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## DEVELOPING A SYSTEM OF READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS FOR LITERARY TEXTS FOR 3RD GRADE STUDENTS IN VIETNAM

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### Abstract

*For elementary school students, learning to read fluently and deeply understand literary texts not only helps them acquire knowledge effectively but also develops their ability to think independently, appreciate literature, and evaluate cultural and aesthetic values. Reading comprehension, especially of literary texts, requires students not only to recognize linguistic elements but also to analyze content, characters, contexts, and messages within the work. Developing this skill is not a simple process; it requires guidance and support from teachers, particularly through appropriate teaching methods. One of the most important and effective methods to enhance students' reading comprehension skills is the construction of a system of instructional questions.*

*With this in mind, the paper "Developing a System of Reading Comprehension Questions for Literary Texts for 3rd Grade Students in Vietnam" aims to explore and propose measures to build an effective and suitable system of instructional questions. These measures will help improve students' reading comprehension abilities while fostering their analytical, critical thinking, and literary appreciation skills. Ultimately, this contributes significantly to shaping students' personalities and holistic development in their early years, preparing them for higher levels of education with a solid intellectual, ethical, and aesthetic foundation.*

**Keywords:** teaching reading comprehension, literary texts, 3rd grade students, instructional questions.

## 1. Introduction

In the current context, where information and knowledge are becoming increasingly abundant and diverse, reading comprehension has become an essential skill not only for students but for all individuals in society. Particularly for elementary school students, learning to read fluently and deeply understand literary texts not only enables them to acquire knowledge effectively but also helps develop independent thinking, literary appreciation, and the ability to evaluate cultural and aesthetic values in literature. Reading comprehension, especially of literary texts, requires students not only to recognize linguistic elements but also to analyze content, characters, settings, and the messages conveyed in the work. Developing this skill is not a simple process; it requires support and guidance from teachers, particularly through appropriate teaching methods. One of the most important and effective methods to enhance students' reading comprehension skills is the development of a system of instructional questions. These questions not only help students understand the content and structure of a text but also foster analytical, evaluative, and critical thinking skills, thereby stimulating creativity and imagination.

For third-grade students, who are at an age where they are absorbing and familiarizing themselves with new linguistic and literary concepts, developing a system of instructional questions plays a crucial role. These questions must be designed appropriately for their age, allowing students to engage with and comprehend the lesson in the most natural and accessible way. In addition to helping students grasp the content of the text, the questions should also spark curiosity, encourage them to ask questions, and seek answers, thereby fostering independent thinking and deeper analytical skills.

With this significance in mind, the paper "Developing a System of Reading Comprehension Questions for Literary Texts for 3rd Grade Students in Vietnam" aims to research and propose measures for building an effective and suitable system of instructional questions. These measures will enhance third-grade students' reading comprehension abilities while also developing their critical thinking, analytical skills, and literary appreciation. Ultimately, this contributes significantly to shaping their character and fostering holistic development in their early years, preparing them for higher levels of education with a strong foundation in intellect, ethics, and aesthetics.

## 2. Research Content

### 2.1 Teaching Literary Text Reading Comprehension

Teaching literary text reading comprehension is a crucial part of developing students' thinking skills, literary appreciation, and character formation. Particularly for elementary school students, learning to read and understand literary texts not only helps them acquire knowledge systematically but also shapes their awareness and attitudes towards life, people, and moral values through literature. For third-grade students, who are beginning to engage with a variety of literary texts, teaching reading comprehension plays an essential role in fostering their intellectual, emotional, and aesthetic development.

#### a. Concept of Teaching Literary Text Reading Comprehension

Teaching literary text reading comprehension is the process of helping students receive, analyze, interpret, and appreciate the content and artistic values embedded in a text. Reading

comprehension is not merely about recognizing words or recalling a story's content; more importantly, it involves analyzing literary elements such as characters, situations, setting, time, language, and the messages conveyed by the author. Teaching literary text reading comprehension helps students:

- Clearly understand the content of the text.
- Analyze artistic elements and recognize aesthetic values in the work.
- Develop critical thinking and literary appreciation skills.
- Connect lessons from literature to real life, enhancing moral and humanistic values.

#### b. Objectives of Teaching Literary Text Reading Comprehension

The goal of teaching literary text reading comprehension to third-grade students is not only to help them understand the story's content but also to develop the following key skills:

- **Understanding text content:** Students should recognize characters, situations, and relationships within the story. Understanding these elements helps them gain a comprehensive view of the work.
- **Developing analytical and cognitive skills:** Students will analyze the relationships between characters, their actions, and the messages the work conveys.
- **Enhancing emotional expression and perception:** Through reading and understanding texts, students will develop the ability to perceive aesthetic elements such as emotions, character moods, and the profound messages intended by the author.
- **Relating to real-life situations:** Students will identify moral and humanistic lessons within the text and apply them to their daily lives.

#### c. Methods for Teaching Literary Text Reading Comprehension

To help third-grade students achieve these objectives, teachers need to apply appropriate teaching methods. Below are some effective approaches:

##### *Guided Step-by-Step Text Reading*

Teachers should guide students through a structured reading process:

- **Reading the text:** First, students should read the text slowly and carefully to grasp its basic content.
- **Detailed analysis:** After reading, the teacher will guide students in analyzing various elements of the text, such as characters, events, character actions, the meaning of situations, and artistic features.
- **Discussion and connection:** Students will discuss the characters, events, or their personal impressions of the work, helping them develop expression and critical thinking skills.

##### *Using Analytical and Interpretative Questions*

Questions play a crucial role in guiding students to engage with the text and develop a deeper understanding. These questions can be categorized as follows:

- **Character-related questions:** "What is this character's personality like?" "Why did the character act this way?"
- **Event-related questions:** "What is the significance of this event in the story?" "Why is this event important?"
- **Message and reflection questions:** "What message is the author trying to convey?" "How do you feel about the character's actions?"

### *Encouraging Group Discussions and Creativity*

Group discussions help students not only understand the text better but also improve their communication and expression skills. Students can discuss story situations, possible solutions to the characters' problems, or the lessons they can learn. Additionally, teachers can encourage creativity by having students continue the story or imagine an alternate ending.

### *Utilizing Visual Teaching Aids*

Visual aids such as images, diagrams, and videos can help students better visualize the story's situations and characters. Using these resources enhances comprehension, aids memory retention, and makes the learning process more engaging for students.

## **2.2 A System of Questions for Practicing and Developing Literary Text Reading Comprehension Skills for 3rd Grade Students**

Content Comprehension	Form Comprehension	Connection, Comparison, and Integration
This type of exercise requires students to identify the main idea, understand the core content, and grasp the author's message in the text.	This type of exercise requires students to find sentences, phrases, images, and details in the text that describe the character's appearance, actions, or dialogue.	This type of exercise encourages students to relate the text to their own experiences.

### **2.2.1 Constructing Content Comprehension Questions**

The system of content comprehension questions helps students accurately grasp information in the text, understand the storyline, and grasp the main meaning that the author wants to convey.

Types of Content Comprehension Questions:

- Basic information recognition questions
- Questions exploring detailed meanings
- Questions analyzing messages and lessons
- Extended questions applying to real-life situations

Considerations When Constructing Content Comprehension Questions:

- Suitable for 3rd-grade students
- Closely aligned with the text content
- Ensuring diversity in question types

- Providing opportunities for students to share their personal thoughts

**Example 1: Lesson:** "Going to School is Fun" (Vietnamese Language Textbook, Grade 3, Volume 1, p.44, "Connecting Knowledge with Life" series) **Question:** What is interesting about the pages the child studies? **Answer:** The pages contain many interesting things: rice fields, fluttering kites, and fascinating folktales.

**Example 2: Lesson:** "The Writing Assignment" (Vietnamese Language Textbook, Grade 3, Volume 1, p.55, "Connecting Knowledge with Life" series) **Question:** What was the essay topic assigned by the teacher? **Answer:** The teacher assigned the topic: "What have you done to help your mother?"

**Example 3: Lesson:** "I Love My Little Sister" (Vietnamese Language Textbook, Grade 3, Volume 1, p.105, "Connecting Knowledge with Life" series) **Question:** What does the first stanza reveal about the child's love for their little sister? **Answer:** The child loves their little sister's smile and the joy of playing with her.

### **2.2.2 Form Comprehension Questions**

Form comprehension questions help 3rd-grade students recognize and appreciate literary techniques, language, imagery, and the author's style in literary texts. This contributes to developing literary appreciation and fostering a love for language.

Types of Form Comprehension Questions:

- Questions about rhetorical devices
- Questions about language and imagery
- Questions about rhythm and text structure
- Questions about the author's style

Considerations When Constructing Form Comprehension Questions:

- Simple, easy to understand, and suitable for 3rd-grade students
- Focus on fundamental artistic elements (comparison, personification, repetition, beautiful imagery)
- Encourage students to observe and perceive naturally
- Flexibility in question phrasing

**Example 1: Lesson:** "The Reunion Day" (Vietnamese Language Textbook, Grade 3, Volume 1, p.10, "Connecting Knowledge with Life" series) **Question:** Find details that show Chi and Son's joy upon reuniting. **Answer:** Details indicating their joy include: Son waving a beautiful kite excitedly at Chi, Chi happily running out, and both enthusiastically sharing their summer experiences.

**Example 2: Lesson:** "My Green Sun" (Vietnamese Language Textbook, Grade 3, Volume 2, p.33, "Connecting Knowledge with Life" series) **Question:** Identify the lines describing the beauty of palm flowers and leaves. **Answer:** The lines are: "Golden flowers like areca flowers / Leaves spread out like sun rays / Just like the sun itself / Beautiful leaves, glowing leaves."

### **2.2.3 Connection, Comparison, and Integration Questions**

These questions help students compare and contrast different texts and situations, create opportunities to connect knowledge from

texts with real-life experiences and other literary works, and encourage imagination, personal opinions, and storytelling skills.

Types of Connection, Comparison, and Integration Questions:

- Questions relating to personal experiences
- Questions comparing different texts
- Questions connecting knowledge to real-life situations
- Questions encouraging imagination and creativity

Considerations When Constructing These Questions:

- Choose questions suitable for 3rd-grade students
- Encourage students to relate to real-life experiences
- Combine visual and experiential learning methods
- Motivate and encourage students

**Example 1: Lesson:** "Visiting My Hometown" (Vietnamese Language Textbook, Grade 3, Volume 1, p.14, "Connecting Knowledge with Life" series) **Question:** Why do you think the child enjoys summer vacation in the countryside? **Answer:** The child enjoys summer vacation in the countryside because they can play with their grandmother, explore the garden with fruit trees, and listen to their grandmother's stories.

**Example 2: Lesson:** "The Sunlit Forest" (Vietnamese Language Textbook, Grade 3, Volume 1, p.19, "Connecting Knowledge with Life" series) **Question:** Do you think the children enjoyed the forest trip with their grandfather? Why? **Answer:** Yes, because they felt regretful when they had to leave.

**Example 3: Lesson:** "Green Forest Festival" (Vietnamese Language Textbook, Grade 3, Volume 2, p.25, "Connecting Knowledge with Life" series) **Question:** Which image in the story do you like the most? Why? **Answer:** I like the image of mushrooms carrying umbrellas to the festival because it is cute and imaginative.

The comprehension question system is designed to be diverse. Objective multiple-choice questions provide answer choices that students must select from, allowing teachers to quickly assess comprehension and help students develop analytical and reasoning skills. However, teachers should note that multiple-choice questions may have limitations in assessing students' true comprehension, as they may select the correct answer without fully understanding the text. Therefore, open-ended questions remain a better method for evaluating reading comprehension, as they require students to respond using their own knowledge and skills, giving teachers a more accurate assessment of their comprehension abilities.

For connection, comparison, and integration questions, teachers should respect students' individual thoughts and emotions, even if they are simple or naïve. Students should not be forced into a single way of understanding or expressing their ideas according to a fixed answer. Instead, teachers should allow students the freedom to express their personal opinions, encouraging them to share their thoughts and activate their prior knowledge and experiences.

**Guidelines for Developing Reading Comprehension Questions for 3rd Graders:**

- Use simple language: Since 3rd-grade students are still developing reading and comprehension skills, questions

should be phrased simply to help them easily understand and respond.

- Make questions clear and specific: Questions should be framed in a way that makes it easy for students to find answers from the text.
- Focus on textual elements: Exercises should highlight textual elements such as characters, plot, time, and setting to help students understand the content and meaning more clearly.
- Diversify question types: Include various types of exercises, such as answering questions, filling in missing words, and matching characters with stories.
- Provide rewards: To encourage reading comprehension development, teachers can offer rewards when students complete exercises well and achieve learning goals.

**Example: The Ant and The Grasshopper**

On a hot summer day with a cool breeze, a green grasshopper was hopping around the field, chirping and singing cheerfully. Suddenly, he saw an ant walking by, struggling to carry a corn kernel back to its nest. The grasshopper called out:

"Hey, Ant! Instead of working so hard, why don't you come here, chat with me, and enjoy playing together?"

The ant replied, "No, I'm very busy. I have to collect food to store for the coming winter."

"Winter is still far away! You worry too much!" the grasshopper mocked.

The ant ignored the grasshopper's words and continued diligently carrying food back to the nest.

Winter eventually arrived, and food became scarce. Since the grasshopper had spent all summer playing instead of gathering food, he was now starving and freezing. Meanwhile, the hardworking ant had plenty of food to last through the cold season.

**Question System:**

**Circle the letter before the correct answer:**

**Question 1:** What did the grasshopper do during the summer? (0.5 points)

- A. He invited his friends to play with him.
- B. He hopped around the field, chirping and singing cheerfully.
- C. He worked hard to gather food for the upcoming winter.

**Question 2:** What did the grasshopper suggest to the ant when they met? (0.5 points)

- A. He invited the ant to chat and have fun with him.
- B. He asked the ant to help him gather food.
- C. He asked the ant to build a shelter to stay warm.

**Question 3:** Why did the ant refuse the grasshopper's invitation? (0.5 points)

- A. Because the ant didn't like playing with the grasshopper.
- B. Because the ant was busy collecting food for the upcoming winter.
- C. Because the ant had to help his parents clean the house.

**Question 4:** Why did the grasshopper mock the ant's words? (0.5 points)

- A. Because he thought the ant was greedy for storing food in the



summer.

B. Because he thought the ant was making fun of him.

C. Because he thought the ant was overly cautious in preparing food so early.

**Question 5:** How did the ant and the grasshopper experience the winter? (1 point)

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**Question 6:** What lesson did you learn from this story? (1 point)

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### 3. Conclusion

Building a system of reading comprehension questions for teaching literary texts to third-grade students is an essential measure to enhance the quality of teaching and promote students' overall development. These questions not only help students grasp the basic content of the text but also develop their analytical thinking, the ability to evaluate characters, events, and the message of the work. Additionally, this system of questions encourages students to cultivate their aesthetic appreciation, connect with real-life experiences, and foster creativity in problem-solving.

When students are trained with open-ended, diverse questions that target skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and emotional expression, they have the opportunity to develop independent thinking and gain confidence in expressing their personal viewpoints. This question system also helps students form a love for literature, enabling them to further nurture this ability in later stages of learning.

By applying an effective approach to designing reading comprehension questions, students not only acquire knowledge in a solid manner but also develop character, ethics, and a sense of civic responsibility for the future. Therefore, implementing and utilizing this system of questions in teaching is a crucial step in improving educational quality while laying a strong foundation for students' comprehensive development.

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