

Protocols for Discussing Text

The Final Word¹

Purpose: provide each person an opportunity to have their ideas, understandings, and perspectives enhanced by hearing from others.

Time:

For circles of 5 participants: A total of 40 minutes if the time is followed religiously.

8 minutes per presenter

Presenter: 3 minutes

Response: 1 minute/responder: 4 minutes

Presenter: Final word: 1 minute

Steps:

1. Each participant identifies one of the most significant ideas from the texts. It's a good idea to have a back up quote as well.
2. The first person begins by reading what struck him other the most from the text. This person points out where the quote is in the text. In less than three minutes, this person describes why that quote struck him or her.
3. Each person responds to that quote and what the presenter said in less than one minute. The purpose of the response is to expand on the presenter's thinking about the issues, to provide a different look at the issue, to clarify thinking about the issues, and to question the presenter's assumptions about the issues.
4. After going around the circle with each person responding, the first person has the "final word." In no more that one minute the presenter responds to what has been said: Now what is s/he thinking? What is his/her reaction to what was said?
5. This process continues until everyone has had the opportunity to have the "final word."
6. Debrief

¹ Adapted by Jennifer Fischer-Mueller and Gene Thompson

The Last Word

Purpose: This protocol allows everyone to discuss a significant aspect of a text.

Materials:

- Index cards
- A text

Steps:

1. Write a significant quote from the text on one side of the index card. The quote should resonate with the reader, perhaps stating an idea that the reader agrees with or strongly disagrees with.
2. On the back of the card, explain the significance of the quote.
3. One person at a time reads the quote and points to where in the text this quote can be found. The person does not explain its significance.
4. The rest of the group discusses this quote.
5. The first person reads the back of the card or explains the significance of the quote. In other words, this person gets *the last word*.
6. Move on to the next person until everyone in the group has had a chance to have the last word.

Variation:

If the group is large or time is short, in a "whip around" structure have each person read the quote on the card even if the quote has previously been read. Do not have the group respond to any of the quotes.

The facilitator's task is to listen for patterns or repeated quotes in order to decide which quotes should be clumped together for the group discussion (step 4). For those quotes that were repeated or that are very similar, only one person should restate the quote before the group discusses it. However, at step 5, everyone who stated that quote gets to have "the last word."

Text-Based Discussion

Purpose: Build a common understanding of a text; deepen one's understanding of a text (text is defined broadly: an article, a book, a video, an art presentation, etc.)

Steps:

1. Facilitator selects a text and frames a question or two that will shape the discussion.
2. Group reads the text like a love letter: over and over to nudge meaning out of every word.
3. Group discusses the text and stays focused on the framing questions.
 - Comments need to be grounded in the text.
 - "Where in the text do you see that?"
 - "It appears that the comment on page ___ contradicts the author's earlier statement."
 - "I wonder what the author means when she says..."
 - Conversation needs to be shared among group members.
 - People are encouraged to challenge ideas, but remember:
 - Challenges are made with respect, and ideas, not people, are challenged.
 - The success of the discussion is the responsibility of the entire group, not just the facilitator.
1. Debrief the process.

Text Rendering

Purpose: To collaboratively construct meaning, clarify and expand our thinking about a text or document

Roles:

A facilitator to guide the process

A scribe to track the phrases and words that are shared

Set up:

Take a few minutes to review the document and mark the sentence, the phrase, and the word that you think is particularly important for our work.

Steps:

1. First round: Each person shares a sentence from the document that s/he feels is particularly significant.
2. Second round: Each person shares a phrase that s/he feels is particularly significant.
3. Third round: Each person shares the word that s/he feels is particularly significant. The scribe records each word.
4. The small group discusses what they heard and what it says about the document.
5. The large groups shared the words that emerged and any new insights about the document.
6. The large group debriefs the text rendering process.