

Handout 2.1

Group discussion - Useful classroom techniques

Think-Pair-Share

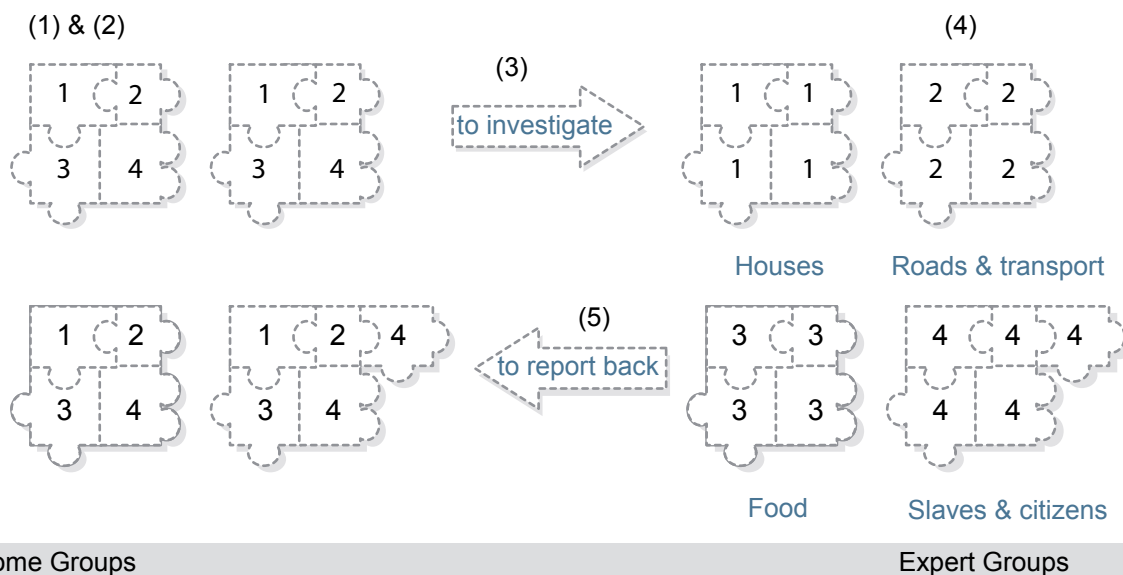
Children are asked to consider an issue or problem individually, such as reading and preparing a response to an information text, or preparing a news item to be read aloud. They then explain their ideas to a partner. After the pairs have discussed the issue, they may join another pair, share views and emerge with a group conclusion or perspective.

Jigsaw

Jigsaw procedure:

- Organise the class into home groups, preferably of equal numbers.
- Number each child in the home group: 1, 2, 3 or 4. If the numbers in a group are uneven, two children can be set the same individual task: 1, 2, 3, 4, 4.
- Assign each child with the same number (i.e. all the number 3s) to one area for investigation.
- The children now rearrange themselves to form expert groups (i.e. all the number 1s together, etc.) to undertake investigations, discuss their work and agree on the main points to report back to the home group.
- Children re-form into their home groups and each individual member reports back on the findings of the expert group.

Example: The task is to produce an information book about the Romans



Snowballing

Children are organised to discuss something or to investigate an issue in pairs. The pairs then join another pair to form a group and share their findings. The small groups then join together to make a larger one, for example:

2 → 4 → 8 → 16 → whole-class plenary/centre

This approach can be useful when controversial material is being read and evaluated, perhaps for bias or for portraying stereotypical images.

Statements game

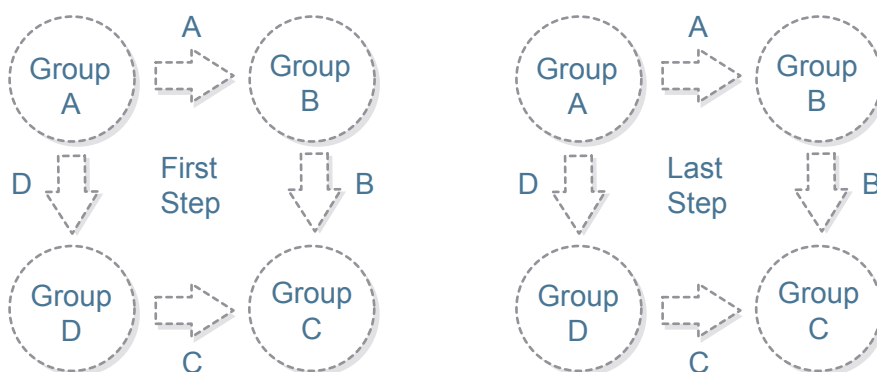
A group is given a set of cards on which statements are written. The group is asked to agree, through discussion, how to categorise the statements, e.g. either agree or disagree with the statement or place them in order of importance or relevance, when some might be considered of equal importance, using the power triangle:

(X = a statement)



Envoys

This is a method of disseminating ideas and information that can overcome a more laborious and repetitive procedure of having each group 'report back' to the whole class. Once each group has completed its initial discussion, it sends out one member as an envoy to the next group. Envoys move round all the other groups in turn explaining/sharing ideas gathered from the groups they have visited.



Rainbowing

Each member of a working group is given a colour. When the group task is complete the children form new groups according to their colours. Within the colour groups, children compare findings/discuss what they have achieved. This is a useful way of disseminating and sharing ideas. It helps children to clarify their own understanding and provides an opportunity for them to question others and to seek justification for any viewpoints. It is a useful technique for reading and critical evaluation of fiction or poetry. It can also be used for drafting and redrafting, when children work on a story starter in one group and then, in their colour group, pool ideas and draw out the best features. The process can then be repeated for the next phase of a story.

Information gap

Choose a topic that can be divided into two complementary parts, for example, a comparison of the lives of rich and poor children in Victorian times or a discussion of the pros and cons of experiments on animals. Split a small group into two sub-groups and give each group information related to one part of the topic. To complete the task, pupils will need to use talk to share the information and draw it together.