



EXPEDITIONARY  
LEARNING

# Grade 6: Module 2A: Unit 2: Lesson 15

## Asking Probing Questions and Choosing a Research Topic



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**Long-Term Targets Addressed (Based on NYSP12 ELA CCLS)**

- I can conduct short research projects to answer a question. (W.6.7)
- I can pose questions that help me clarify what is being discussed. (SL.6.1c)
- I can pose questions that elaborate on the topic being discussed. (SL.6.1c)
- I can respond to questions with elaboration and detail that connect with the topic being discussed. (SL.6.1c)
- After a discussion, I can paraphrase what I understand about the topic being discussed. (SL.6.1d)

**Supporting Learning Targets**

- I can ask speakers questions to encourage them to clarify their ideas and elaborate on what they are saying.
- I can paraphrase what a speaker says to check my understanding.
- I can respond to questions by clarifying the point I am trying to make and by elaborating on my ideas.
- I can identify a topic I am particularly interested in researching.

**Ongoing Assessment**

- Exit ticket: Topic Choice



Agenda	Teaching Notes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Opening<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>A. Independent Reading: Five Vocabulary Words (5 minutes)</li><li>B. Unpacking Learning Targets (3 minutes)</li></ol></li><li>2. Work Time<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>A. Studying the Performance Task Prompt (7 minutes)</li><li>B. Focused Discussion: Asking Questions and Paraphrasing (18 minutes)</li><li>C. Introducing the Discussion Tracker (7 minutes)</li></ol></li><li>3. Closing and Assessment<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>A. Exit Ticket: Topic Choice (5 minutes)</li></ol></li><li>4. Homework<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>A. Continue independent reading. Answer this question: “Who is the intended audience of your book? Why do you think that?”</li><li>B. Familiarize yourself with the researcher’s notebook to get ready for the next lesson.</li></ol></li></ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Although this lesson is in Unit 2, it is actually the kickoff for Unit 3. This is to give you time to look over the draft end of unit assessments before handing them back to students with feedback in Lesson 17.</li><li>• When studying the prompt it is important students understand why they are being asked to provide evidence to support their rule to live by—evidence adds weight to their thoughts and opinions. Without researched evidence to support it, people have little reason to trust or listen to their rule.</li><li>• It is also important that students understand that the reason they research before determining their final rule is because they need to make sure that their rule has research evidence to support it.</li><li>• As the speaking and listening standard SL.6.1 is assessed in Unit 3, students practice the skills outlined in that standard. In some of the lessons in Unit 3, students follow a similar plan—first they listen to a scripted model discussion; then they identify how the discussion was effective; and finally, they practice the skills they have learned through the model in a group discussion with a focus question. In this lesson, the focus is on questions to encourage the speaker to clarify and elaborate his/her ideas, and also on paraphrasing back to check for understanding.</li><li>• Students are introduced to the research topics in this lesson, and at the end of the lesson they choose a topic to focus their research on. Collect the exit tickets at the end of the lesson and use student choices to put them into research teams in preparation for the next lesson.</li><li>• In advance: Select four students to be in the middle of the fishbowl. Give them a role (Student 1, 2, 3, or 4) and a copy of the script in advance; ask them to read through the script to become familiar with their part.</li><li>• Post: Learning targets.</li></ul>



Lesson Vocabulary	Materials
clarify, elaborate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Performance Task Prompt (one per student and one to display)</li><li>• Document camera</li><li>• Fishbowl Script 1 (one per student)</li><li>• Effective Discussion Criteria anchor chart (new; co-created with students in Work Time B)</li><li>• Discussion Tracker (one for display)</li><li>• Exit ticket: Topic Choice (one per student)</li><li>• Researcher's Notebook (one per student)</li></ul>



Opening	Meeting Students' Needs
<p><b>A. Independent Reading: Five Vocabulary Words (5 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite students to pair up to share the five words that grabbed their attention in their independent reading and to explain why those words grabbed their attention.</li> <li>• Circulate and listen to get an idea of the degree or depth to which students have been reading their independent reading homework.</li> <li>• Invite students to choose the word that grabbed their attention the most from the five their partner listed.</li> <li>• Invite students to pair up with someone else to share the one word they selected from their previous partner's list.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening with activities linked to independent reading homework holds students accountable for independent reading.</li> </ul>
<p><b>B. Unpacking Learning Targets (3 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite students to read the learning targets with you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* "I can ask speakers questions to encourage them to clarify their ideas and elaborate on what they are saying."</li> <li>* "I can paraphrase what a speaker says to check my understanding."</li> <li>* "I can respond to questions by clarifying the point I am trying to make and by elaborating on my ideas."</li> <li>* "I can identify a topic I am particularly interested researching."</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Invite students to Think-Pair-Share: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* "What does <i>clarify</i> mean? When you ask questions to encourage a speaker to clarify their ideas, what are you asking them to do?"</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Listen for students to explain that <i>clarify</i> means to make it clearer, and that when asking someone to clarify their ideas, you are asking questions to help him or her explain those ideas more clearly. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* "What does <i>elaborate</i> mean?"</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Listen for students to explain that <i>elaborate</i> means to explain in more detail.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussing and clarifying the language of learning targets helps build academic vocabulary.</li> </ul>



Work Time	Meeting Students' Needs
<p><b>A. Studying the Performance Task Prompt (7 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribute the <b>Performance Task prompt</b> and display it using a <b>document camera</b>.</li> <li>• Invite students to read along silently in their heads as you read it aloud. Ask students to Think-Pair-Share:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “So what are you going to be doing for your performance task?”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Listen for students to explain that they are going to write an evidence-based essay informing people of a rule to live by.</li> <li>• Ask students to Think-Pair-Share:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “What is an evidence-based essay?”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Listen for students to explain that an evidence-based essay is an essay in which they provide evidence to support their rule to live by.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “Why was it enough for Steve Jobs and President Obama to base their rules to live by on their previous experiences? Why didn’t they have to provide evidence or research for people to trust them?”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Listen for students to explain that both Steve Jobs and President Barack Obama have been very successful and had many previous significant experiences in life enough to support their rules.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “Why didn’t Bud have to provide researched evidence to support his rules to live by?”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Listen for students to explain that Bud’s rules were only for him to follow—he wasn’t recommending them for anyone else to follow, so he didn’t need to provide researched evidence; however, had he wanted others to follow his rules, they would have wanted more evidence to prove that his rules were worthy of following.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “So why do you think YOU need to provide evidence from research to support your rule to live by?”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Listen for students to explain that it is important to provide evidence from research to support their rule in order to more fully explain their rule and show people that their rule is a good rule to live by.</li> <li>• Focus students on the word topic and tell them that although they may already have some ideas for rules to live by, they are actually going to begin by researching in a topic area that is of particular interest to them and to other students their age before they choose the final rule to live by that they will put forward in their essay. This way, they will make sure their rule is based on evidence from research, so that the reader can see and understand why it is a good rule to live by.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider providing select students with a prehighlighted version of the Performance Task Prompt that highlights the explicit actions students will need to take to complete the task (e.g., “choose a topic,” “research the facts,” “write an essay”).</li> </ul>



Work Time	Meeting Students' Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Write topics on the board. Tell students that they will be choosing one of these topics to research to make a rule to live by:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Healthy habits</li><li>2. Reduce, reuse, recycle</li><li>3. Bullying</li></ol></li><li>• Clarify that “Healthy habits” is about eating healthy foods and exercising. “Reduce, reuse, recycle” is about reducing how much you use, and reusing and recycling things. Students should already be familiar with the term “Bullying.”</li></ul>	



Work Time	Meeting Students' Needs
<p><b>B. Focused Discussion: Asking Questions and Paraphrasing (18 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite the four students who have prepared for this discussion to sit in the fishbowl and all of the other students to sit around them. Ensure they have their copies of the script.</li> <li>• Tell the students on the outside to focus on the questions that are asked in the fishbowl. Ask students in the Fishbowl to follow the Fishbowl Script 1 to have a discussion.</li> <li>• At the end of the fishbowl, ask students on both the inside and the outside to Think-Pair-Share with an elbow partner:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “What did you notice about this discussion?”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Select students to share what they noticed with the class.</li> <li>• Display and distribute the Fishbowl Script 1. Invite students to spend a couple of minutes reading it. Ask them to Think-Pair-Share:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “What do the questions do in the discussion?”</li> <li>* “How do the questions improve the listeners’ understanding of the speakers’ ideas?”</li> <li>* “How do the questions improve the speakers’ understanding of their own ideas?”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Listen for students to explain that the questions probed the students to clarify their thinking on their rules and give more details. They gave the students the opportunity to explain the reasoning behind their ideas. Also, listen for students to explain that the rule was paraphrased back to make sure it had been understood correctly.</li> <li>• Record student ideas on the new <b>Effective Discussion Criteria anchor chart</b>. Ensure the following are included:</li> <li>• Ask questions to encourage the speakers to elaborate to help me better understand their ideas.</li> <li>• Ask questions to probe the speakers to encourage them to think more deeply about the claim.</li> <li>• Say:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “Speaker 1 says, ‘I hear you saying that you think we should drink water every single day to keep us hydrated because being hydrated keeps us alert and healthy. Is that right?’ Why does the listener paraphrase what the speaker says?”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Listen for students to say that the listener paraphrases to check that he or she understands what the speaker is saying.</li> <li>• Record student ideas on the Effective Discussion Criteria anchor chart. Ensure the following is included:</li> <li>• Paraphrase what the speaker has said to check my understanding and to give the speaker the chance to correct me if I misunderstand.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider providing select students (especially those with difficulty in auditory process) who are observing the fishbowl with copies of the script ahead of time so they can follow along with the text as they listen.</li> <li>• Anchor charts provide a visual cue to students about what to do when you ask them to work independently. They also serve as note-catchers when the class is co-constructing ideas.</li> </ul>





Work Time (continued)	Meeting Students' Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell students that now they are going to apply what they learned from the fishbowl to have their own discussion based on a focus question you are going to give them. Remind them that to have an effective discussion, they should focus on the criteria they have recorded on the Effective Discussion Criteria anchor chart.</li> <li>• Remind students of the topics they are going to research. Give them the focus question:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “Which of the topics is of particular interest to you? Why?”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Give an example: Say you are particularly interested in healthy habits because as a teacher you want students to be successful and happy at school, so rules to live by that help students achieve this are of particular interest to you.</li> <li>• Give students a couple of minutes to think about which of those topics is of particular interest to them and why.</li> <li>• Put students into groups of four to have a discussion about that question, focusing on the anchor chart to help them ask questions of each other to probe and to encourage them to elaborate, and to encourage them to paraphrase and check for understanding.</li> <li>• Circulate to listen and to encourage students to ask each other questions and paraphrase to check for understanding.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>C. Introducing the Discussion Tracker (7 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Display the <b>Discussion Tracker</b> and tell students that you will be using this to assess their speaking and listening skills.</li> <li>• Take one skill on the Discussion Tracker and invite students to read it with you. Ask:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “Why is this skill important? How will it make you a better speaker and a better listener in discussions?”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ask students to Think-Pair-Share:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “Which of these skills would you mark off from the conversation you just heard?”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Listen for students to say they could mark off the first five on the list.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of criteria, such as the Discussion Tracker, gives students a clear vision of what they need to be able to do to be successful with learning targets.</li> </ul>



Closing and Assessment	Meeting Students' Needs
<p><b>A. Exit Ticket: Topic Choice (5 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tell students that now that they have had a chance to discuss the topic that is of particular interest to them and have been pushed in their thinking with questions from other students, they are now going to choose a topic to focus their research on to ultimately write a rule to live by for their performance task.</li><li>• Distribute the Exit Ticket: Topic Choice. Tell students to check the box of the topic they would like to focus on and to justify why on the lines underneath.</li><li>• Collect the exit tickets; as you will use these to put students into research teams before the next lesson.</li><li>• Distribute the Researcher's Notebooks.</li></ul>	
Homework	Meeting Students' Needs
<p>A. Continue independent reading. Answer this question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* “Who is the intended audience of your book? Why do you think that?”</li></ul> <p>B. Familiarize yourself with the researcher’s notebook to get ready for the next lesson.</p> <p><i>Note: Using the exit tickets, divide students into groups of three or four according to the topic they chose to focus on (“healthy habits,” “reduce, reuse, recycle,” or “bullying”). Mixed-ability grouping of students will provide a collaborative and supportive structure for reading complex texts.</i></p> <p><i>Before Lesson 16, prepare folders for each research team with all texts plus a glossary for each team member. The list of research texts and glossaries for each text can be found at the end of Lesson 16.</i></p> <p><i>Remember, by Lesson 17, take time to prepare feedback for students on their argument essays, based on Rows 1 and 3 of the rubric.</i></p>	



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# Grade 6: Module 2A: Unit 2: Lesson 15

## Supporting Materials



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You have read several texts of different types to discover the “rules to live by” of other characters and real people: Bud from *Bud, Not Buddy*, Steve Jobs, President Barack Obama, and poet Rudyard Kipling. Each of these people decided on his “rules to live by” based on his own life experiences.

Now you have a chance to share some of the important lessons, or “rules to live by,” that you have learned from experiences in your own life. We trust the rules suggested by Steve Jobs and President Barack Obama because they have both been very successful in their lives; however, for people to trust your rules to live by, you need to be able to support your rule with evidence from research.

You will begin by choosing a topic important to you and people in your age group. With a small “expert group,” you will research the facts of this topic and collect evidence: facts, definitions, and quotes in order to determine a rule to live by. Finally, you will individually write an evidence-based essay to inform readers of one “rule to live by” that can be shared with others who can learn from your experiences and research.

I can pose questions that help me clarify what is being discussed. (SL.6.1c)

I can pose questions that elaborate on the topic being discussed. (SL.6.1c)

I can respond to questions with elaboration and detail that connect with the topic being discussed. (SL.6.1c)

After a discussion, I can paraphrase what I understand about the topic being discussed. (SL.6.1d)

Student 1:	My rule to live by is to drink plenty of water every single day.
Student 2:	Why do you think that is a good rule to live by?
Student 1:	Because drinking water keeps you hydrated.
Student 3:	So why do we need to stay hydrated? Why is that so important?
Student 1:	We need to stay hydrated because if we are dehydrated, we will be tired and our bodies won't function as well as they should. We will feel unwell and we won't be able to work hard at school.
Student 4:	So I hear you saying that you think we should drink water every single day to keep us hydrated because being hydrated keeps us alert and healthy. Is that right?
Student 1:	Yes!
Student 1 [to Student 2]:	So what is your rule to live by?
Student 2:	To read every single day.
Student 4:	Why do you think that is a good rule to live by?
Student 2:	Because reading every day makes you a better reader.
Student 3:	But how does reading every day make you a better reader?
Student 2:	It builds your vocabulary.
Student 1:	So I hear you saying that we need to read every single day to build our vocabulary. Is that right?



Student 2:	Yes, and building our vocabulary will make us better readers!
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Student Name:		Date:	
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Criteria	
Paraphrases ideas and questions	
Asks clarifying questions	
Asks probing questions	
Clearly explains own ideas	
Responds to questions with details	
Seeks out different peer perspectives and backgrounds	
Acknowledges different peer perspectives and backgrounds	
Respectfully compares own perspective with someone else's.	

Notes/Comments:



Name:		Date:	
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Which topic is of particular interest to you for research?

- ☐ 1. Healthy habits
- ☐ 2. Reduce, reuse, recycle
- ☐ 3. Bullying

Why?






\_\_\_\_\_  
**Name:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date:**

Topic of Research:

**Directions:**

This is your place to gather information and summarize your findings as you complete the research project. This will serve as a portion of your mid-unit assessment and demonstrate your progress toward RI.6.1 (citing text evidence), RI.6.2 (summarizing), and W.7 (conducting and research project).

This side will provide specific directions as well as a place to collect your source information.	This side is where you will gather relevant information and summarize your texts.
<p><b>I. Research Question</b></p> <p>Consider these two questions as you write your question:</p> <p>What is important about this topic?</p> <p>How does it contribute to improving the lives of your peers?</p>	<p>My research question:</p>



This side will provide specific directions as well as a place to collect your source information.	This side is where you will gather relevant information and summarize your texts.
II. RESEARCH NOTES	
<b>Text 1</b> Direction for this text: _____  Text Title: _____  Author: _____  Source: _____	Relevant information from this text (bullet points):          
Did reading this text make you want to revise or refine your research question?  _____ Yes _____ No  If yes, how?	Summary of the text:          



This side will provide specific directions as well as a place to collect your source information.	This side is where you will gather relevant information and summarize your texts.
II. RESEARCH NOTES	
<b>Text 2</b> Direction for this text: _____  Text Title: _____  Author: _____  Source: _____	Relevant information from this text (bullet points):          
Did reading this text make you want to revise or refine your research question?  _____ Yes _____ No  If yes, how?	Summary of the text:          



<p>This side will provide specific directions as well as a place to collect your source information.</p>	<p>This side is where you will gather relevant information and summarize your texts.</p>
<p><b>II. RESEARCH NOTES</b></p>	
<p><b>Text 3</b>            Direction for this text: _____             Text Title: _____             Author: _____             Source: _____</p>	<p>Relevant information from this text (bullet points):</p>
<p>Did reading this text make you want to revise or refine your research question?</p> <p>_____ Yes _____ No</p> <p>If yes, how?</p>	<p>Summary of the text:</p>



<p>This side will provide specific directions as well as a place to collect your source information.</p>	<p>This side is where you will gather relevant information and summarize your texts.</p>
<p><b>II. RESEARCH NOTES</b></p>	
<p><b>Text 4</b>            Direction for this text: _____             Text Title: _____             Author: _____             Source: _____</p>	<p>Relevant information from this text (bullet points):</p>
<p>Did reading this text make you want to revise or refine your research question?</p> <p>_____ Yes _____ No</p> <p>If yes, how?</p>	<p>Summary of the text:</p>



### III. SYNTHESIZE YOUR FINDINGS

Summarize your findings about your research topic. Remember to use complete sentences and to acknowledge your sources.




**IV. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

After conducting this research, what are you wondering? What suggestions do you have for further study?