

Discussion in the Classroom: A Powerful Tool for Comprehension

**Illinois Reading
Council
Speaker's Bureau**

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Goals for Session

- **Support** and **strengthen** rich student discussion
- **Empower students** to create meaning and deepen their learning

Discussion

CCR Anchor Standards

Speaking & Listening - Comprehension & Collaboration

- 1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.*
- 2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.*

Think-Write-Pair-Share

A brainstorming strategy that provides “think time”

1. Pose a question or pick a topic.
 2. Think about what you know and record it.
 3. Pair with a partner to gain more information.
 4. Share with the whole group.
- *Allows students time to verify and add to first thoughts.*
 - *Works well with brainstorming.*
 - *Students can ask the initial question.*
 - *Allows students to jot down their thoughts and increases participation in discussion*

Benefits

Student-led small group discussions provide a means for “developing understanding of complex topics and can facilitate writing about these ideas. Sweigart, 1991

Discussion promotes deeper understanding, leads to higher-level thinking and problem solving, and improves communications skills. Gambrell, 1996

Students achieve better in classrooms where the discussion is dialogic. Wilkinson & Sons, 2011

3b: Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques

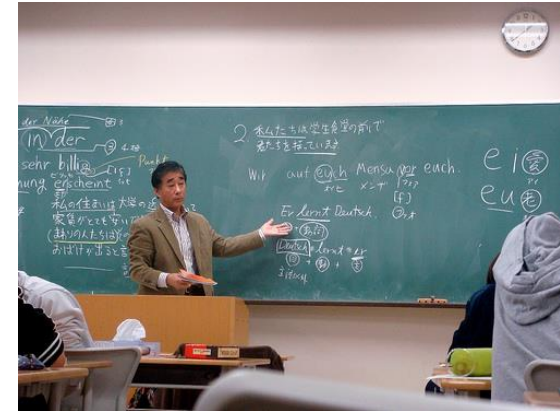
Quality of **questions/prompts**

Discussion techniques

Student **participation**

Monologic vs Dialogic Classrooms

ONE WAY



Maintain control of the talk

VS



TWO WAY

Exploration and collaborative talk

Dialogic Classroom

- **Negotiate meaning from other's perspectives**
- **Improves comprehension and critical thinking skills**
- **Symmetrical rather than asymmetrical power relationship**
- **Students value their conversations**
- **Promotes collaborative inquiry**
- **Allows for uncertainty which enables dialogue.**

Metacognition

Thinking about your own thinking

1. Knowing if I understand.
2. Knowing what to do if I don't.

Are you hearing voices as you read?

RECITING VOICE – The voice a reader hears when he/she is only reciting the words and not drawing meaning from the text.

CONVERSATION VOICE – The voice that has a conversation with the text. It represents the reader's thinking as she/he talks back to the text in an interactive way.

- **Interacting Voice** – asks questions, make connections, identifies confusions, agrees and disagrees with ideas.
- **Distracting Voice** – pulls the reader away from the meaning of the text. The reader begins to think about something else.

Good discussions require "seeds" to grow.

Mummies and Pyramids

The Egyptians built the largest buildings in the ancient world. They built them of stone. These buildings were not for living people. They were tombs (TOOMS) for dead pharaohs. They were built on the west side of the Nile River.

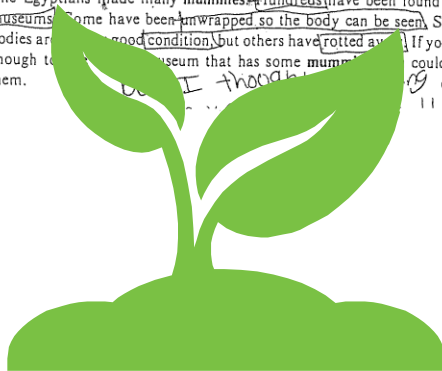
These tombs were called pyramids (PEER-ah-mids) because of their shape. They were very big and the Egyptians built many of them. These pyramids are still standing today. The oldest one is over four thousand years old. The largest is over five hundred feet tall. That is as tall as a seventy-story building. Deep inside each pyramid there is a small room in which a pharaoh was buried. In most pyramids, this room has been found. In the largest pyramid, archeologists are not sure they have found the burial room. No body was ever found there. Perhaps some lucky archeologist will make another great find some day and discover the room where the body was buried.

The pyramids were built by the Egyptian pharaohs. They probably used slaves to do the work. Some archeologists think that the biggest pyramid took over twenty years to build. It was to be a great pharaoh's tomb.

The Egyptians believed that after a person died his spirit still lived. It wandered about the land. When it was tired, the spirit needed a resting place. The Egyptians believed that the spirit returned to its dead body to rest. For that reason, they tried to preserve (pree-ZERV) the body. To preserve the body, the Egyptians made it into a mummy (MUM-ee).

Mummies were made by wrapping a dead body in long strips of cloth. The cloth was coated with a kind of tar. Before the body was wrapped in the cloth, it was cut open and all the insides were removed. They were put into jars. Even the brains were removed by putting a hooked wire through the nose. When the wire was turned, it pulled the brains out through the nose. The brains were put into a jar. When the body was finally wrapped in cloth, it was just an empty shell. Sometimes a body was stuffed with spices before it was wrapped. The wrapped body was called a mummy.

The Egyptians made many mummies. Hundreds have been found and are in museums. Some have been unwrapped so the body can be seen. Some of the bodies are in very good condition, but others have rotted away. If you are lucky enough to live near a museum that has some mummies, you could go to see them.



♀ = people
○ = comment.



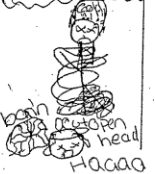
This one
This was really Cool

stone

Was the first thing they open in still called a tomb?

Where are the slaves buried at?

Is that why the body looked all brain?



Big days
A long time ago tombs were in pyramids.
The pyramids were very tall the biggest pyramids is over 500 ft tall. The oldest one is over 4000 years old.
Archeologists will make find a body some day.

The used slaves to build the pyramids?

The Egyptians said that after a person dies that they become a mummy.

mummies were not they eat everything but the bones and wrapped them up.

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PETS

CONNECTION



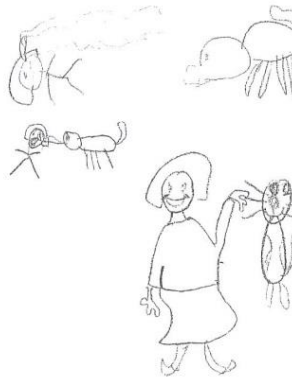
This is like.....

play with you.

VISUALIZATION



What I see in my mind.



Pets have special jobs, too.

They make you feel happy when you are sad.

They make you laugh.

When you have a pet, you are never lonely.

A pet's job is to be your friend.

That's one job that isn't hard at all.

PETS

CONNECTION



This is like.....

My mom gave me a job at the house. My family cheers me up all the time. My mom makes me feel lonely at night. I had a pet. I have lots of friends. Some things aren't hard at all to me, everywhere.

VISUALIZATION



What I see in my mind.



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Double Entry Journals

What I Read

What I Visualized

What I Read

What I Inferred

Conclusion

Support

What 's Important

What's Interesting

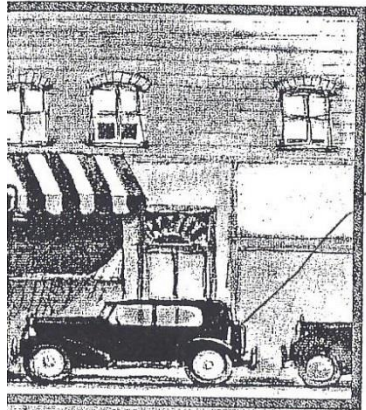
Text Structure

Examples from the
Text

Teammates^{list}

By Peter Golenbock

I wonder!
I think!
I feel!



Once upon a time in America, when automobiles were black and looked like tanks and laundry was white and hung on clotheslines to dry, there were two wonderful baseball leagues that no longer exist. They were called the Negro Leagues.

The Negro Leagues had extraordinary players, and adoring fans came to see them wherever they played. They were heroes, but players in the Negro Leagues didn't make much money and their lives on the road were hard.

Laws against segregation didn't exist in the 1940s. In many places in this country, black people were not allowed to go to the same schools and churches as white people. They couldn't sit in the front of a bus or trolley car. They couldn't drink from the same drinking fountains that white people drank from.

Back then, many hotels didn't rent rooms to black people, so the Negro League players slept in their cars. Many towns had no restaurants that would serve them, so they often had to eat meals that they could buy and carry with them.

personal stuff

3

Respond Here

- Teammates make me feel like I'm with my friends. *
- It look like long ago
- A person that lives by me hangs laundry
- why where the heroes
- why do the not exist
- That's mean
- extraordinary what mean
- It's not far
- bag lunch
- Law against segregation didn't exist in the 1940s

Annotation Codes

SHARP

S = makes me Sad

H = makes me Happy

A = Anticipates something

R = Reminds me of something

P = sees a Problem

LEARN

L = Learned new information

E = Explored the cause & effect

A = Arrived at a conclusion

R = Recognized different
perspectives

N = Noticed important facts

Code for Understanding

***** = Interesting

BK = background knowledge

? = question

C = confused

L = learned something new

W = wondering what a word means

S = surprising information

Sticky-Note Discussions

Effective way to engage students with text as they read

- ❖ Literature groups
- ❖ Mathematics word problems
- ❖ Challenging informational text

Local Government

The city or town you live in has a government. The leader in most communities is called a **mayor** or a town manager. A small group of people called the **city council** helps the mayor run the local government. Communities hold elections to vote for these leaders.

There are many other people in local government who help run your city or town. In some communities the mayor picks the leaders to help. In other places, these leaders are elected. Who are the leaders in your local government?



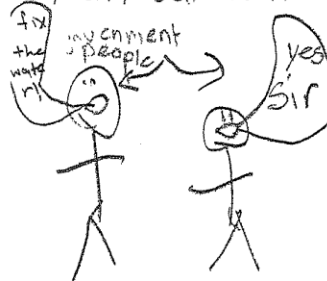
A government
makes
LAWS.



Your state
has a
governor.



government people
run our town



the community
+ leaders
called a mayor



Election
is a time
when
people vote



governor
help
people.



React to the Fact

Identify facts on sticky notes

“React to the Fact” with questions,
opinions, feeling, connections

Share facts with group

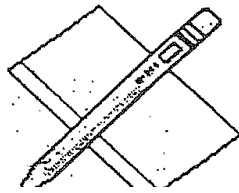
Take notes on group member’s facts and
reactions

React to the Fact (cont.)

Students independently **record** most interesting or controversial facts

Write a personal reaction to expand their own understanding.

Fact	Pg #	Group Reaction/Fact	Personal Reaction



Journaling and Discussion Starters

I think

I can't really understand.....

If I were _____ in this story, I would or would not have.....

I was surprised.....

I know the feeling.....

I like/did not like the way.....

One thing I noticed about the author's writing is

I really admired _____ because

The setting reminds me of

The line, " _____ " reminds me of

The character, _____, reminds me of myself when

I was confused when

I was wondering.....

I agree/disagree.....

I was disappointed when

I discovered.....



Don't stop there!!!

Reflection

For students to become effective metacognitive learners, they must have time during and after a learning experience to evaluate their learning.

L. Baker, 2008

Reflect as a Learner

Teacher Directed:

How did you take responsibility in your group today?

What did you enjoy about discussing (content) with your partner or group this week?

Student Directed:

How did discussion help me understand the content of today's lesson?

How was I actively engaged?

Discussion Starters

Regarding what you have experienced so far,
turn to a neighbor and . . .

1. Summarize what you heard, read, or saw

I learned that...

2. Ask a question about the material

I wonder...

Why or why not...

3. Tell something you found interesting or surprising

I was surprised that...

It is interesting that...

4. Other: anything else related to the topic

This reminds me of...

Discussion

An active, constructive, and social process for learning

Discretionary Discussion

Teacher +1

Minimal participation for majority

VS.

Instructional Conversations

Students initiate own inquiries and respond to one another, and/or mandated participation.

Open-Ended Questions...

- are those that have **no** right or wrong answer.
- **promote** student **engagement**.
- draw on **students own thoughts**, knowledge, skills, experiences, and feelings.

“In a classroom rich with open-ended questioning, children talk more than the teacher. This is true active learning.”

“Open-Ended Questions: Stretching Children’s Academic and Social Learning” from The Power of Our Words by Paula Denton, EdD (Northeast Foundation for Children, 2007)

Ten open-ended questions that facilitate good discussions

1. "Which of the five points we just discussed most applies to you? Why?"
2. "What do you think about that?"
3. "How does this section affect you?"
4. "What did you learn from this study?"
5. "What is one box you checked? Why?"
6. "Which of these points do you need to work on?"
7. "How does the memory verse relate to the chapter and to your life?"
8. "Which point in this chapter spoke to you the most?"
9. "Does anyone disagree with a point in this chapter? If so, why?"
10. "What was your favorite part about this lesson? Why?"

Question Starters & Frames for Higher-Level Questions

Recall: *who, what, list, repeat, identify, name, when, define*

What is _____ ?

Define _____ .

Identify the _____ .

Who did _____ ?

Analysis: *summarize, categorize, divide, separate*

What is the main idea of _____ ?

List the main events of _____ .

What are the parts of a _____ ?

What is the topic of _____ ?

Comparison: *differentiate, compare, contrast*

Compare _____ X _____ to _____ Y _____. In what ways are they similar?

How does _____ X _____ differ from _____ Y _____ ?

Inference: *predict, conclude, what if, anticipate, infer*

What do you think will happen next in _____ ?

What do you conclude about _____ ?

Predict what _____ will do.

What would happen if _____ ?

Evaluation: *judge, defend, prove, assess, evaluate*

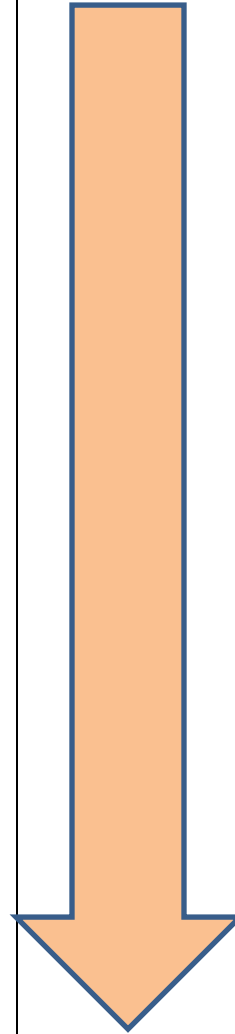
What is your opinion of _____ ?

What is the best solution to the problem of _____ ?

Evaluate the writing of _____ .

Defend your opinion about _____ .

convergent



Question Frames

divergent

cognitive growth...

*...occurs more likely when one is **required to explain, elaborate, or defend one's position** to others as well as to oneself; striving for an explanation often makes a learner **integrate and elaborate** knowledge in new ways.*

L. Vygotsky

Small-Group Discussion Structures

- Book Clubs
- Collaborative Reasoning
- Instructional Conversations
- Literature Circles
- Inquiry Circles
- Socratic Seminars

Small-Group Discussion Activities

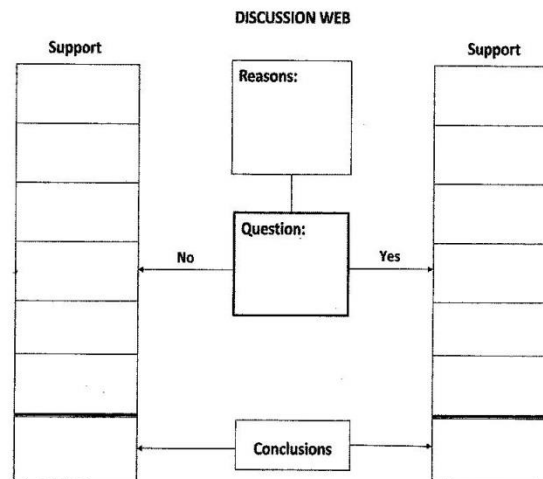
- Think-Write-Pair Share
- Text Annotation
- Turn-To-Your-Partner
- Journaling
- Sticky Notes
- React-To-The-Fact
- Three-Minute Pause
- Discussion Web

Three-Minute Pause

- Meet in groups of 3-5.
- Define or summarize key points.
- Add own thoughts
- Ask clarifying questions.

Discussion Web

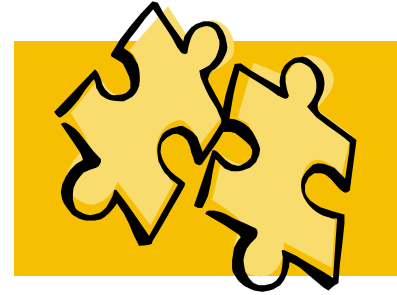
- Promotes understanding of different points of view
- Actively involves all students
- Can extend into opinion/argumentative writing



Discussion Web

- Write question in middle of grid
- Discuss and record reasons for selecting the topic
- Brainstorm opposing arguments
- Develop conclusions on both sides
- Students work in pairs and decide which conclusion seems more valid

Pattern Puzzle



Help students . . .

- Understand patterns and structures.
- Sequence events or process steps.
- Categorize or group information.
- Recognize main ideas and details (when combined with Powers).

In more effective schools, discussion was far more prevalent than recitation. In effective schools students asked more questions and took far more responsibility for leading their own discussions.

Judith Langer, 2009