

# Inquiry Mini-Lessons

## Evaluating Your Questions

When students are looking at a set of inquiry questions, they must be able to evaluate the questions that they have raised to find a good, researchable inquiry question.

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Materials:**

- list of evaluating questions on chart paper (see step 2)
- set of questions to model (see step 3)
- set of questions for students to discuss and evaluate (see step 4)
- chart paper and marker

**Grouping:** whole class or small group

### Procedure:

1. Explain to students that you are going to look at various inquiry questions to see if they are good questions for research.
2. On chart paper, show students some evaluating questions that could help them decide if a wondering/question is one that could be explored. Some evaluating questions might include:
  - Could we find information on this? Where?
  - Do we need to look in more than one place for the information? Why?
  - Is it going to give us facts, or do we need to think about and come up with more ideas or further research about the topic?

**Teaching Tip:** Display the chart in the classroom for individual student use.

3. Model some questions and discuss if each would make a good researchable question and, if so, how to go about researching it. Ask students to help evaluate the questions and give reasons for their ideas. You might use some of the following inquiry questions:
  - What would I need to have if I wanted a pet?
  - How would I care for a pet?
  - Which pet should I have—a cat or a dog?
  - Should I have a pet?
  - Why would it be good/not good to have a pet?
  - Why is it difficult to have a pet?
  - Who would benefit from having a pet?
  - How much help would I need from adults if I had a pet?

Remind students of the evaluating questions they can ask to evaluate the inquiry questions.

*When I'm deciding if "How would I care for a pet?" is a good inquiry question to research, I ask myself, "Could I find information on this question? Where? Would I need to look in more than one place for information?" I think I can easily find information on this question. I can probably find the information in one or two places—books or magazines and on Websites for pet owners. My inquiry question is very targeted, so I will only need to look at a couple of sources.*

4. Once you've modelled evaluating several questions, provide small groups of students with questions to discuss and evaluate, and then bring ideas back to the whole-class discussion. You can use the "Wonderings" or "Questions" column from a class organizer developed during the inquiry units to find questions for students to evaluate.

*Let's look at our list of questions in the "Wonderings" column of our R.A.N. Chart to see if these questions are ones that could be researched.*

5. If you're working on a whole-class inquiry, you may wish to ask students to revisit their choice for an inquiry question.

**Teaching Tip:** If students are researching in small groups, pairs, or individually, ask them to go back to their own list of questions and evaluate which of them would be the best question to research. They can present their choice to other students or the class to obtain feedback.