

## What is up/down/both/why?

Up/down/both/why is short hand for a set of questions that readers can use to: 1) describe their own emotional responses and interpretations of a text  
2) interpret an author's expectations about how a reader might respond to a text

## When are some good times to use up/down/both/why?

	How do I respond? Up/down/both/why	How might the author expect me to respond? Up/down/both/why?	Sentence stems
Details that <b>stand out</b> as positive or negative, or both	“That moment in <i>Beloved</i> when she says “They took my milk!” was really <b>negative</b> ↓ to me. <b>Why? What associations does this create for me?</b> I associate milk here with sustenance and life for a baby, and then taking it is so ↓ oppressive and degrading. But I also have to say that when the line gets repeated like three times, I thought it was a little overdone.”	“Yes, I think the author was going for ↓ sadness and maybe anger here. The associations in the book are definitely about mother trying to nurture her children, and white people taking that away is the ultimate inhumanity. I don't think Morrison was going for overdone, though.”	The line “ <u>They took my milk</u> ” creates a <u>negative</u> connotation, because <u>life, nourishment, and family survival are being taken away in a racist and inhuman way.</u>
Exploring <b>confusing</b> authorial choices	“What's up with this ‘red heart’ in <i>Beloved</i> ? I have no idea. OK: in this context, does this image seem ↑, ↓, or both?” To me: <b>both</b> . <b>Why? What associations</b> ? First, I associate hearts with life and love ↑. But on the other hand, it's like Paul D. is out of control, so associations = lack of control, intensity.”	“I'm not sure; but I think the author expects me to respond more ↓ . Because even though I associate hearts with love, this is not a loving scene, and <i>Beloved</i> IS a ghost, and Paul D. is desperate, so ↓ - desperation, fear of living? Or love?”	An image like the “red heart” is often associated with <u>life and love</u> , but in this text the image suggests <u>desperation and maybe fear of life and love</u> , because ____ .
<b>Patterns:</b>	“In <i>Beloved</i> , lots of imagery of water – <i>Beloved</i> comes out of the water – that's <b>both</b> ↑ <b>and</b> ↓ - there are <b>associations</b> with ↑ birth, but at the same time, haunting ↓. Denver is born in the water ↑, which I see as moving toward freedom, but it's such a painful birth.”	“I think Morrison would expect a reader to be impressed at Sethe's strength in all these water situations, but also see the pain and sadness. At least, she would expect those responses from someone who understood the horror of slavery.”	Morrison presents a <u>motif of water and liquid</u> , which throughout seems connected to <u>birth, but not entirely happy births. These births are painful and even haunting.</u> For example, ____
Examining the <b>end</b> of a text	“I find the ending of “ <i>Beloved</i> both ↑ <b>and</b> ↓. <b>Why? What associations?</b> The last lines: “You your best thing.” “Me? Me?” seem hopeful ↑to me, because those last words sound like she's opening her heart to herself, but also ↓sad that she can't see her own value (because the whole idea of value has been stolen from her).”	“I think I'm expected to feel <b>saddened</b> ↓about the end, as I said before, but maybe Morrison is also suggesting hope↑? She could have had Sethe die at the end, or Paul D not come back. The question mark seems ↑, because it suggests that there are still answers to seek. So I <b>associate</b> this ending with continuation of life --and story.”	By choosing to end this text with a <u>question mark</u> , the author suggests that <u>this story is not over yet, which allows for at least a little hope amidst all this sadness.</u>
Interpreting <b>worldviews (themes)</b> of text	My <b>associations</b> so far: ↓ slavery, ↓ theft of humanity, being haunted ↓ by... love or life? The pain of birth? Maybe the pain of birth when you're not free? What it means to understand your “value” as a person when you've been “valued” by another? How are these themes connected? What are my judgments about these themes?	“Overall, am I expected to feel more optimistic or pessimistic about the world created in ‘House on Mango Street’? How do I know? Do I embrace, question, or resist this author's more pessimistic/ optimistic of the world? Why?”	I would like to think that <u>once a person has freed themselves from slavery, they can begin to celebrate themselves.</u> But in the world of “ <i>Beloved</i> ,” <u>Morrison</u> creates a world in which <u>those who have been enslaved cannot do so. Slavery has corrupted the whole idea of self-worth.</u>

**Q: Is up/down/both the same as “agree/disagree”?**

A: No. *Though they are related, up/down/why is not the same as “agree/disagree.”* For example, many readers do not **agree** with what Sethe did to her daughter, but they **sympathize** with her, or they see the text as **portraying her sympathetically**. (But of course, disagreeing with Sethe plays into how much you sympathize with her, or how much you are moved by the author’s portrayal.)

Instead, up/down/both/why is a way to think about your interpretation of: moods created in you and tones created by text.

**Q: When should I use up/down/both/why?**

A: When you have questions like, “Why that detail?” “Why that name?” “Why all this repetition of...?” “What could this mean?” When you are confused about what a text is doing, up/down/both/why is a good jumping-off point

When you would like a guide to interpretively rich parts of a text and rich literary devices, use up/down/why as you read, looking for parts of the text that seem especially positive, negative, or both.

When you need help moving from the concrete to the abstract

**Q: I could basically just keep asking up/down/why forever. So when do I stop asking “why”?**

A: Up/down/both/why is useful in helping readers move from concrete descriptions to abstract concepts and judgments. It helps them articulate ideas that they might think are obvious. Here is an example from a classroom:

- Student 1: The end of “Still I Rise” no doubt it’s positive to me. Why? Because at the end she repeats, “Still I rise.”
- Teacher: It did the same for me. Gave me chills. So let’s push a bit, moving to the abstraction. Why are those words positive?
- Student 1: Because it’s going, you know, going up. Upwards.
- Teacher: Okay – now some people might say that rising up is just an action. So how can you explain to them that this action actually has positive connotations?
- Student 1: Because it’s like, rising is positive because it’s like **doing better**, or **succeeding**.
- Student 2: Or like if you rise above something you have like **conquered** it.

When readers have moved from describing action and to articulating ideas, effects, or views about the world, you can stop pushing for why.