World behind the Text

- Who authored, edited and/or translated this text? Is there more than one author? Is it the work of an individual or a community? Is it possible to establish authorship at all? Does the author draw on other texts in creating this one?
- When was it written?
- What can we learn about the cultural world of the time in which the text was created (Culturally, Politically, Socially, Personally)?
- What can we learn about the community for whom this text was originally created (Culturally, Politically, Socially, Personally)?
- What is happening at this time in history in the community for which the text was written? Where is it on the timeline of Revelation History?
- Why was the text created?
- Why has the author chosen specific words or phrases?
- What messages might the text have conveyed to its original audience?

Notes on World behind the Text.

World of the Text

- Who are the characters in the text?
- What happens in this text?
- Where does the story take place (Where in the plot are these verses coming from? How do they relate to the big picture? Look to the meaning and theme of the book because it should bleed into every verse)?
- What text features are in the text (e.g. imagery, metaphor, simile, repetition, contrast, symbol, vocabulary, voice, treatment of sources, grammar and/or style)?
- What is the most memorable or central scene in this text? Why is this scene central?
- What key words or phrases, or interesting, new or difficult ideas need further exploration? What Biblical tools can be used to find this information (e.g. Biblical commentaries, Biblical dictionaries, Biblical atlases, annotated Bibles, online Bible search engines)?
- What evidence can we find in the text of the historical, social, cultural, political and religious life of the time?
- Who speaks and who is silenced?
- Can the original language in which the text was written help with understanding the text? Do other English translations give a clue to this? Can concordances and online homilies on the text help?
- Is there a particular structure to this text? Why was it structured in this way?
- How do different parts of the text relate to each other?
- What clues or text features help the reader to identify the type of text (e.g. greeting in a letter; sense of touch in a healing miracle; evocative language in a psalm)?
- Why has the author chosen this style or form of writing to convey the message?
- What comes before and after this text?
- Is the text attested to in other gospels or books of the Bible?
- Is this text used for different purposes in other books of the Bible?
- Is this text drawn from or connected to texts in other books of the Bible?
- Are there any theological issues or ideas in this passage?

Notes on World of the Text.

World in Front of the Text

- What I could be the readers response to this passage? What might this passage be saying to people in our modern culture?
- Is there anything in this text that might be open to challenge or questioning by a modern reader?
- What factors make it possible for modern readers to bring to this text interpretations not intended by the author?
- How might gender, culture or life experience, including experiences with religion or religious groups, affect the way a modern reader might respond to the text? How can the experience of the reader add to the richness of interpretation?
- What are some messages from or about God that a modern believer can take from this text in their time and place?
- What does this mean for the Church today?
- How might the text be meaningful to you today? What does this passage teach me about God? What does this passage teach me about human beings (or myself)? What does this passage teach me about the need for and the coming of a Saviour?

Notes on World in Front of the Text.