

Discussion Webs

Purpose:

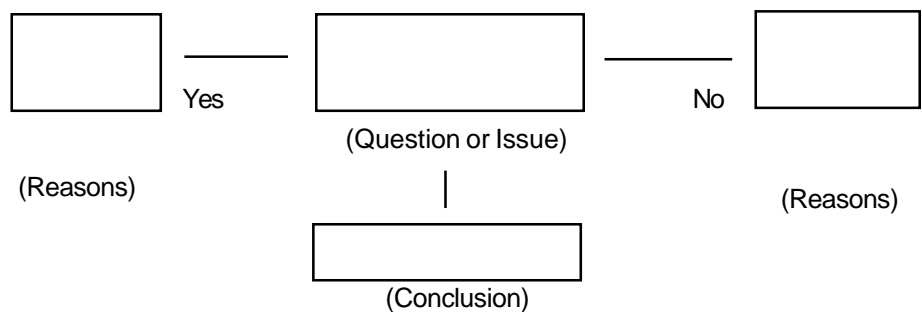
To provide the structure by which students engage the text and each other in thoughtful discussion; to create a framework in which students explore texts and consider different sides of an issue in discussion before drawing conclusions.

Materials:

Informational and narrative texts; can be adapted for most content-area subjects.

Procedure:

1. Prepare students for reading by activating prior knowledge, raising questions, and making predictions about the text.
2. Read the selection and then introduce the Discussion Web by having the students work in pairs to generate pro and con responses to the question. For example, the following question may be used to generate discussion for *Where the Red Fern Grows*: "Should Billy have cut down the big old sycamore tree in order to get to the coon?" The partners work on the same Discussion Web and take turns jotting down their reasons in the "yes" and "no" columns. Students may use key words and phrases to express their ideas, and they should try to list an equal number of pro and con reasons on the web.
3. Combine partners into groups of four to compare responses, work together, achieve a consensus, and reach a conclusion as a group. Explain to the students that it is OK to disagree with other members of the group, but they should all try to keep an open mind as they listen to others during the discussion. Dissenting views may be aired during the whole-class discussion.
4. Give each group three minutes to decide which of all the reasons given best supports the group's conclusion. Each group selects a spokesperson to report to the whole class.
5. Have your students follow up the whole-class discussion by individually writing their responses to the Discussion Web question. Display student responses to the questions in a prominent place in the room so that they can be read by others.



For more information on Discussion Webs, see Alvermann, D.E. (1991). The discussion web: A graphic aid for learning across the curriculum. *The Reading Teacher*, 45(2), 92-99.