

AUTHOR VISIT Q&A PREPARATION SUGGESTIONS

Preparing elementary students for an author visit involves building anticipation, familiarizing them with the author's work, and teaching them to craft thoughtful questions rather than just asking for facts. Key strategies include studying the author's books in advance, practicing "thick" versus "thin" questions, and organizing questions by theme.

Here is a guide to preparing students for a successful, engaging author visit:

1. Pre-Visit Preparation & Research

- **Read and Review:** Read multiple books by the author. Have students create book reviews, posters, or artwork inspired by the books to display.
- **Explore the Author's Background:** Visit the author's website, watch book trailers, and discuss their "story sparks" (where they get ideas).
- **Set the Stage:** Announce the visit at least a month in advance to build excitement. Discuss what an author and illustrator do.

2. Teaching "Good" Questions

Move students beyond shallow or repetitive questions (e.g., "Do you like cats?") by focusing on their interests.

- **"Thick" vs. "Thin" Questions:** Teach students that "thin" questions have one-word answers, while "thick" questions encourage long, detailed, and interesting answers.
 - *Thin:* Do you have a dog?
 - *Thick:* What inspired the main character's personality?
- **Use Question Stems:** Provide prompts such as:
 - "I wonder why you decided to..."
 - "What was the most challenging part of..."
 - "How did you feel when you were..."
- **Model Questioning:** Model how to ask questions by thinking aloud during reading sessions.

3. Classroom Activities for Brainstorming

- **Categorize Questions:** Brainstorm questions as a class and categorize them into topics like "Writing Process," "Characters," and "Inspiration".
- **Practice Interviews:** Have students act as the author and others as the interviewer to practice asking and answering in real-time.

4. Refining and Submitting Questions

- **Submit in Advance:** Consider using a Google Form or shared document to collect and share student questions with the author before the visit.
- **Focus on Interests:** Ask students to identify what *they* are truly interested in knowing about the writing or illustration process.
- **Practice "Think Time":** Teach students to pause (a "think time" of 3-5 seconds) before asking a question *to ensure it's meaningful*.

Suggested Questions for Elementary Students

- **About Writing:** Where do you find your inspiration? Which character do you like the best and why? What is your favorite genre to write and why? How many books have you written? Which age group do you prefer to write for and why? Are you working on a book now, and what's the title?
- **About Process:** How long does it take to write each book? How much do you rewrite? Do you write a little each day or do you write lots at one time followed by none for days? What is your most common writing mistake? How long do you spend researching for a story?
- **Personal Connection:** What was your favorite subject in school? What hobbies do you like and do they appear in your writing? Which authors do you most admire and why? What is it about your favorite childhood book and why?
- **Other:** Do you read your reviews – do negative reviews upset you? What is your favorite part of being a writer? Which is your favorite book that you have written and why? What were you like as a kid? If you weren't a writer, what would your job be? Do you have lots of author friends? How old were you when you published your first book? Do you think you will continue to write all your life? Is it

possible to write a character of a different background or with a disability if you have not experienced that yourself?

5. Day-of-Visit Tips

- **Practice Etiquette:** Remind students to listen actively and raise their hands.
- **Use Visuals:** If the author has a [PowerPoint](#) or slideshow, encourage students to base questions on the visuals.

For more structured activities, consider using resources like the [18 Activities to Prepare Your Students resource](#).