
- I don't agree with this.
- You make a good point but I would like to offer another idea.

Helpful Language

Before you comment, think about what types of comments you'd like to receive.

When we comment, we want to say more than just "good job." We want to tell the person what they did that went well. For example, "Maria, when you shared that quote from the article, I could really understand your point of view."

Use your comments to start a conversation about the ideas the person has shared.

Ways to Start a Comment

- I agree with you because...
- What I liked about your post is...
- When you wrote < quote from their writing or video > ^{said} it made me think...
- Thank you for sharing, can you tell me more about...?
- I really enjoyed your video/post. One question I have is...

This chart, designed for a minilesson for second and third graders, supports students in getting started with a productive comment while modeling kind and respectful language.

Comment Checklist

- I watched the person's video carefully and listened to all they had to say.
- I thought about what the person said.
- I left a comment that pointed out something positive the person did.
- I left a comment that asked a question to clarify or continue the conversation.
- I made a connection or shared my own thinking about this topic.
- I used kind and respectful language.

This infographic chart synthesizes the ideas that students came up with during a class discussion about commenting. The images included are more than decoration—they support young readers and present information in a memorable way, offering visual cues for what to do!

Have students discuss and reflect on the comments. What do they notice about specific comments? What kinds of comments would they like to receive?

Co-created checklists and guides (like those shown here) can also help scaffold students as they begin to comment on each other's work. If the checklist is done on chart paper, we ask students to take a photo with their device or we photograph it and provide miniature copies for students to use as they comment.

OUTCOMES AND WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Students should be able to read and respond to each other's thinking and work in a way that supports each other and the deep thinking we want them to do. Once students begin leaving comments on each other's work, can they

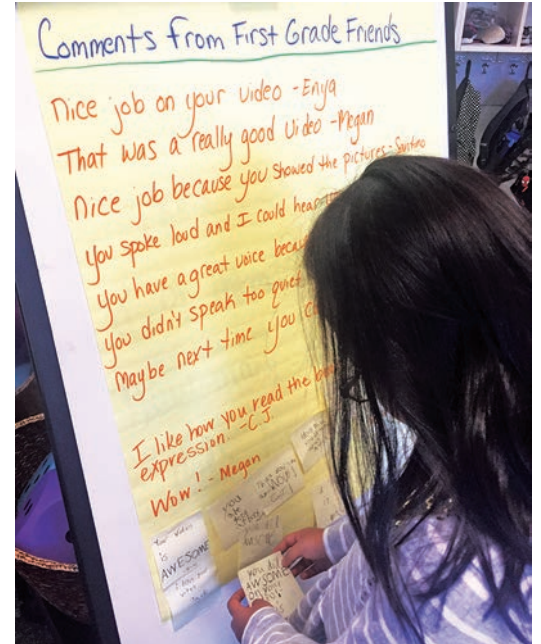
- ▶ show active and careful listening?
- ▶ point out specific elements of a classmate's work that are effective or that they connect with on a personal level?
- ▶ disagree using respectful language and clear reasoning?
- ▶ extend the discussion by responding to the classmate's work in a way that prompts conversation about meaningful topics and ideas presented?



FOLLOW UP

Use commenting on a regular basis and establish a protocol for commenting:

- ▶ Make commenting an enjoyable time in the classroom. Play soft music, and have students make use of flexible seating.
- ▶ Allow students to watch videos with partners and comment together after talking.
- ▶ Students do not need to receive comments from every classmate on every piece of work. Establish commenting groups or circles so that all students receive comments from those in their group. Rotate groups frequently so that students can establish relationships and learn from everyone in the class.
- ▶ Use comments—either your own or others'—as a launch point for small-group discussion.



First-grade students brainstorm what to say before their first experience with commenting.

3

Critical Reading

Developing an Empathetic Stance Through Connected Literacy

The otherwise-chatty group of fifth graders sat silent for a moment.

“Can that really happen?” one of them asked. “I mean . . . this story, could this happen in real life?”

The small book club group had been reading *Out of My Mind* by Sharon M. Draper, a story about a nonspeaking girl with cerebral palsy named Melody whom everyone assumes is also cognitively impaired. When Melody is given a communication device, a whole new world opens and those around her realize that she has a great deal to say. This book, which has both been lauded and come under criticism for its treatment of a character with a disability, was part of a carefully selected set of books for students to choose from. None of the students in the book club had any close relationships with anyone who had a disability like Melody’s. They struggled to merge what they were reading with their own limited personal experiences. They looked at each other, unsure how to continue the conversation.

“It’s just a story,” one said, “I don’t think it can happen.” This comment launched a spirited debate between them about the plausibility of the plot of their book. The teacher finished with the students she was sitting with and quietly sat just outside the circle of the group to listen in. As they came to a stalemate in their debate, the students turned to her.

“How’s it going?” she asked. They all started to talk at once. Then, Annalisa pulled her hair behind one ear and summed up the conversation. “We’re arguing about whether something like this could happen in real life.”

“It’s a good question,” the teacher responded. “I think there’s someone you should meet.” She grabbed her laptop and pulled up the Twitter profile of Jordyn Zimmerman (@jordynbzim), a young autistic woman who lived the majority of her life unable to communicate. Jordyn did not have expressive language skills, and schools projected her intellectual ability based on the way she communicated. Instead of including her in the standard school curriculum, Jordyn was instructed to do simple tasks like touch her nose. As with Melody, the main character in the book, access to an assistive



**Empathy is about finding
echoes of another
person in yourself.**

—Mohsin Hamid, 2012
(quoted in Leyshon 2012)



communication device revealed Jordyn’s true intelligence and potential. A video on her website showed Jordyn today, a student at Ohio University communicating clearly about her advocacy work for autism and inclusion.

“I want to tell you that Jordyn has autism, which is very different from cerebral palsy. What Jordyn and our main character Melody have in common is that they both use assistive technology to help them communicate,” the teacher explained.

“So if we just give everyone a tablet, they can talk?” one student asked. The student looked expectantly at the teacher.

“It sounds like we have some big questions here and we need to learn more. We can’t really know what someone else’s experience is like until we know their story. I think we need to hear some more stories. Let me do a little gathering for you and let’s meet again tomorrow.”

As we give our students opportunities to become more informed citizens of the world, they will inevitably encounter situations and experiences that are unfamiliar to them. These situations and experiences can also be unfamiliar to us, and it is OK to be honest about what we still need to learn and where we need to grow. In the example above, the students were initially at a loss, making decisions about whether or not the character’s situation was possible based only on their own guesses. It was only through examining multiple stories and accounts that they were able to learn more and contextualize what they had read. The work of this chapter is to ensure that students have the tools and strategies they need to learn with empathy rather than jumping to conclusions or making assumptions.

What Do We Now Need to Teach That We Didn’t Need to Teach Before?

The values and goals of strong instruction are not new: we respect children; we meet them where they are academically and socially and help them to grow; we encourage a sense of agency in our students; and we aim for them to become independent learners, readers, writers, and thinkers. However, technology now offers us both new challenges and new opportunities in relation to these values and goals.

We live in a world where any human with a device can record events and share their story wide and far (Jenkins 2006). We can access countless texts, primary source documents, images, video clips, and other resources. We no longer need to depend on a textbook’s homogenized single story: technology makes it possible for us to gather as many stories about a topic or event as we can. Whereas previously we may have read one article about a current issue, technology now allows us to access multiple stories from every side and angle. In fact, in many ways, our society *demand*s that we do so as there are limited resources that seek to tell stories in a truthful and unbiased manner. For better or for worse, journalists and publishers are no longer the



Join the Conversation:

The Power of Story

“We’ve moved from papyrus to print books to video to tablets and devices, but *story* is something that will endure regardless of the device or the medium.”

#ReadTheWorldNow



Hein.pub/RTW3.1

SHIFTING PERSPECTIVE: Build Our Empathy Vocabulary



TRY THIS WHEN . . .

- you notice students could use support in having more empathetic responses in social or academic settings
- you are moving into studying a topic that may be sensitive for some (or all) students
- you are deepening students' ability to understand and/or write about emotions in characters.

Equipping students with language to identify and express their emotions helps them better evaluate how they are feeling in any given situation, as well as observe and connect with others' emotions. Encouraging students to connect their own daily emotions to those of characters or people they may read about helps them understand themselves better and respond to others with compassion.

WHAT TO DO

Select a picture book that names different emotions to launch the lesson (see the box on this page for ideas). If you're working with older students who are not used to seeing picture books in class, take this opportunity to remind them that picture books are often far more complicated than they might seem, and that everything from the word choices to the illustrations in a strong picture book is highly intentional.

Read the book with students and use it to begin a chart of emotion words for students to use during lessons and discussions. Ask students if they have any additional words beyond those in the book that they would like to add. Discuss, act out, or invite students to tableau (Steineke 2009) the words to build a common understanding of their meaning.

Give students an opportunity to practice using the words right away by viewing a short video with a range of emotions. Our favorites for this work include

- ▶ *The Pits* by Mike Hayhurst (bit.ly/2mqUgUZ)
- ▶ *Luxo Jr. [Pencil Test]*, a Pixar wireframe by John Lasseter (bit.ly/2m0vE59)
- ▶ *If You Fall* by Tisha Deb Pillai (bit.ly/2kSMnXO).

Helpful Language

What emotions do we see in this text? Have you ever felt that way? Show me what that looked like.

What might be some clues that someone else is feeling this way?

What other emotions can we add to our chart?

Why might it be important to understand how a character or person is feeling?

Picture Books for Discussing Emotions

These are a few books that work well with this lesson:

The Feelings Book by Todd Parr

I Am Human: A Book of Empathy by Susan Verde

I Wish You More by Amy Krouse Rosenthal

In My Heart: A Book of Feelings by Jo Witek

Say Something by Peter H. Reynolds

Physical Response to Emotion

-  wide eyes → surprise, fear, question
-  eyebrows down → mad, angry
-  circle mouth → surprise, new learning, wow!
-  squiggle mouth → confused, nervous, unsure
-  tears → sad, joy, scared, worry
-  arms crossed → mad, scared, protect me, stay away, cold

A first-grade classroom uses picture books as mentor text to identify facial expressions and the body's physical response to emotions. They refer to this chart as a tool for interpreting how characters and classmates may be feeling. Helping kids identify how a person is feeling is foundational for productive face-to-face interactions.

Ask students to view the video in pairs and to stop the video periodically to discuss it, jotting down the different emotions that the characters feel as the video progresses. Then, ask students to identify the clues that helped them identify the emotions in these characters—a movement? a sound? a posture? a pause? You might note the types of clues on a chart to help students consider others' emotions as they read, view, and discuss.

When the chart is complete, review it with students. Ask: *Do these examples hold true of every community and culture?* People from different cultures and communities act and react in a variety of ways. This is a good time to explore any differences your students may name. If none arise, this could be a potential area for investigation.

At some point during the lesson, either as a lesson launch or during an end-of-lesson share, bring students together to discuss how being able to identify our own emotions and the emotions of others helps us be better friends, more empathetic classmates, and more effective communicators. This could take place as a whole-class or small-group discussion or a more personal written or digital reflection and share. If students need more support in this skill, consider drawing on your shared experiences with stories and characters, reaching back into books you've shared to offer specific moments to explore together.

OUTCOMES AND WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Students should be able to identify, name, and demonstrate facial expressions or body language that conveys emotion. Can students

- ▶ list common emotions and act out or show what they might look like?
- ▶ discuss subtleties and specifics of language used to show emotions?
- ▶ identify and explain emotions present in media?
- ▶ explain why it's important for us to be able to identify emotions in ourselves and others?
- ▶ recognize how context, culture, and the range of human ability contributes to expression of emotion?
- ▶ notice and respect how different people react in different ways?

FOLLOW UP

Refer back to the co-constructed charts from this lesson any time it might be helpful to remind students to be aware of their own emotions or the emotions of others. This might be during a literacy or writing lesson, when discussing a character, or during a discussion of a sensitive issue. You might also offer students emotion check-ins, giving them a moment for a quick private reflection or time to jot in a notebook. These check-ins are for the students' own metacognition, not for sharing with others. We often use this strategy before, during, and after a conversation, dispute, or learning activity.

4

Student Agency

Rethinking Action for a Better World

As students begin to read the world and take a more empathetic stance on the stories of others, they also begin to identify problems they want to fix. Some of these students address local concerns, like the first-grade class that developed public service announcements to raise awareness about train safety—a critical issue in a town with three railroad lines. Other students realize that the problems they would like to fix affect people in faraway places, such as the fifth graders who passionately researched issues of child labor in chocolate production and started a campaign to encourage others to buy certified fair trade and labor-free products. Or the group of kindergartners who raised funds to donate mosquito nets to protect children in areas plagued by malaria. At times, students find themselves deeply embroiled in issues of equity, race, and adult power struggles, as the students of the National Teachers Academy did when Chicago’s mayor decided to close their successful South Side elementary school. With the help of teachers Mia Leonard and Autumn Laidler, students researched, wrote letters, and spoke at press conferences. They raised difficult questions about why their city would want to close a school that had been central to their community—a community largely made up of people of color—to replace it with a selective enrollment high school. In the end, they were able to keep their school, largely due to the efforts of these students and teachers and their community.

If we look around, we see a generation of young people poised and ready to make an impact on the world, whether it be by doing a kind act on the playground, performing a public service in the community, raising awareness about an issue, collecting donations for those in need, making a personal pledge to change a behavior, contacting members of government, or protesting for a cause they believe in.

As Kristin’s first-grade student said in the quotation on the right, kids *can* change the world, at any age, and it’s our job to support them to do so. In each of the situations described here, students were empowered to take action on an issue that mattered to them. It is this sense of agency and energy that propels students to see themselves as someone who can make

You’ll see that kids can help change the world!

—Moey Dworkin-Cantor,
first grader
(quoted in *Inquiry Circles in Elementary Classrooms*,
Daniels and Harvey 2009)

a difference. We believe that students can take action in ways that change the world, both big and small. As teachers, we have the power to make the space for this work, building opportunities for students to take the reins and follow their questions about the world to a place that sparks an action for change. In this chapter, we'll discuss how to do it.

What Does It Mean to “Take Action”?

There are many times in our curriculum when we ask kids to share what they have learned from reading, research, or long-term inquiry work. These “going public moments” are important opportunities to let students stretch their creative legs, apply writing and speaking skills, share their learning, and assess how they have grown. However, taking action goes a step further and aims for real impact on an issue. In the work ahead, we define taking action as working toward a specific change that affects others. This means students’ work must be created with a purpose, audience, and intended impact in mind.

To work toward their specific change, students who are taking action might

- ▶ talk with other students and community members
- ▶ post a well-researched comment
- ▶ record and share a quick video teaching the important parts of what they’ve learned
- ▶ engage in and/or advocate for conscious consumerism related to their issue
- ▶ write a letter or email to a government official or person in power
- ▶ write a letter to the editor and send it to the local paper
- ▶ write a blog post
- ▶ start a social media campaign
- ▶ design and distribute posters or pamphlets to raise awareness
- ▶ create a piece of artwork
- ▶ build a photo essay
- ▶ craft and deliver a presentation
- ▶ write and perform a play or spoken word poem
- ▶ make a Common Craft–style video
- ▶ engage in a volunteer opportunity
- ▶ organize a symposium or workshop
- ▶ start a fund-raising or donation campaign and educate potential donors



INSPIRING STUDENTS TO ACTION: Ask Questions to Understand an Issue



TRY THIS WHEN . . .

- students have identified a topic or issue they'd like to take action on but have yet to understand the scope of the issue
- students have dug into research and are unsure of the best way to take action or how they can help.

Children instinctively ask questions when they encounter cognitive dissonance as youngsters. As Warren Berger points out, questioning is essential now and in the future as “complexity increases and change accelerates” (2014, 2). Yet our education system tends to discourage this practice, intentionally or unintentionally. By valuing students’ questions, we can encourage them to drive their own learning, to gain understanding, and, most importantly, to care. In this Try It, we’ll focus on equipping our students with skills and strategies for generating a range of diverse questions as they focus on an issue related to their topic. Students will rely on the introductory tech set that you curated in the previous Try It to inform their questions. Then, in the next Try It, they’ll have opportunities to dig deeper to try to address these questions in the tech set or in any new resources you bring into the classroom.

WHAT TO DO

Share your own topic with students on the projector and model asking whatever questions come to mind. It can be helpful for students to see that asking questions can be challenging but we can work through those challenges. Try to talk through your thoughts as you work, to show students what this work looks like inside your head. It’s OK to pause and think silently when necessary—students need to know that we sometimes need to give something some thought. Give students paper and pencil or a digital way to jot any of their own ideas down so as not to interrupt the flow.

As you model, try using one of the following questioning lenses to better understand the issue you’re studying:

Understanding: What questions do we need to answer to help ourselves fully understand what’s happening right now and why?

Context: What questions would it be helpful to answer in order to know the history behind this topic? Context questions help us to understand the overarching question, *How did things get this way?*



Join the Conversation: Asking Questions

“If you have a question about something, and are given the time and space to pursue that, then you care about it because you own it.”

#ReadTheWorldNow



Hein.pub/RTW4.3

Perspectives: What questions might people in different roles ask?

Solutions: Which questions might help me get to possible solutions or actions?

For example, if we were focusing on the topic of recycling at school, we might use the *perspectives* lens, considering the questions that a teacher, a student, a custodian, and a principal might ask.

Once you've modeled how the process might go, give students time to jot down their own questions independently. Then, have them share and view each other's questions in groups, actively looking for new ideas and feedback.

We often find that a quick gallery walk helps students who feel stuck find new ideas. You might also use one or more of the following prompts to help students generate more questions.

- ▶ *What do we need to know about here? Can we glance over our resources to get the gist and then come up with some more questions?*
- ▶ *What might other people know that we don't know?*
- ▶ *What questions might someone ask if they didn't agree that this is a problem?*
- ▶ *What questions would each person who is involved with this topic have?*
- ▶ *What solutions have already been tried? What happened? Which solutions haven't been tried?*

You might stretch this process over a series of a few short sessions, giving students ample time to read, view, talk, and write and ensuring they have opportunities to discuss and be inspired by others' questions. If students are working on separate topics, you might even gather a list of questions that could be applicable to other students' topics on a class chart. For example, in one third-grade class a student asked, "Why hasn't anyone fixed this problem yet?" The teacher wrote this question on the board and asked students to consider if this question would apply to their topic. If it did, he prompted them to write it down and then ask any follow-up questions they came up with.

OUTCOMES AND WHAT TO LOOK FOR

We want students to go beyond the initial first few questions they might have about a topic. Can students

- ▶ use lenses to generate many questions about a resource?
- ▶ collaborate in groups to generate, discuss, analyze, and refine questions?
- ▶ identify questions that will lead to further inquiry and action?

Helpful Language

What do we wonder about here?

What questions do you need to answer in order to really understand this topic?

What is one question another group had that you want to add to your list?

Do you have any other questions that will prompt you to think about why this learning is important?

What new questions do you have after exploring the resources?

Can you bully by embarrassing someone?

Can you bully by accident?

What should we do if we see this?

Can you be cyberbullied by your friends?

Why is cyberbullying worse sometimes?

How do teachers feel about cyber bullying?

How does it affect the person getting bullied?

When can this happen?

Are there apps that are worse for cyberbullying?

A small group of fourth graders generated questions to guide their learning. Students then used these questions to guide additional reading and research.

- ▶ take on different roles to anticipate what support or challenges they may encounter in taking action (for example, the cost of a proposed idea, or opposing viewpoints)?
- ▶ consider how they might address counterpoints or potential barriers to a solution they are proposing?

FOLLOW UP

As students begin to answer questions, they will inevitably have more. Encourage this type of thinking: it leads students to questioning that will take them to a deeper understanding of the topic, and it reinforces their own curiosity, which is an essential skill for lifelong learning. As students move into research or inquiry work in the next Try It, make time during the process for them to stop and reflect on how they are addressing their questions and to note any new ones that have arisen. Prompt students to keep thinking in this way through the language you use during conferring and small-group work, using phrases like *What more do we wonder about this?* *What else are you curious about?* and *What new questions do you have?*

