

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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

FINIS:

- So, thinking back, what themes or *so whats?* 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?