

# A Model for English Reading Teaching in Senior High School That Points to Higher-Order Thinking —“Questioning the Author” Theory Perspective

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**Abstract:** Higher-order thinking is an important part of the quality of thinking. In recent years, relevant research has also attracted much attention. At present, senior high school English reading teaching still focuses on language input and ignores language output, which leads to the lack of active exploration spirit and migration and innovation ability of students. Students study at a shallow level. Based on this, this study attempts to make use of the research results of narrative theory to explore the teaching mode of senior high school English reading from the perspective of “Questioning the Author” theory, aiming to provide some reference for first-line English teachers in reading teaching.

**Keywords:** Higher-order thinking; Senior high school English; Reading teaching; Questioning the author

## 1. Higher-order thinking calls for reading teaching

The training goal of English courses in senior high schools is to cultivate and develop students' core literacy, which mainly includes linguistic ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability (Ministry of Education, 2020)<sup>[1]</sup>. As an important part of the quality of thinking, advanced thinking includes critical thinking, creativity and problem solving, learning to learn and lifelong learning. It is a necessary thinking ability for talents in the 21st century. And its cultivation and development has attracted the attention of many front-line teachers and scholars.

Language is both the core and shell of thinking (Yang Cheng, 2018)<sup>[2]</sup>. In the process of language learning, the development of language ability is inevitably accompanied by the development of thinking. As the main position of cultivating and developing higher-order thinking, reading teaching can effectively promote the cultivation and development of students' higher-order thinking. However, there is still a phenomenon in English reading teaching in senior high schools that emphasizes language knowledge and skills but neglects the cultivation of students' thinking quality. In this process, students are no longer the constructors of language meaning, but the passive receivers of language knowledge, which makes students' thinking and cognition stay at a shallow level.

Therefore, how to effectively promote the cultivation and development of students' higher-order thinking in reading teaching has aroused the attention of many teachers and scholars. The current domestic research on higher-order thinking mainly focuses on the single thinking ability, such as critical thinking and operational thinking. The relevant researches on English reading mainly focus on the importance of conducting English reading activities based on thematic meaning exploration, and discuss the positive effects of such reading process on students' thinking development (Li Wenning, 2021)<sup>[3]</sup>. The research on the combination of the two is relatively few. Therefore, the related fields have relatively broad research prospects.

## 2. Questioning the author: a new method of reading teaching

So, how to effectively cultivate students' higher-order thinking in reading teaching? Beck & McKeown (2006)<sup>[4]</sup> put forward the concept and method of “Questioning the author” reading teaching. In a study in the 1990s, Beck & McKeown(2002)<sup>[5]</sup> asked elementary school students who had completed at least one unit on the American Revolution to describe what the revolution was about. Their responses are as follows.

“I thought it was the Civil War or the Civil War ?”

“They want different rules and things like that, like one part of the world they want freedom and the other part wants to take over and tell people what to do.”

Studies have shown that this kind of confused student response is common. Even when the answers were close to the goal, students apparently had difficulty understanding their social studies textbooks, which is not surprising since these textbooks often lack explanations and textbooks often lack explanations of the connections between ideas and events (Beck, McKeown, Gromoll, 1989)<sup>[6]</sup>.

“Questioning the Author” theory emphasizes that students should focus their attention on establishing the ideological understanding of the text, and pay attention to the linkage between the whole and the part, rather than thinking of understanding as learning facts and extracting information from the text like traditional infusing teaching. As a strategy that focuses on dialogue exploration and deep thinking, “Questioning the Author” theory provides a new way to explore English reading teaching oriented to higher order thinking.

### **3. Senior high school English reading lesson pointing to higher-order Thinking**

In order to explore how to carry out reading teaching pointing to the cultivation of students higher-order thinking from the perspective of “Questioning the author” theory, the author takes the novel appreciation introduction Unit1 “The Open Window” as an example.

#### ***3.1. Construct understanding and draw out intention : the basis of cultivating higher-order thinking***

Step 1 Title analysis

Prediction:

Q 1: Why does the author use an “The Open Window” as the title?

Q 2: Based on the title and pictures, who are the main and secondary characters in the text?

Design intention: By reading the title of the text and browsing the illustrations, students predicts the content that the article may involve, so that they can form certain reading expectations, build a bridge from known to unknown, and establish a connection between students’ existing experience and new experience (knowledge). They can also establish a meaningful association with knowledge.

Step 2 Background introduction

Author introduction: Hector. Hugh Munro, whose pen name is Saki, is one of the best modern British short story writers. Many of his works mainly focus on the life of the aristocracy and leisure class, exposing the erosive life and hypocrisy of the British upper class. The Open Window is one of the representative ones.

Time background: Before World War I, England was still following the Victorian tradition of excessive etiquette.

Design intention: The introduction of the author and the historical background can not only activate the original knowledge diagram of students, but also clear the obstacles for students to better understand the story and explore the theme to a certain extent.

Step 3 Text reading

Skimming:

Q 3: What are the main personality traits of the two characters

Framton Nuttel: a slightly nervous person who is undergoing a nerve cure. His sister introduced him to visit Mrs. Sappleton in another town to take a rest.

Vera: a very self-possessed young lady.

Q4: What are the personality traits of the third character? And use clues to connect the three main characters.

Mrs. Sappleton: kind, polite but quite absorbed in her own concerns. She isn’t very interested in her visitor, but tries to be kind to him. We can guess that she is also fooled by Vera.

The trail between Framton and Mrs. Sappleton is a calm visit. The clue between Vera and Mrs. Sappleton lies in the reason (see Figure 1).

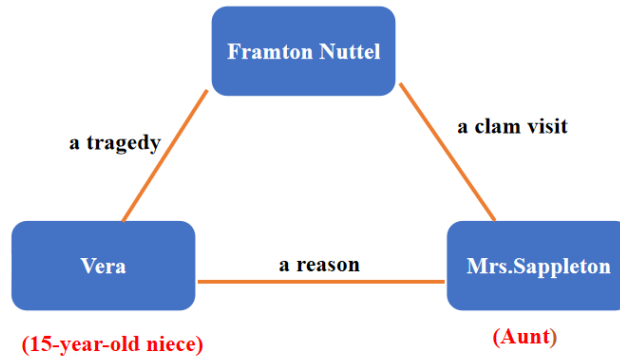


Figure 1: Character relationship clue

Design intention: Skimming and scanning help students quickly grasp the information of the article and understand the personality of the characters. At the same time, teachers guide students to use clues to sort out the relationship between characters and the development of the story, which is conducive to improving students' information integration ability and enabling students to develop logical thinking in information integration.

Scanning:

Before analyzing the two parts of the article, teacher shows the five parts of the novel plot (see Figure 2), briefly explains the basis for dividing the novel into parts 1 and 2, and then analyzes the contents of the two parts one by one.

Q5: What are the parts of the plot?

Beginning, development, climax, ending, and wedge (see Figure 2).

Q6: What is the basis for the classification of novels?

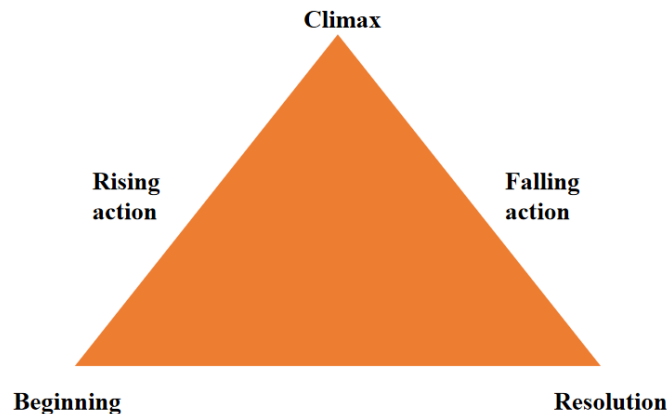


Figure 2: The five elements of a plot

In the first part, ask the students to find out the typical characteristics of Mr. Framton and Miss Vera, and analyze the evidence in the text that can show Vera is calm.

Q3: How can we find Vera is calm?

The word “advice” in the third paragraph shows that Vera, as a 15-year-old girl at that time, was sophisticated enough to give Mr Framton, who was much older than her, exactly the advice he wanted. By reading this, we can see that the author had embedded Vera's fake story to trick Framton. The word “Then” in paragraph 7 suggests that Vera had this reaction immediately after hearing Framton’s words, that Vera did it on purpose, and that she had a plan in mind for how she would respond, which is what

the author foiled.

Q3: What is the cause of Mr. Framton's anxiety?

Everything makes him nervous, the tragedy (see Figure 3) is particular.

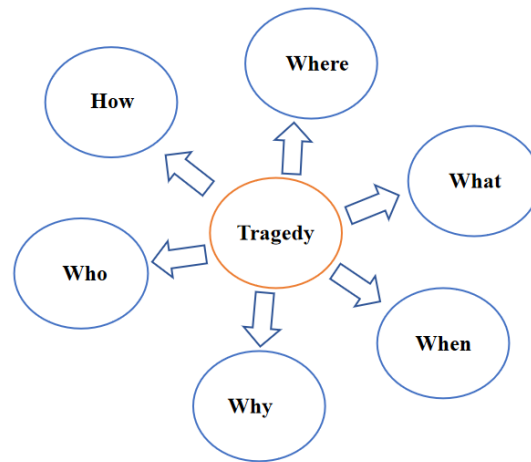


Figure 3: The five elements of a tragedy

Q4: How does the author describe nervousness ?

Para 2: Tell by repetition → accentuate

Para 10: Tell by using adv.

Para 14: Here the girl's voice began to crack. (show by using action)

Para 16: The girl suddenly began to shake and she stopped talking. (visualize)

Design intention: In this part, the teacher asked the students to deeply analyze the character characteristics and the reasons behind the psychological changes of the characters according to the text content, existing cognition and experience, so as to try to figure out the author's real intention of writing. Teaching not only respects students' individual experience, but also helps students to integrate experience and knowledge, which lays a good foundation for cultivating students' higher-order thinking.

### 3.2. Explore the main idea and predict the plot: the key to the formation of higher-order thinking

Step 4 Detail analysis

Q1: Do you think there is a paradox between Vera's clamness and her nervous behavior? Why or why not?

Q2: What does "uh" suggest? Hearing about such a tragedy, why does Nuttel, nervous and restless, respond, "very interesting"?

Student feelings: Mr. Framton is trying to hide the conversation Vera just had with him. Mr Framton was already convinced of Miss Vera's story and had a strange feeling for Sappleton.

Q3: Is Framton's intention to calm his nerves fulfilled?

No. Instead, he was terrified. Paragraphs 24 and 25 describe Framton's fears vividly by describing her actions, such as shivered, ran wildly and so on. The happier Mrs. Sappleton is, the more afraid Mr. Framton is. Eventually Mrs. Sappleton's happiness reaches its peak, which means Framton's fear reaches its peak, so he finally chooses to run away. Along the way, Framton's hopes for a calm visit have been dashed, and for him, instead, the visit has been dreadful, which is also an important contrast and contrast.

Step 5 Discussion

Q 4: What does the author want to tell us?

Exposes the decadent life and hypocrisy of the British upper class.

Q5: What happens when Framton escapes? Outline the plot accordingly.

Design intention: The discussion of the main idea of the article helps students to understand the true intention of the author. In this part, the teacher guides the students to predict the unknown story plot based on the development of the chapter, and gives reasons to support the predicted content. Through group discussion, students can find problems and establish connections according to known plots and characters, make reasonable predictions about plot development, and listen to their peers' plot predictions, which is conducive to cultivating students' sense of cooperation.

### 3.3. Internalize language and exert imagination: externalizing higher-order thinking

Step 6 Continuation writing

On The premise of serving the main theme of the article and combining the character characteristics, "The Open Window story" is rewritten and predicted according to the first prompt sentence given.

"Ham sorry I am late," the aunt apologized to Framton. "I hope that you don't mind the open window. My husband and brothers will be back soon from hunting." \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

In the dim light, three figures were walking across the lawn toward the window. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(cited from Ji Bingting(2021)<sup>[7]</sup>)

Step 7 Peer-evaluation

Exchange of continuing content to do peer evaluation (see Table 1).

Table 1: The checklist of continuation writing

Items	Scores				
The continuation plot covers the five elements of the novel.	1	2	3	4	5
The characters' traits are consistent.	1	2	3	4	5
The continuation of the content is in line with the development of the story.	1	2	3	4	5
Sentence patterns are flexible and varied.	1	2	3	4	5
Tenses are consistent.	1	2	3	4	5

Design intention: Context creation creates conditions for students to apply what they have learned. Guided by the meaning of the theme, students can continue and retain the behavioral style and characteristics of the original text, push the development of the story plot to a climax by creating conflicts, and depict characters and images in a variety of descriptive ways. In this process, students' imagination and creativity can be fully developed. Peer evaluation helps students to recognize their own shortcomings, understand different ideas and insights, and thus develop students' critical thinking.

## 4. Conclusion

As authentic language input, short story text can arouse students' empathy and empathy due to its plot richness, which can stimulate students' output desire and help cultivate students' critical thinking ability in the process of analyzing characters, deducing plots and analyzing themes (Ji Bingting, 2021)<sup>[7]</sup>. Based on the research results of narrative theory and the reading teaching concepts and methods that focus on dialogue exploration and deep thinking about "Questioning the Author", this study finds that the teaching of high school English reading teaching oriented to higher order thinking is mainly divided into three stages. First, students should construct the understanding of the text and speculate on the author's writing intention. Second, students are supposed to explore the main idea of the article and predict the plot. Third, they should internalize text language and give full play to imagination. If teachers can give students detailed guidance in reading teaching, and constantly observe, summarize, reflect and optimize their own teaching behavior, it will be helpful to the cultivation and development of students' higher order thinking ability.

### Acknowledgements

Project supported by the Innovation Fund of Gannan Normal University for Postgraduates in 2022, "A study on strategy of continuation writing rapport from the perspective of Questioning the Author theory" (Grant No. YC2022-s908).

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