OUR FRAMEWORK FOR CRAFTING ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION PROMPTS

2019
Better Questions

Richer Discussions
HOW DOES IT WORK?

At Parlay, our team works directly with teachers to create custom-made questions that fit their classroom.

1. Teacher Requests
   Hi Anna Lisa!
   I would like some help creating a discussion prompt about The United Nations for my AP History Class, but I don’t know where to start.

   Hi Mrs. Smith!
   Happy to help. Just a couple clarifying questions then we’ll be able to get started on that for you!

2. Parlay Creates
   Learning Goals
   Supporting Content
   Discussion Questions

3. Add To Classroom
   Learning Goals
   Supporting Content
   Discussion Questions
   [PUBLISH TO MY CLASS]
PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS

These are the four questions that we ask teachers to answer before creating their custom discussion prompt.

1. For which grade level and subject area is this discussion?

2. What topic/subject are you covering with your class?

3. What curriculum standards are you trying to meet (if any)?

4. Are there any other goals / angles we should consider?
THE PARLAY TEMPLATE
Here is our powerful framework for crafting discussion prompts.

1. Learning Goals
What topics or essential questions will we be exploring in this discussion?
What are the skills and curriculum expectations we want to cover? (See Appendix 1)
How does this topic connect to the real world or students’ lives directly?

2. Content & Multimedia
Add links to articles, images, videos, or existing class materials for students to review before submitting their response. (See Appendix 2)

3. Discussion Questions
Provide students with the discussion question(s) they are going to answer in their own individual submissions before joining the discussion. (See Appendices 3 and 4 and 5)

4. Peer Feedback
Provide instructions and guiding questions for students to build on, question and challenge their classmates’ submissions after joining the discussion. (See Appendix 6)
EXAMPLE ROUNDTABLES

Check out some of these examples we helped teachers create.

What can YOU do to defend human rights?
Sheila Howard

Exploring The UN Sustainable Development Goals
Bobby McDonald

Are We Born Resilient?
Lisa Gothard

Why Consult Multiple Sources and Perspectives?
Anna Lisa Martin

Fear and The Domino Effect in American Foreign Policy
Paul Hays

Emerging Technologies for Social Good
Dawn Berkeley

The Mountain Men in Early America
Katie Burns

Characters in Animal Farm
Katie Sauer
APPENDIX 1 - Curriculum Alignment

Here are the questions we consider when aligning prompts to the curriculum.

1. **What are the curriculum requirements?**

2. **Are they content-based or skills-based?**

**Skills**

1. What are the specific skills that students are expected to demonstrate?
2. How do these overlap with the skills that are developed ‘naturally’ when using Parlay?
3. How can we structure questions to align them with required skills that are not naturally developed using Parlay?
4. Have they already been exposed to these skills or do we need to source content / activities to introduce them?

**Content**

1. Do the students already have access to the right content (textbooks / digital materials)?
2. Can we supplement or enhance this content with other open educational or trusted resources?
3. How can we connect these content requirements to the “real-world”?
4. How can we use content to extend these requirements beyond demonstration of knowledge and understanding?
APPENDIX 2 - Content & Multimedia
Here are some of our favourite places for great supporting content and multimedia.

- PROCON
- The New York Times
- 1000 WRITING PROMPTS
- ThoughtCo.
- Our World in Data
- Singularity Hub
- Kurzgesagt
- The Conversation
- newsela
- National Geographic
- TED-Ed
- Facing History and Ourselves
- DOGONews
- NPR
- Brain Pickings
### APPENDIX 3 - Good Types of Discussion Questions

Here are some of the different types of questions we like to use to help shape the discussion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Real-Word Inquiry:            | Assess - What is the issue or problem at hand?  
                                Diagnose - What is one root cause of this issue or problem?  
                                Act - What can we do as individuals or as a society to solve the issue? |
| Author's Claim:               | Interpret - What is the author’s central claim or argument?  
                                Evaluate - Are you convinced by this argument / evidence? Why? |
| Building Arguments:           | Claim - Ask students to make a claim to support their argument.  
                                Reasoning - Ask students to provide rationale behind their claim.  
                                Evidence - Ask students for credible evidence to support their claim. |
| Compare and Contrast:         | Ask your students to make connections and identify differences between ideas that can be found in class texts and materials. |
| Ethical Dilemmas:             | Provide students with a problem or situation, and ask them to explore one or more of the moral and ethical concerns. |
| Personal Exploration:        | Let students explore a new idea on their own terms. This creative freedom helps them find their authentic voice. “What does ______ mean to you?” or “Find an example of ______ in your own life”. |
| Reflections:                  | Ask students to reflect on an experience such as a field trip, film, or reading. “What struck you at the time?” “What stuck with you after?” |
**APPENDIX 4 - Question Types to Avoid**

Here are some of the different types of questions we try to avoid.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes/No Questions:</td>
<td>Any question that can be answered with a simple yes or no tends to limit the depth and complexity of the discussion that ensues.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elliptical Questions:</td>
<td>This is the opposite of the yes/no error. If you start with “What do you think about...” it often means the question is vague and won’t provide enough structure for your students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leading Questions:</td>
<td>These questions have a bias built right in, and discourage students from taking risks with their ideas. An example might be: “Don’t you think that...” or “Wouldn’t you agree that...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slanted Questions:</td>
<td>These questions are subtle. They indirectly “close down” a student that may not agree with the implied assumption. An example might be: “Why was this person so corrupt?”</td>
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</tbody>
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### APPENDIX 5 - Incorporating Bloom’s Taxonomy

Here are some of our favourite verbs to use when creating discussion prompts. We like to frame each question with one of these verbs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Analyze</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify</td>
<td>Analyze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examine</td>
<td>Prioritize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observe</td>
<td>Connect</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outline</td>
<td>Relate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Define</td>
<td>Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe</td>
<td>Discern</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understand</th>
<th>Evaluate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explain</td>
<td>Assess</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relate</td>
<td>Defend</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extend</td>
<td>Critique</td>
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<tr>
<td>Infer</td>
<td>Combine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classify</td>
<td>Prepare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare</td>
<td>Select</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apply</th>
<th>Create</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compare</td>
<td>Propose</td>
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<td>Contrast</td>
<td>Develop</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use</td>
<td>Adapt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Choose</td>
<td>Justify</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employ</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modify</td>
<td>Value</td>
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</tbody>
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## APPENDIX 6 - Guided Feedback Questions

Every discussion prompt warrants its own unique peer feedback questions. Below we have included some feedback questions we like to use in a “Bricks and Mortar” setup:

| 1. Clarifying Questions: | “I have a clarifying question about ______.”
| | “Have you considered ______ from the perspective of ______?”
| 2. Value + Compliment: | “I really liked ______ because ______.”
| | “Your point about ______ was interesting because ______.”
| 3. Challenges: | “I disagree with ______ because ______.”
| | “I have concerns about ______ because ______.”
| 4. Suggestions: | “I think you can improve ______ by doing ______.”
| | “A different approach might be ______.”
| 5. Build on Ideas: | “Building on your idea about ______, I think ______.”
| | “I see a connection between ______ and ______.”
| 6. Reflection: | “Your idea about ______ changed my perspective because ______.”
| | “I am curious to learn more about ______ because ______.”

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Parlay

Class Discussions for a better world.

Parlay is an instructional tool and content creator for teachers looking to inspire meaningful, measurable and inclusive discussions in their classrooms. We work with thousands of passionate educators and some of the most prestigious and innovative schools from all over the world. Parlay is headquartered in Toronto, Canada.

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE?
Visit us at www.parlayideas.com or;
Contact annalisa@parlayideas.com for more information