

Is There Another Way of Understanding That?

What this protocol does: This protocol helps students learn to build interpretations together through Wondering and Focusing. It encourages students to consider multiple ways of understanding the same text. In so doing, this protocol reinforces a core PoP stance about our text-partners that *“The text may have multiple meanings and may need my peers and me (as well as my teachers) to bring them to light.”* By structuring students to look for multiple possibilities of meaning that can be supported with textual evidence, the protocol prevents students from rushing to judgment about a text’s meaning and instead reinforces a habit of wondering and seeking to understand. It also supports the idea that interpretations are grounded in the text and that the same textual detail can lead to different ways of understanding.

What students need: Students will need access to the text, the protocol, and would benefit from a template to help structure their work. Students can use their own templates to fill in individually or they can collaborate on a Google doc. Students will need some time alone to read the text and identify 2-3 details that stand out to them and come ready to share these with their havruta partner(s).

Notes for the teacher: This protocol is based on the assumption that the text that students are exploring is meaty enough to support multiple interpretations. A pitfall of this protocol is asking students to explore multiple interpretations when there is not enough detail in the text or accompanying resources to support their interpretations. In this case, students may develop ideas that are not textually grounded. To avoid this difficulty, you may need to wait until students have studied enough text so that there is enough content to support multiple interpretations. For younger students, this may mean directing students to look back over select parts of the texts that they have already studied. *Note:* When students have generated multiple interpretations, it’s an opportunity to help them consider the significance of their different interpretations and link their thinking to the larger corpus of existing commentaries.

Protocol: Is There Another Way of Understanding That?

INDIVIDUALLY

- 1 Read (or re-read) the given text.
- 2 Write down or note 2-3 words or phrases that stand out to you from the text. Come to your havruta ready to share these.

IN HAVRUTA

- 1 **GREET YOUR PARTNER(S)** Take a couple of minutes to say hello and catch up socially.
- 2 **SHARING NOTICINGS AND LOOKING FOR EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT MULTIPLE INTERPRETATIONS**
 - a Take turns sharing what you noticed (the words or phrases) with your havruta partner according to the following steps:
 - b Partner A should read one of the words/phrases you wrote down (or noticed) out loud and point them out to your havruta.

- c** ARTICULATE why this detail stood out to you--what do you think it could mean? Pose any questions it might raise for you. Your partner (Partner B) should practice LISTENING to help you formulate your ideas and to understand what you are saying.
 - d** *What's the evidence?* Your havruta (Partner B) should help you find another detail in the text to further support your idea.
 - e** *"Is there another way to understand that?"* Together with your havruta, come up with an alternate interpretation or idea that can also be supported by evidence in the text.
- 3 SWITCH ROLES AND REPEAT** all the steps in #2.
- 4 REFLECTION** Share one appreciation you have for working with one another.

Template Example:

The following page is a template that you can print out to give to students when working with the *Is There Another Way of Understanding That?* protocol.



Is There Another Way of Understanding That?

Havruta Names: _____

Part I: Alone (fill in your details and fill in your partner's when you meet):

Partner A's words or phrases from the text:

Partner B's words or phrases from the text:

Part II: Together: Work with Partner A's detail

A. Why I noticed this and my idea about what this means:

B. "What's the evidence?" Together identify details in the text to support your idea:

C. "Is there another way of understanding that?" Write your second interpretation here:

D. "What's the evidence?" Find other details in the text to support this idea:

Part III: Together: Work with Partner B's detail

A. Why I noticed this and my idea about what this means:

B. "What's the evidence?" Together identify details in the text to support your idea:

C. "Is there another way of understanding that?" Write your second interpretation here:

D. "What's the evidence?" Find other details in the text to support this idea:

Part IV. Share one appreciation you each have for working with one another.

