

A Blog for Busy Teachers

FREE LANGUAGE-BASED TEACHING STRATEGIES

Discussion Strategies *Each One, Teach One*

Purpose: To help students learn the difference between a conversation and a discussion, and to teach them skills to help them more successfully engage in academic discussions.

Definitions and Visualization: Ask them to brainstorm the difference between a conversation and a discussion.

Definitions: The below is not exhaustive. Students also have great ideas to add!

| Conversation | Discussion |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No goal• Can go off topic• Use informal language | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stay on topic• Reference text• Demonstrate critical thinking--connect readings to overall unit, share new ideas, etc.• Build on each other's ideas |

Visualizations: What does an academic discussion look like?

1. Show a video online that models / discusses what makes an excellent academic discussion. Some ideas:
 - a. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8-gkP_rLB4
 - b. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPq0YezRzy8&t=24s>



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Phrases to Use:

Expressing an Opinion:

- Based on my experience in my neighborhood, I believe...
- Based on what I read last night, I think ...
- In my opinion, ...

Predicting:

- I guess / predict / imagine ...
- Based on this quote [insert quote], I predict that
- I hypothesize that...

Asking for Clarification:

- Can you repeat that?
- Will you explain that again?
- What made you arrive at that opinion? Do you know someone who...?

Paraphrasing:

- So, you're saying that...
- Based on what you just said, you believe ...

Solicit a Response:

- We haven't heard from you yet. What do you think?
- Do you agree?
- What quote did you find that illustrates ...?

Acknowledging Ideas:

- My idea is similar because ...
- I agree with (that idea) because ...
- My idea is related and builds on your idea ...

Compare It:

- This idea is like _____
- This idea is different from _____ because it

Argue for / against:

- I agree because...
- I disagree because...
- I see both sides because...



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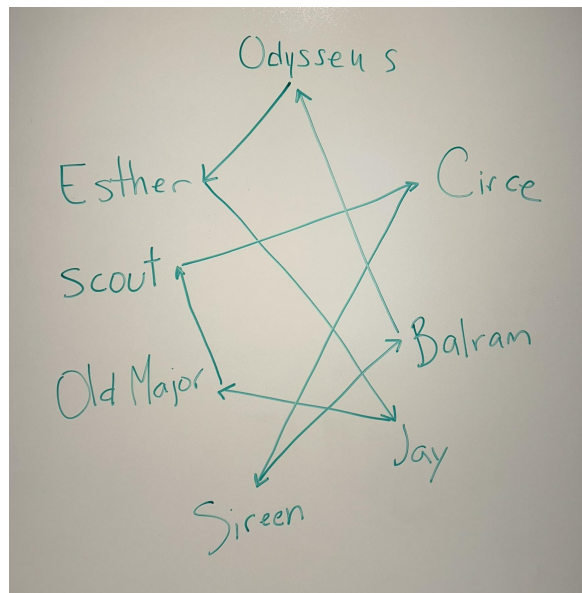
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Techniques to Facilitate Discussion:

- Teacher-Led:
 - *Set Goals:* For example, give them specific questions to answer. Ask that each person speaks at least twice. Ask that they make 3 direct references to the text.
 - *Materials:* Direct students to reference the discussion phrases guide. Have students set personal discussion goals using the self-assessment sheet. Also, teachers can use the discussion circle tracker. See image below.
 - *Raise Hands and/or Use Dice:* Act as a moderator. Students raise hands. Teacher tracks participation and quotes on the board. Teachers can also use dice. See image below.
- Student-Led:
 - *Set Goals:* Students set goals
 - *Materials:* Directed by students. Teachers can serve as scribe and monitor Pingree discussion circle tracker.
 - *Use Koosh or Body Language (no hands!):* Students can use a ball or koosh to toss around to serve as a "mic" to indicate whose turn it is to speak. Or, they can reference body language.

Discussion Tracker:

To help students see the path of discussion and to track their own participation, the teacher can put the students' names in a circle and track their participation. See image below:

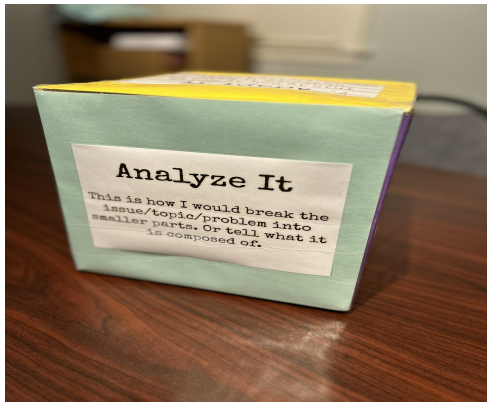


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Dice:

A fun way to engage students is to have them roll a big dice with some of the discussion phrases on it.



Phrases on the Dice:

Adapt it: This is how it can be used or how it helps me understand other issues/topics/problems.

Compare it: It's like _____ and different from _____.

Associate it: This issue/topic/problem makes me think of _____.

Argue for / against it: I agree because _____, I disagree because _____ or I see both sides because _____.

Analyze it: This is how I would break the issue/topic/problem into smaller parts/ Or tell what it is composed of.

