

Discussion Questions

Your group will work together to create discussion questions that will help guide class discussion. You need not share these questions in advance with the class, they are just used to help your guide the discussion for that day.

What are we asking?

The research for that day is often be a good starting point for generating discussion questions. But as our work continues, you may encourage more synthetic questions that connects that day's research with previous discussions, questions, and topics.

How do we begin?

It's best to begin with the questions you genuinely have.

- Are there technical terms that are unclear? Can you work with the group to figure out what they might mean?
- Are there passages in the text that looks like they are important but are difficult to understand? Guide the group to that part of the text and work together to examine it more closely?
- Good questions often begin with statements — descriptions of what you think is going on in the text, followed by how that idea or issue leads to a fruitful question. These fruitful questions are often *how* and *why* questions.

- Are there central ideas in the text that are worth spending time discussing. If so, it's ok to ask a question by making statements: here's what the idea is, here's why it's important, what do your peers have to say about it?
- We'll keep a running tally of core questions raised in the research. Good questions can be generated by tying the day's research to those core questions.

The goal is to contribute questions that help guide discussion about the philosophical topics rather than reactions to the text or discussion of personal opinions. The goal is to understand the research better, not what our reactions to the research are.

Here are some open-ended questions that can help you and your peers generate useful discussion questions:

Explain why _____ .

Explain how _____ .

What is the meaning of _____ ?

What is the main idea of _____ ?

What is the solution to the problem of _____ ?

What if _____ ?

What conclusions can I draw about _____?

How does _____ affect _____ ?

How does _____ relate to what I've learned before?

What is the difference between _____ and _____ ?

What is another way to look at _____ ?

What is an example of _____ ?

Why is _____ important?

What do we do from there?

You are providing the questions that will generate discussion, which primarily means helping the **Discussion Coordination Group** guide class discussion. It's particularly helpful to them if you can contribute some questions to start class off.

Sometimes discussion ends because the topic has been addressed and it's simply time to move on. You can also help the **Discussion Coordination Group** by contributing a new question to get things started again.

You will also have your **Text Resources Group**. When you suspect that a puzzle or question might be best approached by examining the research, ask the class to look for places in the text that might help, and ask the members of the **Text Resources Group** to take the lead.

Extra Tips

- Know and use your peers' names.
- Repeat and rephrase questions. Repeat and rephrase answers and other contributions to the discussion.
- After a response has been contributed, ask others to comment and discuss rather than commenting on it yourself.
- Leave sufficient wait time after asking a question before answering it yourself, repeating it, rephrasing it, or adding further information.
- Listen carefully and provide positive feedback.

- You can use your questions to generate ice-breaker and idea-generator activities such as
 - Solo free write: each person writes about the question or topic from the research for 5-10 minutes
 - Think-Pair-Share: peers to split into pairs for small group discussion about a posed questions to feed into group discussion.
 - Note: guided activities like this require an advance plan and clear questions and instructions.