

Teaching the Questions

Overview

Your group is responsible for creating a conversation using some suitable approach that leads to intellectual engagement with what we will call the BQs (Big Questions). Each of you has chosen to read *Crime and Punishment* from a particular “angle of vision”—a critical perspective that interests you. Time for you to be, if not the teacher, then at least our guide, as you help us think about *Crime and Punishment* through your chosen lens.

Requirements

Each group must:

- Generate a list of possible topics from the book; these should be compelling topics that invite complex thinking and diverse perspectives. An example, for those in the Choices group, might be “the difficulty of making the right choice.”
- Choose the one topic that most interests your group.
- Formulate a BQ (Big Question) based on this topic.
- Develop an effective, engaging experience or process by which you can help us explore and respond to this BQ (see Possible Ideas list below).
- Help the class make connections between your BQ and the novel (as well as your own lives and the larger world, if possible).
- Show evidence of each person’s contributions through notes in the Reader’s Notebook, work in the group, contributions to the actual experience you create.
- Be prepared for your group to run this discussion for *at least twenty minutes*, though it can go as long as forty-five minutes—if it’s that good.

Grading

Your grade on this assignment is based on the quality of the experience you provide for the class. This experience should:

- Demonstrate the depth of your own understanding of the book and thinking about the ideas you discuss.
- Challenge us to think about a BQ that leads to new insights into the book, our own lives, and the larger world.
- Ensure the full class’ participation in whatever experience you create.

Remember that the grade is collective (for the group), though I reserve the right to differentiate the grades if individuals don’t demonstrate equal commitment.

Possible Ideas

Here are some ideas, though I challenge you to come up with others.

- *Socratic Seminar*: Create guiding questions you help the class explore by way of examining and responding to your BQ.
- *Visual Explanation*: Come up with some way to ask people to represent, analyze, or otherwise respond to your BQ that involves some sort of visual thinking.
- *Simulation*: Provide some experience that forces us to engage with and to explore your BQ that will get us thinking beyond the obvious yet allows everyone to connect to the novel.
- *Opinionnaire*: Create a series of questions that challenge students to think about your BQ from different angles, along a continuum, and so on.
- *Third Text*: Bring in a clip of a film, art work(s), other media, or a written text (e.g., a poem, article) that we can read quickly; use this to create a frame for a discussion through small groups and/or the full class. A variation on this would be to create a handout with quotations about your subject that students could first examine individually or in pairs or small groups. The site www.bartleby.com has several online quotation dictionaries I have found useful for this.
- *Surprise Us*. Just be sure that it makes us really think about the book and your Big Question.