ABSTRACT
Text dependent analysis questions challenge students to not only express what they know but to also explain how they knew it. It is an unfamiliar kind of thinking for many. Educators are challenged with developing questions that familiarize students TDA questions. This white paper provides educators with a background on how to write effective text dependent analysis questions.
Why Educators Must Create TDA Questions

Students need to practice responding to Text Dependent Analysis (TDA) questions.

Exposure to TDA questions not only better prepares students for core-based testing, but also provides an opportunity to exercise deep thinking and analysis skills.

Yes, students need exposure to text dependent analysis questions, but TDAs are not readily available. TDA questions typically are not included with the curriculum (yet), and they don’t come as prizes at the bottom of cereal boxes. The reality necessitates educators develop their own.

For many educators, writing TDA prompts means acquiring a new skill set. Creating complexity and rigor takes careful thought. The techniques presented in this white paper will help you in developing TDAs that prepare your students for the challenge of strategic thinking.

Wouldn’t it be great if TDA questions were available as prizes at the bottom of a cereal box?
Caught in a Webb [Depth] of Knowledge

In the late 1990s, Dr. Norman Webb published his concept of Depth of Knowledge.

Depth of Knowledge (DOK) refers to the complexity, or depth, needed to truly understand a concept. Using Webb’s DOK, we can build text dependent questions that propel students towards success.

As an educational taxonomy, Webb presented four levels or depths of knowledge. Each level descends into deeper understanding. The greater the Depth of Knowledge, the more complex tasks learners can accomplish.

**Level 1: Recall and Reproduction**
Tasks at Level 1: Recall and Reproduction require students to recall or reproduce knowledge or skills. Tasks involve working with facts or the use of basic procedures or formulas. The tasks do not require any cognitive effort beyond remembering the right response or formula.

**Level 2: Skills and Concepts**
Tasks at Level 2: Skills and Concepts have students make a decision on information. Students often showcase skills that emphasize comparing, summarizing, and making predictions. The cognitive effort at Level 2 goes beyond rote and often asks how or why.

**Level 3: Strategic Thinking**
Tasks at Level 3: Strategic Thinking show students planning and using evidence in their response. Key processes at Level 3 include: analyzing, explaining and supporting with evidence, and generalizing based on information provided. Strong text dependent analysis exists within Level 3: Strategic Thinking.

*** It is at Level 3 that we will build our TDA questions. ***

**Level 4: Extended Thinking**
Tasks at Level 4: Extended Thinking demand students extend their use of higher order thinking processes. Students perform investigations to solve real world problems over a longer period of time. Level 4 demands the greatest cognitive effort.
Webb’s Depth of Knowledge Question Examples
By applying Webb’s Depth of Knowledge, it is easy to label tasks for their cognitive rigor. For example, the following questions about trees run the entire range from Level 1 to Level 4.

DOK Level 1  TASK: Identify this type of tree.  
The student is asked to identify the tree based on recallable traits.

DOK Level 2  TASK: What is the difference between deciduous trees and coniferous trees?  
The task asks the student to go beyond rote knowledge and explain.

DOK Level 3  TASK: Explain how a drought might affect the growth of this tree.  
Using evidence, the student would need to provide in-depth reasoning.

DOK Level 4  TASK: Conduct an experiment to determine the best type of fertilizer for seedlings of this type of tree.  
Students investigate a real-world problem using higher order thinking.

Learn More
Watch Dr. Webb present a short discussion (about 8 minutes) on his Depth of Knowledge taxonomy on YouTube.  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qFXU6_TYljc

How Webb’s Depth of Knowledge Works in Conjunction with Text Dependent Analysis
Text Dependent Analysis questions rely on the type of mastery presented in Webb’s Depth of Knowledge, Level 3: Strategic Thinking. TDA questions are designed to show how well students analyze, explain, and support with evidence their responses based on a provided prompt. It is at this level that educators must provide practice in order to develop the strategic thinking skills of their students.
Writing Text Dependent Questions

Text dependent questions should guide students towards the greater meaning of the reading passage. By offering a series of questions, the educator starts the student on that journey and provides the path and pacing to uncover the meaning.

Achievethecore.org produced a seven step process that helps to create a series of core questions. The following summarizes the seven step process.

**Step 1: Identify the core understanding and key ideas of the text.**
Read the passage. Determine the key insight or take-away that students should experience. Use the tasks developed to guide students towards this core idea. Begin contemplating a culminating activity.

**Step 2: Start small to build confidence.**
Create initial questions that introduce students to text. Providing early opportunities for success will build confidence, allowing students to tackle more complex tasks later.

**Step 3: Target vocabulary and text structure.**
Identify parts of the passage that use powerful vocabulary that connects to the main idea. Use questions to draw students' attention to these words, phrases, and sentences.

**Step 4: Tackle tough sections head-on.**
Find the section of the passage that provides the greatest difficulty. Create questions that help students explore the meaning of the difficult passage.

**Step 5: Create coherent sequences of the text-dependent questions.**
Think of the questions created as stops along a journey. Build the sequence of questions that eventually leads the student to the overall meaning of the passage.

**Step 6: Identify the standards that are being addressed.**
Note the standards addressed by the questions. Determine if other standards could be addressed with this text. Create questions that address those additional standards.
Step 7: Create the culminating assessment.
Create a culminating assessment that highlights the key idea from the passage. The culminating assessments should reflect a mastery of one or more standards, involve writing, and be completed by the students independently.

Don’t Let the Verb Wheel Drive You off the Tracks
A quick Google search for “Depth of Knowledge” or “Write Text Dependent Questions” will often lead to the Verb Wheel. The concept is simple. Using a verb to write TDA questions from the defined quadrant of the circle will result in the creation of a question at that DOK level. The approach is appealing, but it can lead to questions that don’t quite measure up to heights of a text dependent question.

The Verb Wheel provides a nice start, but just because a verb is displayed in a specific level doesn’t mean that using it will produce a question at that same level. Here is an example. Describe. The verb, describe, can be used to write tasks that would fall into DOK 1, 2 or 3.

**DOK 1 – Low Complexity**
*Describe the characteristics of metamorphic rocks.*

**DOK 2 – Moderate Complexity**
*Describe the difference between metamorphic and igneous rocks.*

**DOK 3 – High Complexity**
*Describe a model that you might use to represent the relationships that exist within the rock cycle.*

Keep Them in Mind
As stated, the Verb Wheel is a good place to start when thinking about more complex tasks. Just make sure to validate that the tasks actually reach the desired complexity level. You can validate questions you write using the TDA Checklist included in this white paper.
Text Dependent Question Stems

Text dependent questions ask students to consult provided text or media to uncover deeper meaning within the passage.

Questions may focus on:
- Identifying key ideas and details within the passage
- Examining the physical structure or writing techniques to decipher meaning
- Integrating knowledge and ideas from more than one source to synthesize concepts

When creating questions, educators should follow the spirit of the question stems below - rather than adopting the exact structure. Evaluate questions based on their effectiveness of providing higher order thinking using the passage.

Each question below must also ask the student why they selected the evidence they presented. TDA occurs ONLY when students are asked to explain why.

KEY IDEAS & DETAILS
- What can you infer from the [title, headings, illustrations] in this passage?
- What key details and/or examples support the main idea of this passage?
- What is the theme of the passage?
- What message is the author of the passage trying to share?
- Explain how [character name] had his/her opinion of [topic] changed in the story?
- What does [character name] think about [topic]? What evidence supports that?
- What does the reader learn about the [character name] relationship with [entity, i.e. family or school] from this section?
- Which line in the poem best states the theme? How so?
- What does the conversation between [character name] and [other character name] reveal about their past and future relationship?
- How does the author of the letter to the editor show that he/she disagrees with the author of the original article?
CRAFT & STRUCTURE

- What does the phrase, [text of phrase], in paragraph 2 mean?
- How does the sentence structure in the poem support the tone?
- Why would the author place paragraph 5 after paragraph 4? How would switching the order of the paragraphs 4 and 5 change the effect of the story?
- Who is narrating the story? How do we know?
- How does the text show that [idea 1] differs from [idea 2]?
- Which character most strongly shows the author’s point of view? Provide evidence.
- What is the turning point in the passage? What does the author want you to know about this event?
- How do the captions in the tables help support the main idea of the passage?
- How does the author’s use of alliteration further the meaning of the passage?

INTEGRATION of KNOWLEDGE & IDEAS

- How do the illustrations help convey the mood of the story?
- How do the two different political cartoons depict [event] differently?
- Explain a cause and effect relation in the text.
- How is the interaction between [characters] in chapter 1 similar to the interaction between [characters] in chapter 2?
- Using all three passages, what can you infer about the [event]?
- What is the best explanation for how the map depicts the thoughts on [topic] from the time?
- Which sentences/phrases in [second speaker’s] rebuttal actually help to further [first speaker’s] arguments for [topic]?
- How might [character] react differently to [event] if he had seen report in the video?
Did You Create an Effective TDA Question?

Educators sometimes struggle with writing good text dependent questions. As they gain experience, the writing process typically becomes easier. Use the following checklist to help determine if the TDAs you created are valid.

All of the following checklist items are REQUIRED for a text dependent question.

- Requires that questions can only be answered correctly by close reading of the text and demand careful attention to the text
- Requires student explain and defend the evidence that they presented
- Require an understanding that extends beyond recalling facts
- Requires students to gather evidence and build knowledge
- Requires access to increasing levels of complex text
- Requires time for students to process questions and formulate responses

All of following CANNOT occur when writing a text dependent question. If you check ANY of these, you will want to rewrite your TDA question.

- Does NOT depend on information from outside sources
- Does NOT ask students about their own experiences
- Does NOT result in only one correct answer
- Does NOT just ask students to cite an answer from the text. It must also make them justify their citation
Any of the following likely show that a question qualifies text dependent. This is by no means a fully inclusive set. Marking a checkbox in this section likely means that you are on the right track.

- May often require students to infer
- May ask students to look at specific portions of the text (words, sentences, paragraphs) in order to determine the text’s role in the meaning of the piece
- May asks why the author chose a word, phrase or sentence to describe something
- May asks how changing one of those words, phrases or sentences to something else may have changed the meaning of the passage
- May ask students to note and assess patterns of writing and their effect on the experience of reading the passage
- May ask students to consider what the text leaves uncertain or unstated and why
- May ask students to uncover why or how the passage is important
What’s Next?

Creating TDA questions is just the first step. Students need to understand and practice how to answer TDA questions. Educators need to understand how to evaluate Text Dependent Analysis assessments in order to appropriately set expectations.

Administrators and directors need to understand how to look for and incorporate TDA into daily lessons.

There is still plenty to do, and help is available.

Text Dependent Analysis Professional Development

For a much more in-depth look at Text Dependent Analysis school districts should bring in experts to provide individualized professional development.

OnHand Schools offers Text Dependent Analysis training and professional development in which participants learn strategies to help students use information from reading passages as support for conclusions and arguments.

Participants learn how to:
- Use the latest research about how the brain learns to read
- Select challenging and appropriate text
- Analyze the text’s content and language ahead of time
- Anticipate potential challenges the text may present for certain students
- Write text-dependent questions that engage students in interpretive tasks
- Lead rich and rigorous conversations, through the use of text-dependent questions, that keep students engaged with the text’s deeper meaning
- Ensure reading activities stay closely connected to the text
- Implement TDA-specific formative assessments to gather feedback

Take a closer look at the professional development opportunities at: http://www.onhandschools.com/training/professional-development-catalog