

# Accessing Complex Text Through Structured Conversations

## Summary

Students use a structured format (an adaptation of Think-Pair-Share) to discuss and deconstruct complex text.

## Main Core Tie

English Language Arts Grade 9-10

[Reading: Informational Text Standard 10](#)

## Additional Core Ties

English Language Arts Grade 9-10

[Speaking and Listening Standard 1 a.](#)

English Language Arts Grade 9-10

[Speaking and Listening Standard 1 b.](#)

English Language Arts Grade 9-10

[Speaking and Listening Standard 1 c.](#)

English Language Arts Grade 9-10

[Speaking and Listening Standard 1 d.](#)

## Time Frame

1 class periods of 30 minutes each

## Group Size

Pairs

## Life Skills

Thinking & Reasoning, Communication

## Materials

Copies of a complex text passage

## Background for Teachers

The new core standards emphasize the importance of developing students' speaking and listening skills as well as helping them access complex text through reading, re-reading, re-thinking, and re-examining.

The purpose of this lesson is to get the students to focus and stay on topic while they talk. As a result, students are required to think more extensively about a topic by repeatedly reading and discussing with others.

## Student Prior Knowledge

Students are responsible for summarizing their thinking, understanding their point of view, and developing questions.

## Intended Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to stay focused on a topic during discussion, synthesize and summarize the discussion, and develop questions for understanding complex text.

## Instructional Procedures

Select a complex passage from a text your students are currently reading or about to read.

Ask students to get out a sheet of paper and divide it into 3 columns.

Instruct them to title each column as follows: My Initial Thoughts, My Thoughts After Discussion, My Thoughts After Re-Reading.

Read aloud a passage from a complex text (be sure that each student has a copy of the passage).

Tell students to write down their initial thoughts and/or questions in the first column. Be sure to assign a time limit, such as "Take one minute to write down your thoughts and questions." Note: This process works best if you model this first before having your students do this.

After the time to write initial thoughts has expired, instruct students to turn to their partner and share their thinking and questions. Note: Assign partners ahead of time. Announce a time limit for each to share, such as one minute each, keeping in mind that time limits can be easily lengthened or shortened according to students' needs.

Tell students to use the second column to record their thoughts after discussing. Again, provide a time limit for this process.

Finally, instruct students to (re)read the passage on their own and note their thoughts and questions after talking about and reexamining the text.

## Strategies for Diverse Learners

It helps to give struggling students formal sentence frames to help them both in speaking and in writing. Examples of formal sentence frames include the following:

"The example I selected was . . ."

" I found the \_\_\_\_\_'s content most relevant when . . ."

"The section I found most puzzling was . . ."

"My initial thoughts after listening to the passage was . . ."

"The question I still have after re-reading is . . ."

For advanced students, consider providing an additional passage that speaks to or offers a different perspective from the original passage.

## Extensions

The structured conversation process can be used as a introduction to new material, as a daily warmup to create community, as a method to lead to possible inquiry (based on students' questions).

## Rubrics

[Communication Skills](#)

## Bibliography

Allen, Janet. More Tools for Teaching Content Literacy. Stenhouse Publishing, 2005.

Kagen, S. Dimensions of Cooperative Classroom Structures. Plenum, 1985.

## Authors

[DEBRA DRUMMOND](#)