# "Wh"-Questions

#### [(Aux) Verb (Neg) CP-S]

bebáa

interrogative pronoun

The subject of the lesson is Wh-questions (a very English term that owes its form to the fact that most English question words start with "wh"), questions that cannot be answered with "yes" or "no." They are very simply formed in Láadan, but look so different from their English counterparts that they are likely to be awkward for English speakers at first.

In the interrogative pronoun, the interrogative "báa" is attached to the pronoun "be." Since "bebáa" (who/what) is a pronoun, it also has plural forms "bebáazh" (who/what, few/several) and "bebáan" (who/what, many). These plural forms will be used less often than the singular—only when the questioner has reason to expect that more than one thing will satisfy her query. Plurality in an interrogative pronoun may seem foreign to English speakers, but it does provide additional opportunities to mark the plural—such opportunities being relatively rare in Láadan.

Additionally, if the speaker wishes to limit her query to persons or animals of only one gender, it is perfectly feasible to incorporate one of the gender suffixes: bebáahizh (who/what, single, female); bebáahid (who/what, single, male); bebáazhizh (who/what, few/several, all female); bebáazhid (who/what, few/several, all male); bebáanizh (who/what, many, all female); bebáanid (who/what, many, all male). Of course, the plural gendered forms are limiting the entire group that would answer the question to the gender specified; if the speaker wished to include both genders, she would not use a gender suffix to limit her question.

Formally, all questions begin with "Báa." Less formally, since we have a form of the word "báa" embedded in the interrogative pronoun, "bebáa," there can be no confusion that it's a question being posed; therefore, in casual speech and writing we can omit the initial "Báa."

# **Examples**

Bíi thal shon wa.
Peace is good.
Báa thal shon?
Is peace good?
Báa thal bebáa?
Who/what is good?
Thal bebáa?
Who's/what's good?

Bíi néde om with wáa.
The person wants to teach.
Báa néde om with?
Does the person want to teach?
Báa néde om bebáa?
Who/what wants to teach?
Néde om bebáa?

Who/what wants to teach?

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Bíi meháya withizh wa.
   The women are beautiful.
Báa meháya withizh?
   Are the women beautiful?
Báa meháya bebáazh?
   Who/what (few/several) are beautiful?
Meháya bebáazh?
Who're/what're (few/several) beautiful?
Báa meháya bebáan?
   Who/what (many) are beautiful?
Meháya bebáan?
   Who're/what're (many) beautiful?
Bíi eril u ra áath wi.
   The door clearly was not open.
Báa eril u ra áath?
   Wasn't the door open?
Báa eril u ra bebáa?
   What/who wasn't open?
Eril u ra bebáa?
   Who/what wasn't open?
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### Vocabulary

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aba
   to be fragrant
bo
   mountain
dan
   language
dim
   container
dizh
   kettle
esh
   boat
im
   to travel
léli
   to be yellow
mahina
   flower
othel
   to be blessed
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Exercises
Translate the following into English.
1 Báa ril othel bebáa?
2 Báa aril mehamedara bebáan?
3 Báa eríli dudoth ra bebáa?
4 Báa eril medi i menahada bebáazh?
5 Báa rilrili nime míi bebáa?
6 Báa aril medush mehal bebáan? E:
Transform the following into "Wh"-questions. Translate into English before and after the transformation.
7 Bíi aril dathim shoná wo.  E: L:
8 Bé eril balin déelahá wa.  E: L:
9 Bíi ril merahíya ra dim wáa.  E: L: F:
10 Bíi híya i shane edemid wi.  E: L: F:
11 Bíi eril héeya lawida amedarahá wáa. E: L:
E:
L: E:

Did the word "amedarahá" in #11 give you any trouble? From "amedara" (to dance) and "-á" (doer/maker), it means "dancer." One note: "aá" is an allowed vowel combination in Láadan within a word or word-part; in fact we've seen it in the Evidence word "waá." However, in this case, the "a" comes from "amedara" (dance) and the "á" from "-á" (DOER)—separate words/word-parts—so we do have to separate them with an "h."

It's perfectly understandable if the word "belidá" in #12 was difficult; it's not the most transparent formation. "Belidá" comes from "belid" (house) and "-á" (doer/maker); a "maker of houses" is a "carpenter."

Translate the following questions into Láadan. Then answer each question in Láadan with the supplied word and translate your answer into English.

13 What may be extremely hot?  kettle  L:
L:
E:
14 What (few/several) are beautiful(place)? mountain L:
L:
L: E: 
15 What (many) aren't alien? languages L:
L:
L
16 What is yellow and fragrant? flower L:
E:
17 Who intended to be good? grandparent L:
L;
E:
18 Who (few/several) promised to remember? peace-scientist L:
L:
E:

In #18, we see a verb, "dom" (to remember), that we've only ever seen as the first element of a Verb Complex (what in English we've been taught to call a "helping verb") used as the second verb (as the main verb in the sentence). It's important to remember that all verbs—even those we're used to seeing as "helping verbs"—can be used in this way.

#### **Answers**

1	Who/what is blessed?
2	Who (many) will dance?
3	Who, long ago, didn't try to follow?
4	Who (few/several) spoke and began to laugh?
5	Who might be willing to be amazed?
6	Who (many) will have to work?
7	I suppose the peacemaker will needlework. Báa aril dathim shoná? Will the peacemaker needlework?
8	Upon my oath, the gardener was old. Báa eril balin déelahá? Was the gardener old?
9	I understand the containers are not large.  Báa ril merahíya ra dim?  Aren't the containers large?
10	A mouse is small and furry, of course. Báa híya i shane bebáa? What is small and furry?
11	The dancer was afraid to be pregnant, I understand.  Báa eril héeya lawida amedarahá?  Was the dancer afraid to be pregnant?
12	I promise the carpenters will be able to
	sing. Báa aril methad melalom belidá? Will the carpenters be able to sing?
13	Báa rilrili owahul bebáa? Bíi rilrili owahul dizh wo. I suppose the kettle may be extremely hot.
14	Báa ril mehóya bebáazh? Bíi ril mehóya bo wa. The mountains are beautiful(place).
15	Báa ril menée ra bebáan? Bíi ril menée ra dan wáa. I understand the languages are not alien.

16
Báa aril léli i aba bebáa?
Bíi aril léli i aba mahina wi.
A flower is yellow and fragrant, clearly.

Báa eril nédeshub thal bebáa?
Bíi eril nédeshub thal hothul wáa.
I understand the grandparent intended to be good.

18
Báa eril dibé dom bebáa?
Bíi eril dibé dom eshoná wa.
The peace-scientist promised to remember.