

Discussion strategies: COURSE DISCUSSION STRATEGIES

What follows is a collection of instructional strategies we will be using to support our conversations during Literature Discussion Groups. For further information see, *Creating Classrooms for Authors and Inquirers* (Short, Harste, w/Burke, 1996, Heinemann).

Cloning an Author

As you read, write down ten points you see as important on 4X6 cards, putting one point on each card. In the group, your first task is to get rid of 3 cards that no longer seem important. From the seven left, choose the one you see as the central idea and arrange the other six cards around it in terms of how the ideas relate. Share your organization with the members in your group by talking through your reasoning. Variation: Exchange your cards with someone from another group and organize this person's cards in a way that makes sense to you. After wards, the author of the cards you are using may wish to share how he or she had the cards organized and why.

One Observation, One Connection, One Surprise, One Question

Jot down one observation, one connection, one surprise, and one question you have as a result of your reading. If you can't recall an observation, jot down two connections or two surprises or two questions. The key is to come to discussion group with at least four statements in hand. Discuss the reading by sharing the various observations, connections, surprises, and questions that members of your group bring to your discussion group.

Anomalies – Have I Go Some Questions for You!

As you read jot down questions that you have on a 4x6 card. At discussion group time, collect all of the questions that members of your discussion group generated and give them to another group. You collect that group's questions and within your discussion group talk about them. Near the end of the session, get together with the other group to hear and share the various answers that have been generated.

Storying Connections

As you read, use post-it notes to jot down stories or experiences that the reading makes you think about. In your group, share the connections that you and other members of your group have made and talk about how the connections relate to what was being read. After discussion group is over formally draft a written version of one of your stories or experiences.

Sketch to Stretch – Save the Last Word for the Artist!

After reading an article or book, make a sketch (a quick graphic drawing) symbolizing what you think the text means. Try doing your sketch without using any words. Remember, you are not illustrating the text, but rather “symbolizing” its significance. In the group, show your sketch, letting others comment on what they think you were trying to say the text meant. Try to be stoic even when members of your group go off in directions you weren’t necessarily thinking. Once everyone in your group has had a turn guessing what they think you were trying to say, you get the last word.

Quotable Quotes – Save the Last Word for Me!

As you read, watch for passages or quotes that catch your attention because they are interesting, powerful, confusing, or contradictory. Note the quote on the front of a 4x6 card. On the back of the card, write your response or why you found that particular quote noteworthy. In your discussion group, one person begins by sharing one of their quotes. The group then briefly discusses their response to this quote. When the discussion dies down, the person who chose the quote flips over the card and tells why he or she chose it. That person has the absolute last word and the group then moves on to another person and another quote.

Free Writing – Ink Shedding

After reading, set a time for 5-15 minutes. During that time write continuously about your thoughts related to what you have just read. If you run out of things to write, you can write “I don’t know what to write” until you think of something else. Once the timer goes off, read back over your free write by passing your paper to another member of your group. They read what you have highlighted and “ink shed” their thoughts in the margins of your free write. After several turns of “ink shedding” pass the free write back to the author so that he or she can process what others had to say. Share final thoughts as time permits.

Written Conversation

Have a silent conversation by talking about what you have read on paper. Two people in your group share a single sheet of paper and a pencil and talk about what they have read by writing back and forth to each other. No talking is allowed (except with young children who often need to read what they have written to each other).

Graffiti Board

Put a big sheet of paper on the table. Each group member takes a corner of the paper and begins writing and drawing their thoughts about what was read in a graffiti-like fashion. The responses, ideas, comments, sketches, quotes, and connections are not organized in any way. The major focus is on brainstorming. Group members then share their graffiti with each other. This discussion can lead to webbing key ideas in a more organized fashion on another sheet of graffiti paper.

Webbing What's On My Mind

After sharing initial responses to something that has been read, the group brainstorms a web of issues, themes, and questions that they could discuss from the article, book, or text set that was read. Using the web, the group as a whole decides which issue, theme, or question is the most interesting to begin the discussion. Discussion continues as other issues, themes, and questions are chosen. New ideas are added as they come up in discussion.

Double Entry Journal

Fold a regular sheet of paper in half the long way so that you have two columns. As you read, copy down quotes from the article as well as comments and questions that run through your mind in the left-hand column. Bring your double entry journal to class and as the topic addressed, jot down, in the right-hand column, insights and comments that you are relating to the comments and questions you have. Meet with your group to share both sides of your double entry journal as well as lingering questions that you might have.