

PART 5

DISCUSSING IDEAS

"It seems a pity, but I do not think I can write more."

OBJECTIVE:

Students learn the characteristics of an effective text-based discussion and demonstrate skills in leading and participating in one.



ACTIVITIES

1- UNDERSTANDING TEXT-CENTERED DISCUSSIONS

The teacher leads students in a reflective conversation about productive, text-centered discussions.

2- IDENTIFYING AND ORGANIZING IDEAS

Students discuss their analysis in groups and independently prepare for leading a text-centered discussion by crafting a comparative text-dependent question.

3- LEADING A TEXT-CENTERED DISCUSSION

Students lead and participate in text-centered discussions with other students who have analyzed different texts.

ESTIMATED TIME: 3 days

MATERIALS:

Texts #1-9
Questioning Texts Tool
Analyzing Details Tool
TCD Checklist



ALIGNMENT TO CCSS

TARGETED STANDARD(S): SL.7.1

SL.7.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SUPPORTING STANDARD(S): RI.7.10

W.7.2

W.7.4

W.7.9

RI.7.10: By the end of the year, read and comprehend literary nonfiction in the grades 6–8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

W.7.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

W.7.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W.7.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

ACTIVITY 1: UNDERSTANDING TEXT-CENTERED DISCUSSIONS

The teacher leads students in a reflective conversation about productive, text-centered discussions.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

Throughout the unit, students have informally practiced the skills and behaviors used in text-centered discussions without formal instruction related to Speaking and Listening CCSS SL.1.

Now present students with the TCD Checklist, a framework that outlines those skills.

- Read through the Checklist asking students to reflect on their performance for each criterion in the small group discussions throughout the unit.
- Have students refer to specific moments (or evidence) from previous small group discussions as examples of when they demonstrated – or didn't demonstrate – the criteria.
- Students fill out the checklist, indicating which skills they have demonstrated in small-group and class activities, noting specific examples in the "Comments" section.
- Students identify skills/behaviors they want to work on in this last part of the unit, as they prepare for and participate in their culminating text-centered discussions.

ACTIVITY 2: IDENTIFYING AND ORGANIZING IDEAS

Students discuss their text explanations in groups and independently prepare for leading a text-centered discussion by crafting a comparative text-dependent question.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

Students prepare for their culminating demonstration of the unit where they will explain a central idea of their text, identify something they have learned from reading their text (in the context of the other texts of the unit), and pose a comparative text-dependent question to facilitate a text-based discussion. The key to this activity is that each student is encouraged to come up with an individual insight or observation that has sprung from reading and studying texts throughout the unit. For some students, this could be a more literal discovery or comparison, for others an inference supported by the texts, and for others still, an evidence-based claim. Students' discoveries need to be text-based and connected to a text-dependent question, but do not need to be too carefully structured around a particular theme, idea, or detail.

EXPERT GROUP DISCUSSIONS

- Students review each other's explanations in text-based expert groups for accuracy and use of details and compare the observations/discoveries they have made about their common text.
- Students discuss their text in relationship to texts #5 & #6, and to the other texts of the unit.
- Use the Text-Centered Discussion Checklist to help guide their discussion.

DEVELOP A COMPARATIVE QUESTION INDEPENDENTLY

- Students independently develop a text-dependent question that is based in their text but connects it to other texts.
- This question will be used to set up discussion when they join a new group in Activity 3.
- Depending on student ability, teachers might choose to model a comparative question and/or work individually with some students to help them develop their own.

≡ ACTIVITY 3: LEADING A TEXT-CENTERED DISCUSSION

Students lead and participate in a text-centered discussion with two other students who have analyzed different texts.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

In this activity, students “jigsaw” to groups of three (or alternately six depending on class size) so that each of the final three texts is represented in the group by at least one text “expert”.

In the discussion, each student (or student pair):

- Shares their explanations of a central idea of the text:
 - ⇒ Pointing out key details to the other students in their group
 - ⇒ Explaining their analysis of the author’s perspective
 - ⇒ Pointing out key words that indicate the author’s perspective
- Once each student has shared his/her analysis, they each take turns posing their comparative question and facilitating the discussion. As they facilitate, they should:
 - ⇒ Ask the other participants to reference the texts in their comments
 - ⇒ Share the understanding that has emerged for them, connecting it to and deepening it with comments from the others
 - ⇒ Direct the group to re-read key portions of the texts to support discussion
- Finally, each triad group summarizes its discussion for the class, sharing questions, observations, and key textual details that they have identified and discussed.

≡ OPTIONAL CLASS PRESENTATION OF LEARNING

One way to make the final small group discussions lead to more of a real-world and college-level task is to use them as preparation for a class presentation of learning. In this exercise, students would develop a presentation to other teachers, community members and parents to share what they have learned about the topic, drawing on their analysis and fielding questions from the audience. This approach simulates the types of experiences students will have in college by requiring them to experience a public speaking scenario. Inviting real observers into your classroom will lead to an increase in the depth of student preparation in Parts 4 and 5. It also enhances the focus students give to their text-centered discussion skills as well as work on their formal presentation skills.



ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The culminating assessment activity of the unit involves participating in and leading a text-centered discussion, through which students can demonstrate both their developing skills of close reading, analysis, and questioning as well as their emerging discussion skills. As such, the activity provides both summative assessment for learning within the unit and pre-/formative assessment to inform instruction in future units. To capture evidence, listen in on group conversations and have students self and peer assess using the TCD Checklist. If more formal evidence is needed, students can compile an optional collection of evidence that includes a reflective narrative (see below), or you can record video of student conversations and review them later.



OPTIONAL – COLLECTION OF EVIDENCE

To extend assessment within this final activity, students could compile a collection of evidence that reflects what they have learned in the unit. The collection could include a:

- written explanation of their final focus text with the tools that have informed and supported that analysis
- comparative text-dependent question for their discussion group, and some reflection about what happened when the group discussed their question
- self-assessment of skills they have demonstrated as close readers and as group members, using the Reading Closely and TCD Checklists to identify and explain their strengths as well as areas they intend to focus on in further work
- personal narrative in which they “tell the story” of what they have experienced, discovered, and learned within the unit, including a reflective summary of their reading experience for one or more of the texts

The student collection of evidence can be used for evaluation of learning in the unit, but will probably be most valuable as a formative assessment to help the teacher, and student, know what to work on in future units.