

THICK AND THIN QUESTIONING

Description: This strategy provides students with the opportunity to become thoughtful sense makers by focusing on Thick Questions. It's the teacher's responsibility to understand the difference between Thick and Thin Questions. One Thick Question is far better than 20 Thin Questions.

How to Use the Strategy:

*This strategy can be used with ALL concepts/ideas.

A **Thick Question** is open ended. It requires evidence to support a point of view and a warrant to link that evidence to the point being made.

A **Thin Question** is usually asking for literal information that does not require interpretation, argumentation, or sustained conversation.

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THICK QUESTIONS:

- Can't be answered with a yes or no.
- Usually lead to deeper discussions and debate.
- Do not have one right answer.
- Thoughtful thick questions position the student as a “doer” of the discipline.
- For example, by saying, “Historians debate...where do you stand on this debate?”
- Warrant your argument.”
- Other thick questions acknowledge gradations. Issues are not right or wrong.
- Content is more subtle and complex than that. Questions might include, “To what degree...”

THIN QUESTIONS:

- Often follow IRE pattern (Inquiry, Response, Evaluation). They are often used by teachers to check to see if a student knows the right answer.
- An example might be, “Who can tell me...” or “Who remembers...”
- Do not lead students to grapple with complex issues.
- Are often yes or no questions accompanied by simple explanations.