Checking In With Readers: Some Questions We Ask

ALWAYS:
• What page are you on?

MOSTLY:
• What do you think so far?
• How is it?
• What’s happening now?
• Are you happy?
• Are you still happy?

AND ALSO:
• Any surprises so far?
• How did you feel/what did you think when you got to the part where…?

MAIN CHARACTER QUERIES:
• Who’s the main character in this one? What’s he or she like?
• What’s his problem?
• What’s the conflict?
• How’s the character development? Are you convinced?

CRITICAL QUERIES:
Depending on the book…
• What genre is this?
• How is it so far compared with other books about ______?
• Does it feel plausible?
• How’s the pace?
• What’s the conflict or problem?
• What’s the narrative voice? How’s that working for you?
• What do you think of the dialogue/format/style/structure/length of chapters/flashbacks and flashforwards/foreshadowing/diction/author’s experiments with ________, etc.?

WHEN IT’S A PAGE-TURNER:
• What’s making this a page-turner for you, instead of a literary novel? What are you noticing about the writing?

WHEN THE TEACHER HASN’T READ THE BOOK:
• I haven’t read this book yet. How is it?/What do you think of it so far?/How’s the writing?

AUTHOR QUERIES:
• Who’s the author?
• How’s the writing?/What do you think of the writing so far?
• Do you know anything about the author?
• Any theories about why he or she might have written this?
• How is it so far compared to his or her other books?

PROCESS QUERIES:
• Why did you decide to read this one?
• I can’t believe how much you read last night. How come?
• You aren’t 20 pages ahead of where you were yesterday. What happened last night?
• Would you call this a Holiday, Just Right, or Challenge?
• Can you follow what’s happening?
• Why did you decide to reread this one?
• Where did you find this book?

FINIS:
• So, thinking back, what themes or so what’s are emerging for you? What ideas about life come through the struggles of the main character? through the changes she undergoes? through what he learns?
• What did you think of how the author ended this one?
• How will you rate it?
• Is this one worthy of a booktalk?
• What are you planning to read next?

WHEN THERE’S LITTLE OR NO ZONE:
• Is this book taking you into the reading zone?
• Why do you think this book is taking you so long?
• If you were going to rate this one right now, what number would you give it?
• Will you consider abandoning this one? Because if you’re not hooked by now, it’s more than okay to shelve it and move on.
• How many more pages will you give this book to get good before you abandon it?
• Can you skim the parts that drag—the descriptions, for example?
• Are you confused because it’s hard to understand the language, or because you can’t tell what’s going on?
• Do you want to skim to find out what happens, or read just the ending, and then move on to a better book?
• What’s on your Someday List? Let’s look at it together.
• Do you know what book/author/series I think you might like?

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