

## THINKING ALOUD WITH ASKING QUESTIONS

Good readers are naturally curious. They ask questions about what happens in the text. Sometimes the answers to their questions are found in the text, and sometimes they are not.

### Teaching Asking Questions in Grades K–2

#### *Smoky Night* by Eve Bunting

##### Overview and Rationale

Inspired by the Los Angeles riots of the early 1990s, this book tells the story of one burning apartment building one night. Although they're neighbors, Daniel's cat and Mrs. Kim's cat don't get along. Nor do Daniel and his mother shop at Mrs. Kim's market. When Daniel's apartment building goes up in flames, all of the neighbors (including the cats) come together in spite of their differences. This visually appealing picture book presents opportunities for rich conversations about race, urban violence, and bridging differences. This book was the recipient of the 1995 Caldecott Medal and earned a Parents' Choice Award; it is also an American Library Association Notable Children's Book and a School Library Journal Best Book of the Year.

Lexile Framework: 360L

Grade-Level Equivalent: 2.5

Guided Reading Level: P

What the Text Says	What I Say
We don't have our lights on though it's almost dark. (p. 1)	<i>Who is the "I" in this story? Where does this story take place? Why are the lights not on?</i>
People are rioting in the streets below. (p. 1)	<i>I know that people riot when they are angry, so this makes me wonder why they are rioting. What are they upset about? How do Mama and the narrator feel watching people riot? I guess they might be a bit scared, since they are watching and trying to hide in their home with no lights on.</i>
"... They don't care anymore what's right and what's wrong." (p. 3)	<i>I wonder what would make people so angry that they would want to smash and destroy.</i>
"... But they look happy, too," I whisper. (p. 3)	<i>Why would people look happy while rioting?</i>
"Are they stealing it?" I ask. Mama nods. (p. 3)	<i>I want to know where the police might be. Why are they not stopping the rioting and stealing?</i>
I've never heard anybody laugh the way they laugh. (p. 5)	<i>I wonder why they are laughing while breaking into a store. Is it because they think this is a game?</i>
... the distant flicker of flames. (p. 5)	<i>The clues of smoke and flames make me understand there is a fire somewhere. Is the fire a part of the rioting? Are people also starting fires?</i>
... go in Mrs. Kim's market even though it's close. (p. 7)	<i>I wonder why the narrator and Mama don't go into this store if it's so close.</i>

What the Text Says	What I Say
... it's better if we buy from our own people. (p. 7)	<i>I think this is an important line, but I wonder what this line means. What does "our own people" mean? Who are the other people?</i>
They pay no attention. (p. 7)	<i>What are the words the narrator can't understand? Are they in another language? Are people mad at Mrs. Kim? Or are they just rioters who are destroying anything in their way?</i>
"... They're moving on." (p. 9)	<i>Finally I know who the narrator is—a boy named Daniel. I'm getting clues that Daniel feels scared—he's hiding behind his Mama and asking if the rioters will come there. I wonder who these rioters are.</i>
The plastic bags are still over them. (p. 9)	<i>The author is giving me clues about the setting of this story—I know there are different kinds of stores here, and Daniel is looking down at the street—maybe from an apartment building. I'm guessing that this story takes place in a city. This makes me wonder if this story really happened. Is the author's purpose to tell about real riots that actually happened?</i>
"We'll sleep together tonight," Mama tells me. (p. 11)	<i>Are there other characters in Daniel's family? Is there anyone besides him and Mama?</i>
Mama is shaking me. (p. 13)	<i>Why is she shaking him? Is it morning and time to wake up?</i>
"Quick, Daniel! Get up!" (p. 13)	<i>I've got a clue that it's not morning—Mama sounds anxious, so I wonder if she's waking Daniel up because something bad is happening.</i>
"Fire! Fire!" (p. 13)	<i>Here's an answer to my question. I think Mama is waking Daniel up in the middle of the night because they need to get away from the fire as fast as they can.</i>
"Put on your shoes. Hurry!" (p. 13)	<i>I wonder if Jasmine is really gone or if Mama just told Daniel that to get him to hurry up.</i>
The smoke makes me cough. (p. 13)	<i>I think I can answer my question about where this takes place—there are stairs and other people, which confirms my guess that this story takes place in an apartment building.</i>
"Hooligans!" (p. 13)	<i>I'm not exactly sure what hooligans are, but I think it's not a nice way to describe someone. Mr. Ramirez must be angry about the fire, and so he's upset with the hooligans who are rioting.</i>
Loco's squawking something awful. (p. 13)	<i>The author is showing me here how everyone is scared—babies are crying, adults are shouting, and animals are squawking. I wonder where everyone will go to be safer.</i>
The fire hasn't reached it yet. (p. 15)	<i>I want to know if the fire fighters will be able to stop the fire before it reaches their window.</i>
"... She'll be long gone." (p. 15)	<i>What does the fireman mean by "long gone"? Does that mean the cat has died, or does it mean she went somewhere safe to escape the fire?</i>
"Everyone follow me." (p. 17)	<i>Who is this lady, and how does she know about the shelter? Is she there to help, or is she one of the neighbors escaping the fire?</i>

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What the Text Says	What I Say
There are empty cartons everywhere. (p. 17)	<i>Who is the "we"? How many people follow the lady, besides Mama and Daniel? Is the glass from smashed windows? Why are there empty cartons? Are they things stolen from stores?</i>
"We're almost at the shelter," the lady tells her. (p. 17)	<i>Is Mrs. Kim going to the shelter? I'm still wondering who this lady is. I'm getting the sense that she's not a rioter, since she seems ready to help. Is she from "our own people" like Mama described before?</i>
We see people from our building. (p. 19)	<i>Does Daniel go to this church? Who set up this shelter? How long will people stay at the shelter? Do they have to pay to stay at the shelter?</i>
What will happen to us? (p. 19)	<i>This question that Daniel asks seems really important, so it makes me ask more questions. Will Daniel and Mama be able to move back to their home? Who started the fire? Will they find Jasmine? How will they clean up from the riots?</i>
But I don't. (p. 19)	<i>It seems important that Daniel doesn't add his thoughts about her cat being mean. I wonder why he stays quiet. Is the author trying to show me that Daniel is trying to be kind to Mrs. Kim, because it's a sad sad night?</i>
She's always making me lie down. (p. 19)	<i>Now I'm wondering how old Daniel is. Is he a teenager? Is he younger than that? I'm thinking he's a bit younger, if his Mama is always wanting him to rest.</i>
I hide under my blanket. (p. 19)	<i>Are all these people Daniel's neighbors? Are they all leaving their homes because of the fire?</i>
"... Thank you for finding her!" (p. 21)	<i>Where did the fire fighter find Jasmine? Will the cats be allowed to stay in the shelter too?</i>
I grin. "No, they weren't!" (p. 23)	<i>I think the author is telling me something important here. I know these cats didn't used to get along, sort of like Daniel and Mrs. Kim didn't really get along. But now, on this sad sad night, they are sticking together. It seems like an important event in the story. It's also the first time I've seen Daniel happy in this story.</i>
"... You'll be able to go back in a day or two." (p. 23)	<i>How badly did the fire damage the building? Will they be able to go back to live forever, or just to collect their things and find a new place to live?</i>
"I thought those two didn't like each other." (p. 25)	<i>I'm just noticing that the author doesn't tell us the name of Mrs. Kim's cat. Is there a reason we don't know its name? Why did the author not give it a name?</i>
I whisper to Mama. (p. 25)	<i>I want to know more about people's reactions to what Daniel says. Why does everyone look at him and get so quiet?</i>
... the way she does when she's nervous. (p. 25)	<i>Why might Mama feel nervous in this instance?</i>
I think that's pretty funny, but nobody laughs. (p. 25)	<i>It's clear that this is the first time Mama introduces herself, but it seems like they've lived in this area for a while. I wonder why they haven't gotten to know each other as neighbors before this.</i>
Maybe she's not going to say anything. (p. 27)	<i>What is Mrs. Kim thinking? How will she react to this invitation?</i>

What the Text Says	What I Say
I reach out and stroke Mrs. Kim's big old orange cat, too. (p. 27)	<i>I'm noticing that Daniel doesn't say "big fat mean cat." Is Daniel changing his mind about the cat after he found out that it stayed with Jasmine in the fire?</i>
"He's purring!" (p. 27)	<i>At first I wasn't sure which cat was purring, but then I remembered that Jasmine is a girl and Daniel says "he's purring." I know cats purr when they feel safe or happy, so I think the author is telling me something important here. Maybe the cats are getting along for the first time, just like these neighbors are learning to meet each other. Is the author trying to tell me about one happy instance on an otherwise sad night?</i>
	<i>After reading this book, I have more unanswered questions. How does the neighborhood recover from the riot? Do Daniel, Mama, and Mrs. Kim have a better relationship after this sad sad night?</i>

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