

Inquiry Mini-Lessons

Raising Wonderings to Fuel Inquiry

This lesson helps students to think about possible avenues of research stemming from the inquiry unit they have studied. It's intended to help students generate ideas using a self-questioning format.

Time: 25 minutes

Materials:

- paper sentence strips for a pocket chart with “I Wonder” written on one strip and prompts written on separate small strips (*Who?*, *What?*, *Where?*, *When?*, *Why?*, *How?*, *Which?*, *If...*)
- pocket chart
- markers

OR

- the heading and prompts written on chart paper

Grouping: whole class and partners

Procedure:

1. Set up a pocket chart with the heading, “I Wonder” and the possible prompt cards beneath. (See Materials for the prompts.)
2. Tell the students that you're going to think about ideas raised in the inquiry that you'd like to find out more about.
3. Model by thinking aloud, using the starter prompts you have placed in the pocket chart. For example, if you've finished the *Inside a Story* unit you might say, “Everybody thought you needed a good ending to a story, but I'm wondering what people think a satisfying ending would be.” As you wonder aloud, write your thought or question on a blank sentence strip and place it in the pocket chart.

There were so many interesting ideas in our inquiry, and I'm going to think about them and wonder, “What else could we discover?”

Teaching Tip: Include several of the prompts in your Think Aloud. Most should be researchable, e.g., “Tololwa Mollel told us that he uses his life experiences in his stories. I wonder which of his life experiences he put into *My Rows and Piles of Coins*?” (Mollel is a Canadian author—the class could email him or possibly arrange a school visit). But you could add one or two prompts that would be harder to research so that you can discuss them in the mini-lesson, “Choosing a Topic to Investigate.”

4. Once you've modelled several wonderings, encourage students to talk with a partner and generate some of their own. Use some of their wonderings to add to your own in the pocket chart.

Teaching Tip: If you're doing a whole-class research inquiry, then your collective wonderings chart will be a good basis for decision making on your topic. If students are working in pairs or small groups, or even individually, they will need extra time to generate their own wonderings. There will likely be overlap with the class chart, but new wonderings may also emerge.