

# Literature Discussion Strategies

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## FREE WRITES (Connection)

After reading the book, set a timer for anywhere from 5-15 minutes. During that time, write continuously about your thoughts related to the book. If you run out of things to write, you can write “I don’t know what to write” until you think of something else. In the group, one person begins by reading all or part of their free write aloud. The group discusses the ideas in that free write and then moves on to the next person. Instead of free writes, group members can create a sketch of their thoughts about the book.

## LITERATURE LOGS or POST-FULL THINKING (Connection)

As you read, stop periodically and write a paragraph or so about what you are thinking in response to the book. In the group, begin by having a person read an entry. The ideas are discussed by the group until the conversation dies down and then someone shares another entry. Instead of writing in a log, you can use sticky notes, writing a quick response or connection, and placing it on the page to share in the group.

## ANOMALIES

Write down questions or things that surprise you as you read. Once you finish reading, look back over your questions to identify the ones that you are still wondering about or that you wonder how others would respond to that question. Discuss the questions and generate new anomalies.

## MAKING A CONNECTION

Jot down stories or experiences that come to your mind as you read. In the group, share your connections and talk about how they relate to the book. If the group is reading in a text set where everyone has read a different book, look for connections across all the books.

## COLLAGE READING/TEXT RENDERING (Connection)

As you read, mark quotes that are significant to you. Collage reading consists of members of the group reading aloud quotes to each other. One person reads a quote and then someone else comes in with a quote and the reading continues in no particular order. Readers choose when they will read a particular quote and try to build on what someone else has read. There are no comments about the quotes. Text Rendering is similar except that someone reads a quote and states why they chose it and then someone else reads a quote.

*Kathy Short*

*Literature Discussion Strategies*

There is no discussion about the quotes or the comments until after the text rendering is finished.

#### CONSENSUS BOARD (Connection)

A board is created with a circle in the middle and a section for each member of the group. The circle contains the title of the book or a key theme from the book. In the individual sections, each person writes down personal connections to that theme or book. After sharing individual connections, the group comes to consensus on connections or understandings that they can agree on as a group to put into the middle of their board to share with others.

#### GRAFFITI BOARD (Connection)

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 the book or text set in a graffiti fashion. The responses, ideas, comments, sketches, quotes, and connections are not organized in any way. The major focus is on recording initial responses during or immediately after reading a book. When the group is ready to discuss, group members then share their graffiti. The graffiti can then lead to webbing or charting to organize the connections.

#### SAY SOMETHING (Invitation: Text-based Response)

Two people share the reading of a short story. The first person reads aloud a chunk of text (several paragraphs or a page) to the other person. When the reader stops, both “say something” by making a prediction, sharing personal connections, asking questions, or commenting on the story. The second reader then reads aloud a chunk of text and again stops and both “say something.” The two readers continue alternating the reading of the story, commenting after each reading, until the story is completed.

#### SAVE THE LAST WORD FOR ME (Invitation; Text-based response)

As you read, watch for passages or quotes that catch your attention because they are interesting, powerful, confusing, or contradictory and put the quote on a 3 x 5 card. On the back of the card, write your response or why you found that particular passage noteworthy. In the group, one person begins by sharing a quote. The group then briefly discusses their responses to that quote. When the discussion dies down, the person who chose the quote flips over the card and tells why he/she chose it. That person has the last word and the group then moves on to another person. Younger children can show a page from a picture book and the others in the group then share their responses, letting the child who chose that page have the last word.

#### SKETCH TO STRETCH (Invitation; Reader-based response)

After reading a book, make a sketch (a quick graphic drawing) of what the story meant to you (not an illustration of the story, but your connections to the book). In the group, show your sketch, letting others

*Kathy Short*

*Literature Discussion Strategies*

comment on the meanings they see in the sketch before you share your meaning. Talk about your sketches with each other and discuss the different ideas people have raised in their drawings.

**WRITTEN CONVERSATION** (Invitation; Reader-based response)

Have a silent conversation by talking on paper. Two people share a piece of paper and a pencil and talk about a book 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.

**CLONING THE AUTHOR** (Invitation; Text-based response)

As you read, write down ten points you see as important on individual cards. In the group, you first discard three cards that no longer seem important. From the seven left, choose the one you see as the central idea and arrange your other six cards around it in terms of how the ideas relate. Share your organization with another person in the group by talking through your reasoning. Mix up your cards and give them to another person in the group and ask that person to organize the cards in a way that makes sense to them.

**STORY MAPS** (Invitation; Text-based response)

Create a visual map to tell the story of the book as either a large mural in which one picture contains the major story elements of character, theme, setting, and plot or as a path that follows the major events of the story.

**TIME LINE** (Invitation; Text-based response)

Create a timeline to organize the major ideas or events of the story or to connect the story with other events in history. You can also create a timeline that shows the highs and lows in tension and suspense in the story.

**STORY RAY** (Invitation; Text-based response)

Each person receives a 3 foot long narrow strip of paper. The book is divided so that each is responsible for one chapter, the cover or a possible epilogue. On the ray, a visual essence of the chapter is created using colors, images, and a few words with various art media and little or no white space. The rays are then assembled on a large mural or wall to reflect the unfolding of the novel.

**WEBBING WHAT'S ON MY MIND** (Tension)

After sharing initial responses to a book, the group brainstorms a web of issues, themes, and questions that they could discuss from the book or text set. Using the web, the group decides on the one that is most interesting or causes the most tension to begin discussion. They continue their discussions by choosing from

other ideas on their web. New ideas are added as they come up in the discussion.

#### CHART A CONVERSATION (Tension)

In groups of 3, discuss a book and then fill in a chart with these categories: I Like, I Dislike, Patterns, Problems or Puzzles. As a whole class, each group shares what is on their chart and the other groups write anything new in a different color on their charts. The groups then talk about something on the chart that they didn't previously discuss. The class then returns to a whole class discussion to share what each group discussed.

#### COMPARISON CHARTS or VENN DIAGRAMS (Investigation)

Read and discuss a text set of books (an author study, genre or thematic grouping, etc.) and talk about similarities and differences across the books. From these discussions, develop broad categories that can be used on a comparison chart. What is there about this set of books that you want to look at more closely to compare the books? The books are written on the side and the categories across the top of the chart. Both pictures and words are used in the boxes. A venn diagram (two circles that overlap in the center) focus the comparison on one major issue at a time.

