

## THREE KINDS OF QUESTIONS (MORTIMER ADLER)

**I. Factual questions-** these questions have only one correct answer. They can be related to details of plot, vocabulary, etc. Good questions of fact lead us to dig deeper into the story. Bad ones do not.

A good question of **fact** based on *To Kill a Mockingbird*:  
*What does Scout do to get in trouble on her first day of school?*

This question is one that a close and careful reader will truly care about.

**II. Interpretive questions-** these questions ask you to offer your opinion about what the selection means. It is therefore the kind of question that best leads to interesting and valuable classroom discussions. Unlike the question of fact, the interpretive question has many possible answers. You must always go back to the text to support them. Good interpretive questions lead to good thesis statements for analytical literary essays.

A good question of **interpretation** based on *Of Mice and Men*:  
*Why does the author include the scene where Carlson shoots Candy's dog?*

IMPORTANT: Note that the question uses the WDTA. Many good interpretive questions ask "Why does the author...?" Good questions of interpretation often come from questioning the author's intentions. A word of advice: avoid using technical literary language (theme, plot, metaphor, point of view) when asking interpretive questions. These terms usually lead us to discussions that are not SPECIFIC enough to the text.

**With questions of interpretation, the authority for your answers is the TEXT.**

**III. Evaluative questions-** these questions ask you whether you agree or disagree with what the author has said or whether something in the selection has application to your own life. You support your response to a question of evaluation by talking about your own values or your own personal experiences rather than about the selection itself.

**With questions of evaluation, the authority for your answers is YOU, not the text.**

A good question of **evaluation** based on *To Kill a Mockingbird*:  
*What situations have you been in that have caused you to pre-judge someone else?*