

Two Class Discussion Examples: What Do You Notice?

Read the class discussion transcripts and note what you notice in the chart below the excerpts. (You will need to make a copy of this doc before completing it.) Beneath the chart, you will find the analysis of each from the study. This can help you check your observations, as well as possibly elaborate on your conclusions.

Discussion 1 Excerpt: *Based on the story Don't Be an Uncle Max, about an uncle living in Alaska who sends his favorite niece unusual gifts.*

Teacher: So why did he send her snow from Alaska? And, I'm also looking for you to make some inferences about Uncle Max. What can we infer that is not in this text? Um, Dante.

Dante: He sent snow in a box because he can't keep a steady job, while you're broke.

Teacher: Oh, so he didn't have a lot of money, you're saying? So he just put the snow in. Yes, that's probably part of why he did it, but he also did it for another reason, I think, which is maybe why she likes him. Do you think she likes him?

Class: Yes!

Teacher: I am wondering why? So, Nadia?

Nadia: The note that was sent with the snow said it was packed with my love, for her.

Teacher: And, did he really pack love in the box?

Class: No.

Teacher: So what is that? It's not a metaphor really. So what is it, when he says I packed love in the box? What kind of literary device is that?

Amaya: I wasn't going to, I have a different comment.

Teacher: Okay, we'll come back to you. Anybody know? Dante.

Dante: Metaphor?

Teacher: It's not quite a metaphor, right, because the love really stands for ... love. But, can you actually put love in a box?

Class: No.

Teacher: So what do you think?

Tanika: Idiom?

Teacher: Mmm, that's interesting. I don't think it's exactly an idiom but I could see how you could make that conclusion. What do you think?

Jamir: Hyperbole?

Teacher: Yeah, it's hyperbole. That's what I was thinking. It's a big exaggeration, he's not really packing love in the box. It's also very descriptive language, it's very figurative. He's making you understand how the uncle feels about her, what's her name, Joanne, Jo, without saying it. You can make inferences about their relationship. What does Jo do with the love? Does she go 'Oh, that's stupid'?

Class: No.

Dion: She says in the last paragraph in the last page, 'Uncle Max also sent me lots of love. Sometimes I really need that. I taped the box closed again so none of the love will fall out.'

Teacher: Excellent, excellent. So what was the other big thing that Max sent to her that maybe not everyone would understand or appreciate? Andre.

Andre: A blue jay.

Teacher: He sent her a bird? It was really a bird? Was it? Was it a bird that made a lot of noise at night when she went to sleep?

Class: No.

Andre: It was a trained bird.

Teacher: It was a what?

Andre: A trained bird.

Teacher: It wasn't a trained bird. Dante?

Discussion 2 Excerpt: Based on the story Thank You, Ma'am, about a teenage boy who tries to steal an elderly woman's purse. Instead of calling the police she brings him home, feeds him, and gives him ten dollars. Students are discussing the question of whether the woman should have reported the youth to the police.

Zalen: I want to agree with everybody who say no because, like, when Andre said she grabbed him by the neck and, she call the police, the boy could tell everything that she did ... that the old lady did to him, like beat him up or something. Mia.

Mia: I say she should never have called the cops because in the text it said that his age was around 15 or 16, and, they said it in the text. And I say she should never have called the cops because he was too young to go to jail. And like, I think Kala said ... yeah, like Kala said it would have been her fault because she grabbed him by the neck and he didn't really grab her purse, but he tried to.

Dante: Zalen, can you repeat that again?

Zalen: I said that, um like Andre said that, the lady had grabbed him by the neck down the street, he could've just told the police that, could have told the police everything that the lady did to him.

Sam: Yeah, but he was the one who stole the pocketbook ... So if she calls the cops ... She didn't really call the cops... But he stole her pocketbook.

Tanika: I want to change my mind ... I want to change my mind, I say yes, she should have called the police because, if, if you're walking down the street at eleven o'clock and ... No, you can't just turn the corner and then grab onto a lady's purse by accident. [points to Zalen]

Teacher: [Laughs]

Zalen: I want to go back to what Sam said and I want to disagree with you [looking at Sam] because, he didn't actually steal the purse, he tried to, he grabbed onto the purse. [points to Amaya]

Amaya: I want to disagree with Tanika because, if the lady would have called the cops, why would she have bring him to her house and give him the 10 dollars? Nadia.

Jamir: Huh?

Nadia: I agree with/

Teacher: [Interrupts] Wait, just let me stop for just a second. I think there's a little confusion about that. If the lady had ... She said if the lady had called the cops why would she bring him to her house and give him 10 dollars.

Jamir: She didn't call the cops.

Amaya: [quietly] Exactly what I was sayin'

Teacher: Thank you.

Nadia: I agree with Tanika because um, he didn't really finish grabbing her pocketbook and he didn't really stole it and, and you don't know if he could do that again.

Discussion Examples Observations

	Discussion 1 Excerpt (<i>Don't Be an Uncle Max</i>)	Discussion 2 Excerpt (<i>Thank You, Ma'am</i>)
What appears to be the purpose or goal of the discussion? Which discussion is an example of an inquiry discussion/argumentation?		
What do you notice about who is controlling the flow of the discussion?		
What teacher talk moves do you notice?		
What student talk moves do you notice?		
What do you notice about the thinking involved in the discussion?		
To what extent are students collaborating with one another during the discussion?		

What can you conclude about inquiry discussions based on what you learned in Unit 1, Unit 2, and these examples?

Analysis from study:

Discussion 1 Analysis:

“Note that in this excerpt the teacher held the floor most of the time and controlled the flow of discussion. The pattern of discourse was largely that of recitation where the teacher nominated students, asked questions, evaluated the answers, and generally steered the discussion towards predetermined conclusions. Students’ responses were brief and all were directed to the teacher” (Wilkinson et al., 2016 p. 75).

Discussion 2 Analysis:

“In this excerpt, the students largely controlled the flow of discussion. There were consecutive peer-to-peer exchanges uninterrupted by the teacher. The students engaged in critical and collaborative inquiry in relation to the big question; they managed turn taking, evaluated each other’s answers, and explored alternative perspectives together. The teacher stepped in only when necessary to clarify a misunderstanding. The students connected their ideas to those of others in the group, and gave long, elaborated responses using reasons and evidence from the text to support their claims. There was an openness and respect for differences of opinion. One of the students, Tanika, changed her position in response to other’s arguments, a move some regard as a key indicator of an exploratory or inquiry orientation (Wegerif 2008). Elsewhere in the discussion, not shown in this excerpt, other students also changed their minds” (Wilkinson et al., 2016 p. 76).

Source: Wilkinson, I. A. G., Reznitskaya, A., Bourdage, K., Oyler, J., Glin, M., Drewry, R., Kim, M. Y., & Nelson, K. (2016). Toward a more dialogic pedagogy: changing teachers’ beliefs and practices through professional development in language arts classrooms. *Language and Education*, 31(1), 65–82.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2016.1230129>

