



## Questioning and Posing Problems



### PURPOSE OF THIS TOOL

With this tool, students continue to learn the value of asking good questions in order to find solutions and expand understanding. They apply the thick/thin questioning technique they learned in the Exploring Meanings section by asking questions about a story of an absentminded family. Then they explore reasons why the family may be absentminded, and they learn a new technique for avoiding absentmindedness themselves. As students further apply the concept of questioning and posing problems, they form a deeper understanding and begin to make it a true Habit of Mind.

The resources in this tool will enable students to

- Explore a story by asking thin and thick questions about it.
- Use questions to consider all of the factors in a situation.
- Apply the C-A-F (Consider All Factors) model at home.

### HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

The following list of resources includes the suggested sequence for using this tool:

- “The Absentminded Borgs” story (Motivating Activity)
- The C-A-F Model worksheet (Core Activity)
- The C-A-F Model template (Extension Activity)

The activities and tasks included in this tool should take about 30 minutes to complete. You will need two packages of self-adhesive notes to complete this activity.

### TIPS AND VARIATIONS

#### 1. Motivating Activity

- Tell students that you are going to read a short story. Explain that while you are reading, they should write questions about the story on self-adhesive notes. Tell them to use a separate note for each question.
- On the board, create a T-chart to use later for posting thin and thick questions. Next to the chart, write the words *Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?* Explain that these words are called “the 5Ws and 1H” and that they are great words to use when asking questions.
- Tell students to carefully listen as you read and to silently write their questions.

- Read the story, which is provided on page 190. When you've finished reading, have students review their self-adhesive notes. Remind them of the differences between thin and thick questions, which they learned earlier. (If necessary, review the concept of thick and thin questions by referring to the Questioning and Posing Problems tool in the Exploring Meanings section, page 80.) Then ask students to classify their notes by writing either *thin* or *thick* on each one.
- Suggest that students convert some of their thin questions into thick questions if necessary to create a balance of both types. Then have them post their notes in the appropriate columns of the T-chart on the board.
- Have students review where their classmates have placed their questions. (Suggest students point thumbs up or thumbs down to gently express their opinions.) Decide as a class where controversial questions should be placed.
- Group similar questions together for convenience in answering them later.

*Note:* The primary purpose of this activity is to give students practice in forming questions, hearing others' questions, and giving and receiving feedback. It is not necessary to answer all of the questions at this time.

## 2. Core Activity

- Ask: What does it mean to be absentminded? Explain the importance of thinking before acting. Tell students the C-A-F model is a great tool for helping to prevent absentmindedness.
- Explain that C-A-F stands for "Consider All Factors." The model encourages students to ask good questions before making an important decision. It is also a good metacognition tool, as it helps students think about the thinking process.
- Give students the C-A-F Model worksheet with scenarios. Work through one of the scenarios as a class to help students get the hang of the tool. Then have students work in pairs to complete the other scenarios. One student can write questions as they brainstorm. When they have finished brainstorming, they should answer their questions and come up with a solution to the dilemma. Allow students 5–10 minutes per scenario to generate questions.
- Stimulate metacognitive discussion by encouraging students to talk about how the C-A-F model can help them.

### 3. Extension Activity

- Give students the C-A-F Model template to take with them. Suggest that students use it whenever they need to solve a problem or make an important decision.
- Keep extra copies of the template handy in the classroom as a reference for students to use as necessary.

## The Absentminded Borgs

Mr. and Mrs. Tim and Nancy Borg and their kids—Susie, Arlo, and Kit—make up the Borg family. For some reason, the Borgs never quite seem to have it together. They are never on time, and they never have what they need when they get someplace!

Mr. Borg works very hard. He doesn't have as much time to spend with his kids as he would like. One day, Mr. Borg promises Susie, Arlo, and Kit that soon they will go to the mountains for a hike and a picnic. Unfortunately, he has to cancel the date a couple of times because of pressing business. Finally, the day is right and the trip to the mountains is really going to happen! The Borgs are determined to do everything right. They make a list of everything they need for the trip. Then they work together to get ready, crossing items off the list as they go. They prepare food and drinks, and they get a picnic blanket, hiking shoes, hats, insect repellent, and everything else they can possibly think of for the trip. They carefully place all the items in the car, pile in, and fasten their seat belts. It's going to be a great trip!

But when Mr. Borg puts the key in the ignition and tries to start the car, nothing happens! He sighs a heavy sigh, and says, "It looks like I'm the absentminded person in this family!"

The following are sample questions for the T-chart:

Thin	Thick
Who are the Borgs?	Why can't Mr. Borg start the car?
Where are the Borgs going?	Why is Mr. Borg so absentminded?
What did the Borgs pack for their trip?	Do you think the Borgs will have what they need when they finally get to the mountains?
How did the family organize for the trip?	How could the family better prepare for their trip?

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## The C-A-F Model: Consider All Factors

To consider all the factors in a situation, it's important to ask yourself good questions. Choose one or more of the scenarios below. Then brainstorm a list of questions and answer them to solve the dilemma.

**Scenario 1:** You are going to the grocery store to get something for an adult. On the way, you meet a friend who is going to play with some other kids you know. He asks you to come along. You would like to play but aren't sure if it's the right thing to do.

**Scenario 2:** You want to get a new pet but don't think your parents will be crazy about the idea.

**Scenario 3:** You want to get a birthday present for a friend. You have no idea what to get her.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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**Scenario 2:** You want to get a new pet but don't think your parents will be crazy about the idea.

**Scenario 3:** You want to get a birthday present for a friend. You have no idea what to get her.

### Sample Answers for Scenario 1

**Key Questions:**

What factors are involved?

*Time, adult expecting me to return, safety, fun with friends.*

Who is affected by my decision?

*Me, my friends, and the adult I'm helping.*

Have I thought of everything?

*How long will my friends play? How far away is the playground? Should I go back and let the adult know? Am I allowed to do this? If I play now, will I still have time to run my errand?*

Do I have everything I need?

*Permission?*

The C-A-F Model: Consider All Factors (Template)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## The C-A-F Model: Consider All Factors (Template)

Use the C-A-F model when you need to make a decision. To consider all the relevant factors, brainstorm a list of questions to ask yourself. The following are a few questions to get you started. You can add more questions. When you are finished brainstorming, answer the questions to help you make a decision.

### **Key Questions:**

What factors are involved?

Who is affected by my decision?

Have I thought of everything?

Do I have everything I need?



## Questioning and Posing Problems

### PURPOSE OF THIS TOOL

In this tool, students focus intensely on the nature of questioning. They ask rapid-fire questions and then slow down to ponder age-old philosophical questions. They reflect on what questioning means to them and might say about others. As students further apply the concept of questioning and posing problems, they form a deeper understanding and begin to make it a true Habit of Mind.

The resources in this tool will enable students to

- Explore their thoughts about the way questioning looks, sounds, and feels.
- Play a game that involves a lot of questioning.
- Explore a philosophical question, mapping their process of unraveling meaning.
- Reflect on what a person's questions might reveal about him or her.

### HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

The following list of resources includes the suggested sequence for using this tool:

- Questioning Y-Chart worksheet (Motivating Activity)
- Questions game (Core Activity)
- What Is Beauty? worksheet (Synthesis Activity)
- Questions or Answers? worksheet (Reflection Activity)
- Questioning Y-Chart worksheet (Reflection Activity)

The activities and tasks included in this tool should take 60–90 minutes to complete.

### TIPS AND VARIATIONS

#### 1. Motivating Activity

- Give students the Questioning Y-Chart worksheet. Ask the following questions as students fill in each area of the worksheet:

What does it look like when someone is in a questioning mood or searching for an answer to a problem? What does it look like at school versus in the world beyond school?

What feelings do you have when you are in a questioning mood or trying to find answers to a problem? Do you always feel the same way? What range of feelings do you have?



What does the process of questioning sound like to you? Is it noisy? pleasant? curious? strange?

- Have students share their findings as a class.

## 2. Core Activity

- Write the following rules on the board:

### **Rules for Questions Game**

Ask your partner a question.

Respond to your partner's question with a related but different question.

Continue the process.

The person who answers the question (makes a statement) or asks an unrelated question loses.

- Have students find a partner. Read the rules on the board and explain as necessary. Tell students to begin the game by asking: What is your name? The partner could answer: What is your sister's name? or What is your middle name? and so on.
- Tell students that when the first round ends they should start again. Perhaps students could play "best two out of three" or continue playing for a specified amount of time.
- Discuss the activity with questions such as the following: What have you learned about asking questions? What types of questions were the most useful? What professionals might be required to ask many questions in the course of their day-to-day work?

## 3. Synthesis Activity

- Tell students that some questions just can't be answered easily, if at all. Philosophical questions, when discussed, often lead to more questions and still more questions. Some philosophical questions have occupied minds for thousands of years. Give students the worksheet What Is Beauty? Have them work in small groups to discuss at least one of the questions. (You may want to assign each group one question.) The point of this conversation is not to come up with answers to these age-old questions but to enjoy the process of exploring and questioning and challenging each other.

- Encourage students to come up with a group answer to the questions. Remind them to be aware of new questions that arise and how they deal with them. Ask the groups to list their new questions and, if you wish, to map how they tried to answer them. Maps should show a clear explanation of thought processes and should include questions.

#### **4. Reflection Activity**

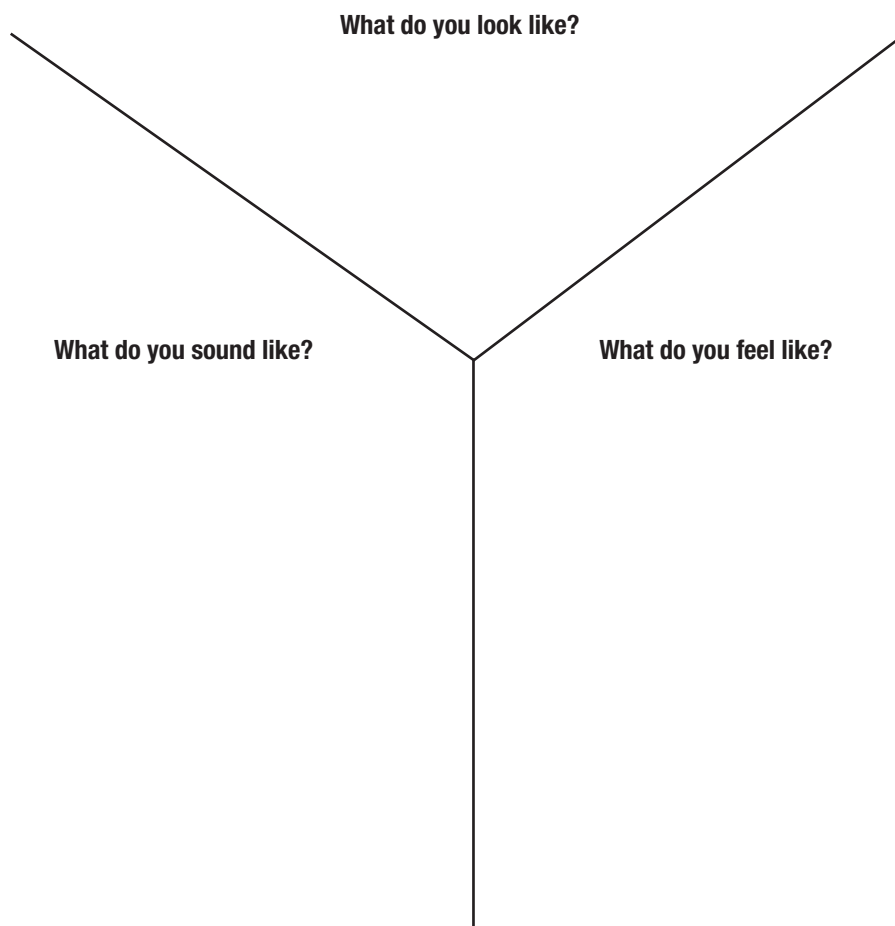
- Give students the Questions or Answers? worksheet. Have them work in small groups to discuss the quotation and answer the questions.
- Have students revisit their Questioning Y-Chart worksheet to see if they would like to add to or revise any of their previous thoughts about questioning.

Questioning Y-Chart

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Questioning Y-Chart

Use this chart to explore your thoughts about the Habit of Mind of Questioning and Posing Problems.



What Is Beauty?

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## What Is Beauty?

Pick at least one of the following questions to discuss and define as a group. Be aware of any new questions that arise in the process. Map your thought process as you discuss the question.

- What is knowledge?
- What is beauty?
- Do I have free will?
- What is truth?
- What is consciousness?
- What is justice?

Map your thought processes here:

Questions or Answers?

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Questions or Answers?

Read the following quotation, think about it for a moment, and then answer the questions that follow.

*Judge a man by his questions rather than by his answers.*

—Voltaire, 18th century French philosopher and writer

### Questions

1. Rewrite the quotation in your own words:
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. To what extent do you agree with the quotation?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Name one or two people who ask good questions. Explain why you think so.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Do you judge a person by his or her questions? Explain.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Questions or Answers?

Read the following quotation, think about it for a moment, and then answer the questions that follow.

*Judge a man by his questions rather than by his answers.*

—Voltaire, 18th century French philosopher and writer

The following are sample answers that you can use to help students get started.

### Questions

1. Rewrite the quotation in your own words:

*A person's questions are more revealing than his or her answers.*

2. To what extent do you agree with the quotation?

*I agree completely. I think people can memorize and smooth-talk with their answers, but a person who can ask really good questions is a thoughtful, curious, interested person, and I value those qualities.*

3. Name one or two people who ask good questions. Explain why you think so.

*My piano teacher never asks an ordinary question, like "How are you?" He'll say something intriguing instead, like "Did you notice the first daffodil on your way in?" He keeps me thinking.*

4. Do you judge a person by his or her questions? Explain.

*Yes, I think I do, because I think of people who ask good questions as intelligent, curious, and interested. They care more about what other people think and feel than about hearing themselves talk.*