

Guidelines for Shared Inquiry Discussion

In Shared Inquiry, participants help one another search for answers to questions raised by a work that they all have read.

The leader focuses discussion on an interpretive question about the text, a question that has more than one possible answer, based on evidence from the piece. As participants respond to the question, the leader asks follow-up questions to help participants clarify and support their ideas and consider proposed interpretations.

Here are the basic guidelines for Shared Inquiry discussion:

1. Read the selection carefully before participating in the discussion. This ensures that all participants are equally prepared to talk about the ideas in the work.
2. Support your ideas with evidence from the text. This keeps the discussion focused on understanding the selection and enables the group to weigh textual support for different answers.
3. Discuss the ideas in the selection and try to understand them fully before exploring issues that go beyond the selection. Reflecting on the ideas in the text and the evidence to support them makes the exploration of related issues more productive.
4. Listen to other participants and respond to them directly. Directing your comments and questions to other group members, not always to the leader, will make the discussion livelier and more dynamic.
5. Expect the leader to only ask questions. Effective leaders help participants develop their own ideas, with everyone gaining a new understanding in the process. Participants should look to the leader for questions, not answers.