

## 39. Discussion Web

### What is it?

The Discussion Web gives all students an opportunity to assume responsibility and share their own ideas in discussion, not just the verbally talented students. It is tailored after McTighe and Lyman's (1988) think-pair-share discussion cycle. In the Discussion Web, all students think individually about the items they want to share in the discussion and then share their ideas with a partner. This private "think time" promotes total class involvement and honors the wait time necessary for developing insightful thoughts to share. Student accountability is also included by having students share their thinking with each other. The Discussion Web incorporates all four areas of language arts: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It can be used anytime during the learning process—as a prereading activity, a prewriting activity, a postreading strategy, or to help students organize their ideas while reading a selection.

### How to use it:

1. Prepare students for reading the selection: activate their background knowledge, introduce new vocabulary words, and explain the purpose for reading. For example, students are going to read *Jack and the Beanstalk*. To pull forward prior knowledge, ask the students, "What characteristics might make a person do mean things?" Then discuss their thoughts. Introduce any difficult vocabulary words during this discussion so the words are used within the context of the story being read. Explain that the purpose of reading the story is to determine if it was all right for Jack to take the things from the giant's castle. Students will construct support for both positions.
2. Have the students read both versions of *Jack and the Beanstalk*.
3. Introduce the Discussion Web with the questions, "Was it all right for Jack to take things from the giant's castle?" written in the middle. Explain to the students that they will have to

construct support for both viewpoints by citing specific reasons. Give each student wait time to construct his own reasons for each viewpoint. Encourage students to write one or two ideas down; this ensures participation by all.

4. Pair each student with a partner to share their written ideas. Ask them to continue to discuss reasons for each viewpoint and to take turns writing down in the Yes/No column the reason why they think it is or is not all right for Jack to take from the giant. Give them five to ten minutes to write their reasons.
5. Pair one set of students with another set of partners. Ask the group of four students to compare their Yes/No reasons. Once students have compared notes and added any new ideas to their web, they form a conclusion to share with the class. They decide if Jack was justified in bringing things home from the castle and their major reason for that decision. They write this statement at the bottom of their web under Conclusion. One person is selected to share the group's conclusion with the rest of the class.
6. Call on each spokesperson to report for their groups as part of the whole class discussion. After each person has shared their group's conclusion, the discussion can be opened up for further discussion by all members. The teacher monitors for effective discussion skills.
7. As a follow-up activity, have the students individually write their own conclusion and their reasons for it on the Discussion Web question section. Also, have the students reflect on the specific discussion skills they used throughout the activity, and their strengths or areas that need improvement. This final writing helps the learners bring closure to the Discussion Web.