

Reframing Discussion Prompts

Moving beyond a binary agree or disagree question for discussion invites deep listening and promotes the skill of seeking to understand others in a conversation. This is particularly valuable for high-emotion topics such as politics and current events.

Note: Using “could” in place of “should” in many questions below is intentional. Deliberation (coming to consensus) is an important civic skill. Though for high-emotion topics, it’s helpful to start with more expansive dialogue or discussion.

Potential Goals and Shifts:

- Critical analysis: Ask about potential impacts or root causes of an issue
- Policy: Narrow the scope to how to address a factual reality
- Identify values: Invite students to name theirs and community values that should inform a policy
- Civic imagination: Invite a brainstorm of alternative policies affirming dignity

Examples of Reframed Prompts:

1. Original: *Is [name of policy] a good immigration policy?*
 - a. Critical analysis:
 - i. What are the potential impacts of this immigration policy?
 - ii. What is causing high rates of immigration?
 - iii. How does immigration impact our community?
 - b. Policy: This prompt is already policy-driven, but you could adapt the policy frame
 - i. What could we do about unaccompanied minors at the border?
 - ii. What policies could address underlying causes of forced displacement and economic insecurity?
 - c. Values identification:
 - i. When you think about the idea of or the impacts of immigration, what is the value that comes to mind?

- ii. What values would you want to inform our immigration policy?

d. Civic imagination:

- i. How might we creatively illuminate the ways immigration has impacted our community?
- ii. How could we generatively engage community members in conversations about immigration?
- iii. How could the U.S. support the freedom, safety, and economic opportunity of all of its residents?

2. Original: *Should we restrict free speech?*

a. Critical analysis:

- i. What are the potential impacts of unfettered free speech?
- ii. What are the potential impacts of heavily restricted speech?
- iii. What responsibilities does a government have to its people?

b. Policy:

- i. How would we like social media companies to ensure users are psychologically safe on their platforms?
- ii. How would we like our school or class community respond to harmful speech?

c. Identify values:

- i. As a thoughtful community member, what are the values that could inform how we express our ideas?
- ii. What value is most important to you as you think about how you want to feel in community with others? Why?

d. Civic imagination:

- i. What's the most effective way to ensure individuals act with community care?
- ii. How can we enable all members of our community to feel their needs of both belonging and freedom are fulfilled?

3. Original: *Should the U.S. send money to Israel?*

a. Critical analysis:

- i. Why does the U.S. send money to Israel?
- ii. What do the U.S. and Israel have in common?
- iii. What have been the impacts of sending more money to Israel than surrounding Arab countries?
- iv. What are the potential impacts of the U.S. ceasing to send money to Israel?

b. Policy: This prompt is already policy-driven, but you could adapt the policy frame

- i. How could the United States ensure the safety, health, and security of all people, internationally?
- ii. Which U.S. policy could be enacted or repealed to better support international peace and justice?

c. Values identification:

- i. What is the primary value that comes up for you as you think about U.S. engagement with Israel?
- ii. What values would you want to inform our international aid?
- iii. How can communities ensure the safety and freedom of all peoples?

d. Civic imagination:

- i. How can perpetrators and survivors of violence acknowledge the harm done, support healing, and prevent future harm?
- ii. How could the U.S. model truth and reconciliation on a domestic level?
- iii. How can communities advance peace and justice when harm is done?