Text Dependent Analysis: Collaborative Discussions for Close Reading

The Thompson TDA Model

Collaborative discussions during close reading are supported by the English Language Arts PA Core Standards in which students are expected to *engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions on grade level topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.*

During and after close reading, text discussions require students to "observe and analyze as much as they can about the text to understand how all text elements work together" (Boyles, 2014, p. 77), and to synthesize and integrate information from both the text and their peers to create an oral or written response. Student engagement in collaborative discussions is at the heart of close reading and is a critical shift in English language arts instruction. Students need a systematic opportunity to participate regularly in oral conversations about the texts they are reading. Frequent collaborative discussions build students' strength in demonstrating the cognitively complex expectations of texts and the standards.

The teacher guides collaborative discussions through meaningful text dependent questions[1]. These questions are grounded in the text and provide students with the opportunity to think deeply, communicate and build on their ideas by listening to others, and to orally rehearse the meaning of the text prior to creating a written text dependent analysis response. Rosenblatt (1988) identified "speech as a vital ingredient" in student achievement as they gain insight into their own reading and writing processes (p. 13). She further described how group interchanges, both between teacher and students and among students, about texts develop insights and varied interpretations about the author's meaning, thus leading students toward the development of a critical or analytic stance. Lave and Wenger (1991) further developed the need for individuals to learn through participation in "social practice" in order to "perform new tasks and to master new understandings" (p. 53). The concept of learning through social practice that requires participation, rather than independently making meaning, is necessary for students to be able to develop their ability to analyze (Thompson, 2018).

[1] See TDA Series: Close Reading Questions Leading to Text Dependent Analysis

Additionally, the use of collaborative discussions is beneficial for (Center for Teaching Innovation, 2020):

- development of higher-level thinking, oral communication, self-management, and leadership skills,
- increase in student retention, self-esteem, and responsibility,
- exposure to and an increase in understanding of diverse perspectives, and
- preparation for real life social and employment situations.

The purpose of this resource is to provide educators with strategies and structures for using collaborative discussions during close reading lessons leading to text dependent analysis.

Planning for Collaborative Discussions

Planning for student-led collaborative discussions during close reading lessons requires the teacher to begin the school year modeling and instructing students: 1) how to think and talk about texts and 2) how to participate in discussions. Throughout this modeling process the teacher may state, *here's what good readers do.* This statement emphasizes the thinking process and the type of reasoning that students are expected to demonstrate during close reading collaborative discussions. Other necessary strategies for beginning the school year are identified below (Michaels, O'Connor, Hall, & Resnick, 2010).

Think and talk about texts. Thinking and talking about texts is a scaffolding process that provides a window into how the teacher thinks about the text, including identifying the reading elements, and the language and ideas necessary for students to demonstrate comprehension and analysis of texts while engaging in text discussions.

Strategy:	*Marking*
Teacher Question/Statement:	*That's an important point.*
Description:	Identifies an important contribution made to the discussion. The teacher asks the student to repeat and elaborate, and then points out why it is important to note the information relative to the question or point being discussed.

Strategy:	*Challenging Students*
Teacher Question/Statement:	*What do you think?*
Description:	The teacher turns the responsibility for reasoning about a concept back to the students which develops shared understandings.

Strategy:	*Pressing for Accuracy*
Teacher Question/Statement:	***Where in the text did you find that?***
Description:	This question focuses students on the text and locating accurate and precise evidence to support the point that is being made. This question models for all students the need to return to the text and reread to locate evidence.

Strategy:	*Building on Prior Knowledge*
Teacher Question/Statement:	***How does this connect?***
Description:	This question reminds students that the concepts from the text dependent analysis prompt and the text they are reading are linked to previous learning. Reminding students of knowledge they have previously acquired encourages students to make connections and to recognize the prerequisite knowledge they possess for being successful.

Strategy:	*Pressing for Reasoning*
Teacher Question/Statement:	***Why do you think that?***
Description:	This question moves the discussion from an unsubstantiated claim or opinion to one in which students must provide textual evidence to support their thinking. Asking students to support their reasoning prepares them for writing a text dependent analysis response with supporting evidence.

Strategy:	*Expanding Reasoning*
Teacher Question/Statement:	***Repeat what you said; say more about that.***
Description:	This probe encourages the student to elaborate on their thinking. This requires wait time by the teacher, as well as the other students. Providing an additional ten seconds allows the minimum time needed for a student to formulate an answer to a question that calls for rigorous reasoning.

Strategy:	*Recapping*
Teacher Question/Statement:	***What have we discovered?***
Description:	Because ideas can evolve through the contributions of many students during collaborative discussions, this question ensures that students can succinctly summarize what has been discussed. Recapping is a way of repeating a shared understanding of the topic under discussion.

Participation in discussions. Several skills are necessary for students to engage in productive discussions including: staying focused, asking for clarification, and learning to disagree in a respectful manner. Strategies for encouraging students to participate in collaborative discussions include the following:

Strategy:	Keeping the Channels Open
Teacher Question/Statement:	Did everyone hear that?
Description:	Expecting students to build on each other's prior contributions requires responses to be audible and for everyone to be expected to listen. Statements such as the one above and *Say that again, nice and loud, so everyone can hear,* are strategies for expecting all students to be involved in the discussion.

Strategy:	Keeping Everyone Together
Teacher Question/Statement:	Who can repeat…?
Description:	Asking students to repeat important points that they heard from the discussion, engages all students and allows for discussion of any misinterpretation. This is often followed by the next strategy.

Strategy:	Linking Contributions
Teacher Question/Statement:	Who wants to add on?
Description:	This question promotes students to build upon each other's contributions, thereby increasing investment in the discussion. When students hear their contributions being built up, investment in the discussion grows.

Strategy:	Verifying and Clarifying
Teacher Question/Statement:	So, are you saying…?
Description:	This question allows the student to hear the teacher's interpretation of the comment. The student then has a chance to agree or disagree and clarify any misunderstanding.

Strategy:	*Establishing Turn-Taking Norms*
Teacher Question/Statement:	*Can you hand that comment off?*
Description:	There are multiple ways to teach students to hand-off a comment or question, such as having the last student who spoke call on the next speaker, relying on a student moderator, using a talking stick or pulling a name from a container. The eventual goal is for students to incorporate and build upon the previous turns of other students to carry out discussions that engage all students.

Strategy:	*Using Wait Time*
Teacher Question/Statement:	*Think about it before answering.*
Description:	Consciously waiting before calling on anyone provides more students with a chance to think and formulate a response. It also ensures that students recognize that the thinking of all students thinking is valued and not just the "star" or "fast" students.

Students can use sentence starters to assist them with having meaningful discussions. The following example sentence frames provides students with the language necessary to agree, disagree, and ask for clarification of ideas using language that is respectful and holds everyone accountable.

Agree
- *I agree with what (Tom) said because…*
- *I'd like to add…*
- *Another example of what (Kendra) mentioned is…*
- *I'd like to go back to what (Jose) said about… and add…*

Disagree
- *I disagree with what (Chandra) said because…*
- *I understand (Sam's) point but…*
- *I noticed some of the same things as (Angelina) but also noted…*
- *Could it also be that…?*
- *However, this example demonstrates that…*

Clarify
- *What do you mean when you say…?*
- *Do you think that…?*
- *Could you provide an example?*
- *I'd like to go back to what (Janine) said about… because it is unclear what is meant by…*
- *It is confusing that…*

Structures for Collaborative Discussions

Teaching and using a small-group structure to guide collaborative discussions helps students stay on-task and focused on the text to locate supporting evidence. There are many different collaborative discussion structures that can be used in the classroom and it is up to the teacher to decide which one works best for her and her students. This decision is based on the age and grade of the students, their previous experiences with collaborative discussions, reading elements, text structures, and text concepts, as well as the classroom configuration. Whichever structure is used, the teacher provides students with the close reading text dependent questions for the text section, allowing them to anticipate the focus for reading and the discussion. When beginning the use of any of the structures described below, the teacher needs to begin with modeling and remind students of the discussion strategies previously learned. The following collaborative discussion structures are adapted from Gonzalez, J. (2015), *The Big List of Class Discussion Strategies;* Frey & Douglas (2013)*, Rigorous Reading; and* School Reform Initiative (2020) *Protocols and Resources*.

Gallery Walk or Chat Stations

Chart paper is set up around the classroom, on the walls or on tables, as stations. Small groups of students travel from station to station together, engage in a conversation about a text dependent question that is written on the chart paper, and then collectively respond to the question using post-it notes. After everyone has responded to the station questions, they conduct a "gallery walk" looking for commonalities and/or discrepancies in the responses and evidence selected. These commonalities and/or discrepancies become the basis for a whole group discussion. Since all students have engaged in discussing each question they are able to contribute to the whole group discussion.

Philosophical Chairs

A statement about the text is posed that has more than one possible response—agree or disagree—and multiple pieces of evidence to support the response. Depending on whether students agree or disagree with the statement, they move to one side of the room or the other. From that location, in smaller groups of 3-4, students locate evidence from the text to support their thinking, and take turns defending their thinking using the selected evidence. The teacher can also use a continuum (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree) and four corners for students to discuss their position. These statements can be derived from the close reading text dependent questions. For example, rather than posing the question, *What does this tell you about the grandson?*, the teacher would make the statement, *The grandson is lazy.* Students would decide whether they agree or disagree, move to one side of the room bringing their texts with them, discuss this statement in a small group, locate evidence to support their decision, and then share with the whole group.

Discussion Roundtable

This collaborative strategy promotes note-taking and the exchange of ideas. Students are placed in groups of four and jigsaw read a text, taking notes about his or her section using a paper that has been folded into quarters, and then folded over the interior corner to form a rhombus in the center. When the paper is opened it will look like the following:

| Name: _____ | | Name: _____ |
| Name: _____ | | Name: _____ |
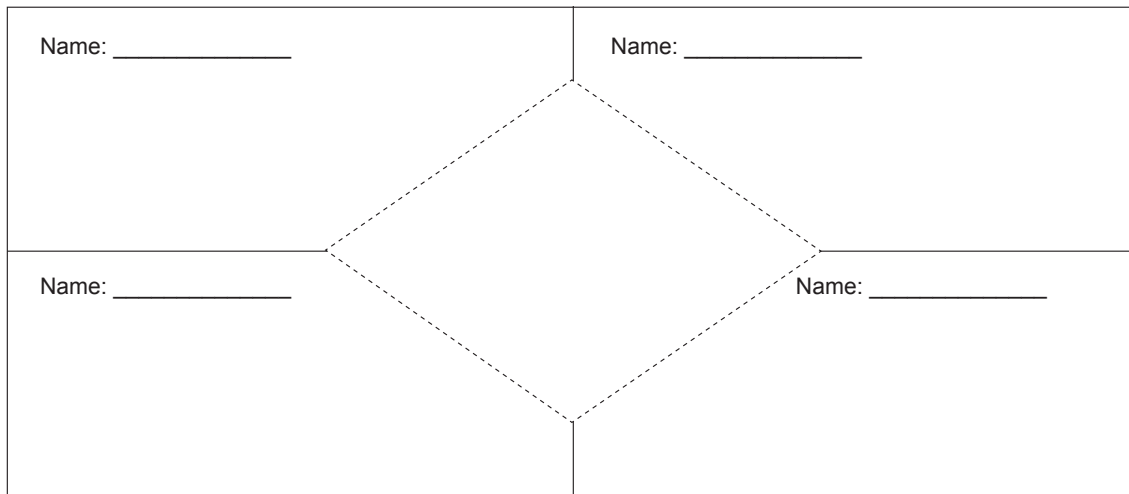
As students share their response to a text dependent question based on their section, other students take notes. After each student has deconstructed their section, each student writes an individual summary of the information in the center. For example, a teacher might pose the text dependent question, *What do the patterns of dialogue exchanges between the two characters reveal?* Students record the meaning of the dialogue for their section of the text. As each person shares their response based on their section, each student takes notes. After the collaborative discussion, students synthesize what they discussed to answer the text dependent question. The responses can be collected by the teacher as a formative assessment to determine misconceptions or the responses can be used for a large group discussion.

Affinity Maps or Diagrams

The teacher gives students a broad question or problem that is likely to result in lots of different ideas, such as *How does the author build suspense or cause uncertainty during the text?* Students begin generating responses by writing ideas on post-it notes (one idea per note) and placing them in no particular arrangement on a wall, whiteboard, or chart paper. Once lots of ideas have been generated, students discuss these ideas and begin grouping them into similar categories, then label the categories and discuss why the ideas fit within them, and how the categories relate to one another. Each group shares their ideas and grouping to the rest of the class during a whole group discussion.

Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UynxDyr0lAo&feature=youtu.be

Concentric Circles

Students form two circles, one inside circle and one outside circle, or the teacher can organize two straight lines facing one another. Students bring their texts with them to the circle (or line) to locate evidence to support their thinking. Each student on the inside is paired with a student on the outside, and they face each other. The teacher poses a text dependent question to the whole group and pairs discuss their responses with each other locating text evidence to support their response. Then the teacher signals students to rotate: Students on the outside circle move one space to the right so they are standing or sitting in front of a new person. The teacher poses a new text dependent question, and the process is repeated. This structure allows students to hear ideas and thoughts of multiple other students.

Conver-Stations

This small-group discussion strategy gives students exposure to multiple peers' ideas and prevents the stagnation that can happen when a small group doesn't change. Students are placed into a few groups of four students each and are given a text dependent discussion question to talk about. After sufficient time has passed for the discussion to develop, one or two students from each group rotate to a different group, while the other group members remain where they are. Once in their new group, they will discuss a different, but related question, and they may also share some of the key points from their last group's conversation. For the next rotation, students who have not rotated before may be chosen to move, resulting in groups that are continually evolving.

Hot Seat

The teacher places students in small groups of approximately five or six students. One student from each group assumes the role of a character, significant figure, or concept (e.g., figurative language) from a text. Sitting in front of the rest of the group, the student responds to classmates' questions while staying in character or concept. The questions should be generated in advance by the whole class (e.g., the teacher would guide students in generating questions they would ask the character or concept). Students use the list of questions, or others they think of during the collaborative discussion, to pose to the student in the "hot seat". A variation of this structure could be having several students form a panel of different characters, taking questions from the class all together and interacting with one another like guests on a TV talk show.

Snowball Discussion

Students begin in pairs, responding to a text dependent question with a single partner. After each person has had a chance to share their ideas, the pair joins another pair, creating a group of four. Pairs share their ideas with the pair they just joined. Next, groups of four join together to form groups of eight, and so on, until the whole class is joined up in one large discussion.

Socratic Seminar

Students prepare for the seminar by reading and annotating a text and writing some higher-order discussion questions about the text. On seminar day, students sit in a circle and an introductory, open-ended question is posed by the teacher or student discussion leader. From there, students continue the conversation, prompting one another to support their responses with textual evidence. There is no particular order to how students speak, but they are encouraged to respectfully share the floor with others. Discussion is meant to happen naturally and students do not need to raise their hands to speak. A final question should help for students to summarize, synthesize, and/or evaluate (e.g., *How does knowledge of this text inform our understanding of the world today? Why has this text endured? What ideas or values are represented in this piece?*)

If students are beginners, the teacher may write the discussion questions, or the question creation can be a joint effort. For larger classes, teachers may need to set up seminars in more of a fishbowl-like arrangement, dividing students into one inner circle that will participate in the discussion, and one outer circle that silently observes, takes notes, and may eventually trade places with those in the inner circle, sometimes all at once, and sometimes by "tapping in" as the urge strikes them.

Text Rendering Experience

The purpose of this structure is to allow students to construct meaning, clarify and expand their thinking about a text while making their thinking visible. Students review a text or section of a text to mark a sentence, phrase, and/or the word(s) they think are particularly important.

First Round: Each student shares a *sentence* from the document she/he thinks is particularly significant.

Second Round: Each student shares a *phrase* that she/he thinks is particularly significant. The teacher records each phrase.

Third Round: Each student shares the *word* that she/he thinks is particularly significant. The teacher records each phrase.

Discussion: The students discuss what they heard and what these sentences, phrases, and words say about the text. Students describe new insights they gained by looking at the text and listening to what their peers noted as important. Finally, the group discusses the meaning of the essential question posed about the text.

The use of the collaborative discussion structures during close reading is intended to guide students in analyzing texts while considering peer perspectives. Throughout the process, the teacher listens to the types of evidence and thinking students are sharing. The teacher uses this information to clarify misconceptions, indicate different questions that should be posed, and to show when students are ready to respond to the text dependent analysis prompt. While collaborative discussions are beneficial

during ELA close reading, they are also valuable in other content areas. Providing students with multiple and different opportunities to collaborate on important and meaningful concepts and ideas prepares students for success in school and beyond.

For more information on the different aspects of text dependent analysis, refer to the series of Text Dependent Analysis Resources by Dr. Jeri Thompson, Center for Assessment.

Thompson, J. (2020). *Text Dependent Analysis Resource: Collaborative Discussions for Close Reading.* www.nciea.org, http://www.education.pa.gov, and http://pdesas.org.

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