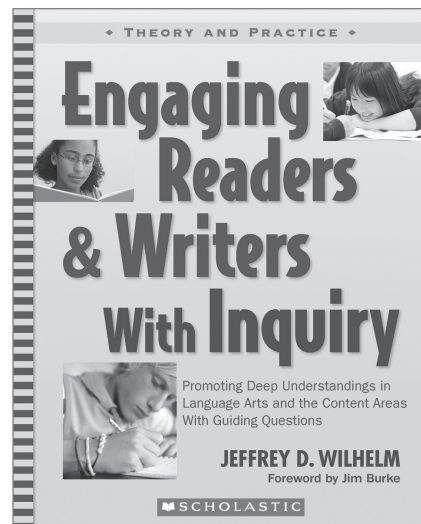


A Study Guide for  
***Engaging Readers & Writers With Inquiry***

by **JEFFREY D. WILHELM**



This Study Guide can be used as a vehicle for discussion or an exchange of ideas with colleagues as part of a study or reading group, or peer mentoring, as well as a resource for generating plans, lessons, and actions you can undertake with your students.

For each chapter the study guide provides the following:

- A short Synopsis of the chapter
- A quote or excerpt to React to
- Questions to Discuss
- Take Action, which provides you with activities you can try in your classroom and then discuss in your next Study Group
- A Teacher Research/Reflection activity to help you think about your use of the strategies and what you might do next as you plan further instruction to meet your students' current needs as readers and thinkers. You may want to record the results of your research and your reflections in a journal.

## Part 1: Thinking About Your Practice

Following are some possible questions to launch your discussion before you begin reading *Engaging Readers & Writers With Inquiry*:

- What is your definition of *inquiry*?
- How do you think *inquiry* might relate to expert reading, composing, and understanding?
- What is your definition of *inquiry-based teaching/learning*?
- What do you think of when you read the title?

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- Do you believe that you use inquiry-based learning in your classroom? At the course level? Unit level? Lesson level? How?
  - What might be the value to student learning of this approach to teaching and learning?
  - What might be the impact on student motivation using this method of teaching?

## Part 2: Chapter Overviews, Study Guide Questions, and Actions

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### CHAPTER 1: Discovering the Way to Animated Learning

#### Overview

In Chapter 1 you learn what inquiry is and what it is not. You will also learn how guiding questions connect students to socially significant materials and learning. Included in this chapter are a general overview and guidelines for teaching in an inquiry-oriented way.

#### React to

“*Learning floats on a sea of talk.*” p. 10

#### Consider and Discuss

- Why is talk so important in the learning process? When you think about your classroom, during a typical lesson, who does most of the talking—you or your students? Which students? In what formats or venues do students get to talk? Why?
- In the beginning of the chapter the author asks whether your students would be more excited to read *Romeo and Juliet* and hear your commentary, or to read it themselves in the context of the question, “What makes good relationships and what destroys good relationships?”

#### Take Action

- Survey your students to find out what real life issues are most important to them. What are their concerns? What are their soap box topics? Take these issues and brainstorm how they might be related to content area curricula in your school. Develop guiding questions for several of these issues. Use the tips (p. 49) and each others’ ideas.
- The organization called What Kids Can Do has a helpful short manual titled *First Ask, Then Listen: How to Get Your Students to Help You Teach Them Better*. The manual includes tips for structuring dialogues with students—beginning with the tip “Root the process in inquiry.” You’ll find the teacher’s guide online at <http://www.whatkidscando.org/publications/pdfs/firesmanual.pdf>

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- Think about an upcoming unit of study. How can you use this unit as a way to engage students in inquiry by providing an inquiry frame with an essential question, a culminating project, and a sequence of instruction that provides modeling, mentoring, and monitoring? Be prepared to share your ideas with the group during your next meeting.
  - If reframing the unit seems too large a task, consider how you could reframe particular lessons to be inquiry oriented.

### **Teacher Research/Reflection:**

- In the section “The Back Story,” on pages 17–20, the author states that the only way we are going to make advances in student learning is to move from information-transmission to inquiry-based teaching. Reflect on your own teaching style. What type of teaching do you engage in most often? How might refining your teaching practice impact your students’ learning? Sometimes we are all in the position of relaying information to students—how can we do so in a way that is “in service” of students’ inquiring and true “understanding”?

## **CHAPTER 2: Rediscovering the Passion of Teaching and the Power of Understanding**

### **Chapter Overview**

In Chapter 2 the author explores the problems caused by traditional approaches to teaching and learning. He also presents inquiry as a proposed reform and explores some reasons why this approach has not been embraced. The author provides several quizzes to help you analyze your teaching and also provides action steps to take that will help move you toward a more inquiry-based teaching style.

### **React to**

*“Inquiry inducts students into a community of practice; they come to think and act more like people who work with the disciplines of math, science, social science, ethics, literature, philosophy, government.” (p. 25)*

### **Consider and Discuss**

- In the context of your classroom work, how can students be brought to think, act, and perform more like real expert readers, writers, ethicists, mathematicians, scientists, historians, and so on?
- To foster this move to thinking and acting like experts, students must be part of a “sustained community of practice.” What resources and contexts in your community, school environment, and classroom can foster a growing sense of belonging to a disciplinary community?

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## Take Action

- Review the “5 First Actions to Take” for transformative teaching on page 25. Select one to start with and write down how you are going to implement this action.
- Using video or audio, record a lesson in your classroom. Analyze the lesson and evaluate the use of various teaching techniques, including the technique of discussion. What went well? What do you wonder about? What would you like to do differently next time? What did you notice that was new to you? What did you learn about your teaching style?
- One of the actions the author recommends is participation in “communities of practice” made up of others who share an interest in teaching. Many teachers also enjoy rich virtual communities that connect them with other teachers from around the country through free e-mail discussion groups. At <http://www.theteachersguide.com/listservs.html> you’ll find links to many such groups, and <http://intersiversity.org/node/81> will connect you with a variety of e-mail lists for teachers, including Engteach-Talk, one of the most venerable groups of its kind.

## Teacher Research/Reflection

- Take the quiz on page 25. Then give the same quiz to your students. Analyze the results and compare them to the results the author found. Reflect on the impact of your students’ responses to your teaching.
- Take the quiz on page 40. What did you learn about yourself as a teacher? What does this mean to you and your future practice? Keep this quiz in mind as you begin to develop an inquiry-based unit.

# CHAPTER 3: Asking the Guiding Question: Reframing the Existing Curriculum Into Inquiry Units

## Chapter Overview

In Chapter 3 you will find step-by-step directions for developing an inquiry unit. The author provides guidelines for identifying guiding questions, a final project, and directions for creating a backwards plan. He also provides tips on how to refine your guiding questions so that your students will more clearly connect to the purpose of the unit and be more engaged in learning.

## React to

*“I used to do a lot of poor and lifeless teaching. Not that every class now runs like a Cuisinart, but I can honestly say that all of my classes are turbocharged . . . I teach in a way that matters to kids.” (p. 51)*

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## Consider and Discuss

- What does the author mean when he says he teaches in a way that matters to kids? What matters to your students?
- How do the state standards impact what you are teaching? In what ways are your Standards compatible with inquiry-based learning? What challenges do we face as teachers when we implement inquiry?

## Take Action

- This chapter is filled with activities to help you develop your inquiry-based unit. You may want to work with colleagues to undertake the following actions. The author suggests one way to develop essential questions is to reframe the Standards. As a group, do the State Standards activity on page 47. What kinds of questions provide the context for learning the required strategies and concepts?
- If you choose not to use the Standards, work with your colleagues to develop guiding questions, using the tips that start on page 49 to help you.
- After you have decided on your guiding question, identify the final project. Use the Meaningful Making Projects chart on page 61 to help you. What are your goals for student achievement for this unit and how do your choices of culminating projects require students to demonstrate that they have met these goals?
- Create your backwards plan. What are your frontloading and gateway activities? Do you have all of the resources you need? If not, where and how will you get them? Ask a colleague to review your guiding question, final project, and backward plan. You will want to refine this plan as you read through the rest of the book, adding activities, refining questioning schemes, and implementing various techniques for discussions.
- Backwards Planning is a tool that students themselves may use to great advantage as they do major projects in any discipline or prepare for important exams. At <http://tinyurl.com/2vpcyf> you'll find a blank Backwards Planning Sheet that you can share with students.

## Teacher Research/Reflection

Reflect on the development process of an inquiry unit. What worked for you? What wonderings do you have? What would you like to add or do differently next time you go through the process? If you have implemented your unit plan in some way, what went well? What will you want to be sure to do again? What do you want to try to add or do differently next time?

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## CHAPTER 4: Engaging Exchanges: Secret Prompts, Walkarounds, and Other Techniques for Discussion, Before, During, and After Learning

### Chapter Overview

When reading Chapter 4 you will explore the role that discussion plays in planning and engaging students in inquiry at the lesson level. The author provides examples from schools he is working with and explains how teachers planned and structured classroom discussions. You will also learn many strategies for engaging students in discussions with question prompts and with discussion techniques to use before, during and after reading. Key elements in engaging students include the guiding structures provided, support for particular kinds of questioning, and the physical arrangement of the classroom or of groups. The author provides numerous guidelines for promoting the kinds of discussions that lead to deeper understanding.

### React to

*“Understanding the facts of a story or a content area is of undisputed importance. But for these facts to come to life, they need to be connected to larger patterns of meaning; they need to be in the service of topical research, critical inquiry, and literacy, and they need to be functional and applicable to the world beyond the text.”* (p. 80)

### Consider and Discuss:

- In order to engage students in the text, the author describes prompts to be used before, during, and after reading to get students engaged in discussion. How do the What?!/ So What?!/ Now What? prompts on pages 80–81 help connect students to the “larger patterns of meaning” the author refers to in the quote above?
- The author suggests many prompts to encourage the “uncovering” of required topics through topical and critical inquiry. Review the prompts found on page 85. How are these prompts similar to and different from the questions you would use to develop a KWL chart? When and for what purposes could you use these prompts? What are the benefits to your students in using and internalizing these kinds of prompts?
- What techniques do you use to help your students both to connect personally to the material they are reading and studying, and to help them connect that material to the world beyond the text? Share with your colleagues.

### Take Action

- Log on to *The Children’s Literature Web Guide*, <http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown/> to find book reviews that you can use with your students while doing a Critical Review Response (p. 99–100).

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- One technique the author suggests using during reading is a Silent Discussion Thread. Have a silent discussion with your colleagues about this book. You may use these question prompts to get started:
    - How might implementing inquiry-based teaching change your students' level of motivation and engagement?
    - Many of the strategies in the book require students to engage in drama and role-playing. What are the pre-requisites to using such techniques successfully? (You might want to check out the author's book *Action Strategies for Deepening Comprehension*, Scholastic.)
    - Inquiry-based teaching takes planning. But what are the payoffs and time-savers that follow from an inquiry approach?
    - What are your worries about implementing inquiry and how might the author suggest addressing these?

### **Teacher Research/Reflection**

- Write in your journal ways in which you can foster discussion that promotes deeper levels of student participation and understanding. List a few techniques that you propose to try and describe the situation in which you will try them. Make a commitment to make the attempt, record what happened (with video, audio, or after-the-fact in your journal) and to share what happened, what went well, what needs work, and what you will keep the same or do differently next time you try the technique.

## **CHAPTER 5: Mantle of the Expert: Learning to Read Deeply Enough to Gain Expertise**

### **Chapter Overview**

In Chapter 5 you will learn how to use questioning schemes to help students accomplish the following:

- Connect ideas within a text
- Connect personal experience with the text
- Connect ideas from one lesson or text to another
- Connect ideas from the text to the world and to disciplinary practice

### **React to**

The Arc of Inquiry

*“The trajectory (of each questioning scheme) takes students from factual comprehension, to interpretation, to application and critique. This kind of*

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*teaching makes what we do matter—to ourselves, our students, and our world—in a way that rarely occurs in school.” (p. 113)*

## **Consider and Discuss**

- Everything that is in our curricula was put there for a reason. In what ways can we make curricular content meaningful to students in the here and now as well as convey its larger social significance and disciplinary relevance?
- The questioning schemes that the author presents (ReQuest, QAR, and Questioning Circles) are often credited with helping students interact with the text on a deeper level. Have you ever used these techniques? If so, how have they helped your students’ levels of engagement and comprehension? If not, what strategies or techniques do you use to deepen your students’ levels of engagement and of comprehension?

## **Take Action**

- Be the student and try the ReQuest technique. The author has provided a Three Level Reading Guide (p. 115) and an article, “The Decline of an Ancient Mariner” (pp. 116–117). Follow the directions on page 118. What did you notice? How did the scheme help you to focus on factual comprehension, interpretation, and critical application? How could the technique be used with your students?
- Use the article on page 121, “Republic of Cockroaches,” or another short text that fits your current teaching to try the QAR technique with your students. Do a reflection on the technique with your students. What did the students notice as they used the technique? What are their reactions to its use?
- Create a Questioning Circle for a book your students are currently reading. For your first few tries, it might be helpful to work on this as a group or with a partner.

## **Teacher Research/Reflection**

- How did it feel to play the part of the student? Write about that experience in your journal. What other data sources are available to help us in understanding our students’ experiences (e.g. shadowing, interviewing, and other techniques from ethnographic research)? How can we, to some degree, live through the experiences our students have with challenging readings, and with various instructional techniques? How can we use this book—and what we learn from our students’ responses to new techniques—to continue to improve our teaching (action research)?



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## CHAPTER 6: Considering the Intelligence Behind the Text: Helping Students Inquire by Reading With the Author in Mind

### Overview

In Chapter 6 you will learn two questioning schemes designed to promote the kind of discussion that helps students relate to the author. Both approaches provide support for considering and comprehending why and how an author constructed a text. Hillocks' hierarchy uses seven levels of questions to move students from the literal to inferential and then to two levels of abstraction: (1) constructing themes about the world, and (2) discerning how the text was constructed to express the idea. QtA uses specific kinds of initiating and follow-up queries to promote a consideration of the author and how she has constructed a text to communicate.

### React to:

*“When we think about the power of relationships in reading and writing, we often miss the idea of relating to an author.” (p. 132)*

### Consider and Discuss:

- In what ways and under what circumstances do you use what you already know about an author when reading a book, newspaper article, and so on? In what ways do you feel you get to know an author and her thinking through reading? How is your experience of considering an author different for different kinds of texts—nonfiction versus fiction, cartoons or graphic novels versus straight text, newspaper articles versus syndicated columns, and so on?
- If you could invite any authors to a dinner party, who would be on your short list? Why? What if you were limited to literary authors? Nonfiction writers? Authors of professional books? What would you like to ask them? What if you could invite authors and thinkers to a discussion of your currently planned inquiry unit?
- Who are the authors that your students like to read? How might these authors' thoughts and ways of expressing themselves affect your students' love of the authors' writing?
- Jeffrey Wilhelm says that Hillocks' Questioning Hierarchy is his “all-time favorite questioning scheme.” Why do you think he likes this scheme so much?

### Take Action

- Select a book that your students will be reading soon. After reading the directions for creating a QtA, develop your own set of Initiating Queries and Follow-up Queries. You may want to use the guidelines on page 136. Be sure to massage the questions to fit the purposes of your inquiry unit. After you have developed your questions, share them with a colleague for

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feedback. When you try them with students, use the responses to continue revising the questions. If you do this a couple of years in a row, you will have a stellar scheme.

- Remember that “authorial reading” is entirely different from learning about an author. Authorial reading is defined as learning about an author’s thinking and craft through a reading of his or her work.

### **Extension**

- Questioning schemes can also aid students in the realm of visual literacy. Choose an age-appropriate single-frame cartoon or painting, and construct a Questioning Hierarchy to scaffold students’ analysis and understanding of the work. *Daryl Cagle’s Professional Cartoonists’ Index* at <http://cagle.msnbc.com> is a rich source of editorial cartoons, and many school and public libraries will lend reproductions of paintings. Or you might also use a smart board to project images from the web.

### **Teacher Research/Reflection**

- Survey your students to find out their favorite authors. You could extend the notion of “author” to favorite poets, musicians, cartoonists, artists and so on. What are the satisfactions provided to your students by different authors? By different kinds of texts? Reflect in your journal about the appeal and psychological work done by different authors and different kinds of texts. How can the techniques from this chapter be used to help students understand texts and authors, and the process of composition more deeply and more critically?

## **Chapter 7: Reenactments and Interventions: Playing to Deepen Understanding of How Texts Work**

### **Overview**

In Chapter 7 the author explores how the general questions found in Chapter 4, and the questioning schemes presented in Chapters 5 and 6, can be used to organize content-area inquiry on a more global level. He also shares concluding thoughts on motivation and deep understanding.

### **React to**

*“Since what we teach really does matter, why not teach it in such a way that students can share your excitement and your understanding of how and why learning it is important, for their lives today and in the future?” (p. 165)*

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## Consider and Discuss

In this chapter, the author states that inquiry changes how the textbook is used, as the textbook becomes just one of many resources. Other than your textbook, what other resources have you found that help enrich and extend student learning? How does inquiry invite these other resources to be used? How does inquiry change how various resources might be used and how these resources can be put in contact and conversation with each other in ways that promote student thinking?

## Take Action

- Demonstrate how QAR can be applied to math word problems that refer to data displayed in a table. For help with this, consult an NCTE/IRA ReadWriteThink lesson online at [http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson\\_view.asp?id=151](http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=151).
- Now is the time to go back to the guiding questions and Backward Plan that you started after reading Chapter 3. What can you add now? Share it with a colleague one more time and then engage your students in Inquiry!
- Try the Day in the Life enactment technique with a science or math concept.

## Teacher Research/Reflection

- What do you want to try first? If you are uncomfortable with trying a full-blown inquiry unit, how can you use inquiry at the lesson or activity level? How can you use this book as a guide that you can return to?
- What do you want to know more about? How can you find out? What other texts or human resources might help you?
- A lot of research into teacher change shows that teachers must alter their practice in small ways in order to change their thinking and practice in bigger ways. So the first challenge is to get off the dime and try some new things. What can you do to encourage yourself to try some of these ideas? How can you continue to use your study group, a peer mentor, or another resource to encourage you to continue to try implementing new techniques?
- How can the techniques from this chapter be used to help students understand texts, authors, and the process of composition more deeply and critically?