

Role Playing

This is an exercise to make the students aware of all the different roles and parts that go into making a discussion, and make them more aware of what roles they take on habitually as well as what roles are more difficult for them.

Cut up this sheet of paper into strips, each strip having one role described on it. Distribute the strips so that each student has a role. Carry on a class discussion with the students all required to stay within their assigned roles. Near the end of the class period stop the discussion and talk about the role playing experience. See if students can guess what roles other students played. What was it like not to be able to talk as much as you wanted? How was it to ask only questions? Was it hard to reference the text for every statement? Do you play your assigned role in your classes every day or was this a new experience?

QUESTIONER: You may only ask questions. The questions should not just be clarifying questions – "What do you mean?" or "What did you say?" but rather thoughtful questions that are going to require some thought and advance the conversation. There may be one other questioner.

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SUMMARIZER: You summarize major points that have been made at the table, not after every comment but rather after we have developed an idea for a bit and different people have spoken and contributed. There may be one other summarizer.

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CONNECTOR: You make connections between the ideas and comments of different people. You should not try to connect every comment, but rather the bigger pictures, the major ideas and points as they are developed in the discussion. Or, you may connect today's discussion with previous discussions or previous ideas that we have already covered in the course. You are the only connector.

CONTRIBUTOR/DERAILER: You are a regular participant in the discussion, and should contribute your own ideas to the discussion. It is best when you can support your ideas with evidence from the text. However, two or three times during the class (no more) you should derail the class by making a comment that is completely irrelevant, or way off the topic. Try to be subtle...

CONTRIBUTOR/INTERRUPTER: You are a regular participant in the discussion, and should contribute your own ideas to the discussion. It is best when you can support your ideas with evidence from the text. However, 2-3 times during class (no more) interrupt somebody in the middle of whatever they are saying, and change the subject/topic of the discussion. Try to be subtle...

TEXT REFERENCER: The only contributions you may make to the conversation are text references, supporting either your own ideas or the points of others.

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