



THE HARKNESS METHOD: 21ST CENTURY 'POWER' SKILLS AND GIFTED LEARNERS

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21st Century Power Skills

According to Philip J. Hanlon, President of Dartmouth, communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, and collaboration are the 'power' skills – not soft skills – that students must develop to be successful in the 21st century

One strategy for promoting 'power' skills with gifted learners is through responsive, student-led Harkness discussions

WE NEED GIFTED
PROGRAMS THAT
TARGET EXPLICIT
POWER SKILLS



The Harkness Method



STRATEGY FOR CONDUCTING AND EVALUATING STUDENT DISCUSSIONS DEVELOPED AT PHILLIPS EXETER ACADEMY



TEACHER OBSERVES AND GIVES FEEDBACK BASED ON THE QUALITY OF CONTRIBUTIONS AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CONVERSATION



DISCUSSION IS EQUITABLE, COLLABORATIVE, AND STUDENT-DRIVEN

What power skills are developed during a Harkness Discussion?

- Communications
- Critical thinking
- Teamwork
- Awareness
- Curiosity
- The ability to connect
- Interacting effectively and harmoniously with others

Student Preparation

READ AND RESPOND
TO THE TEXT BEFORE
THE DISCUSSION
USING READING
STRATEGIES

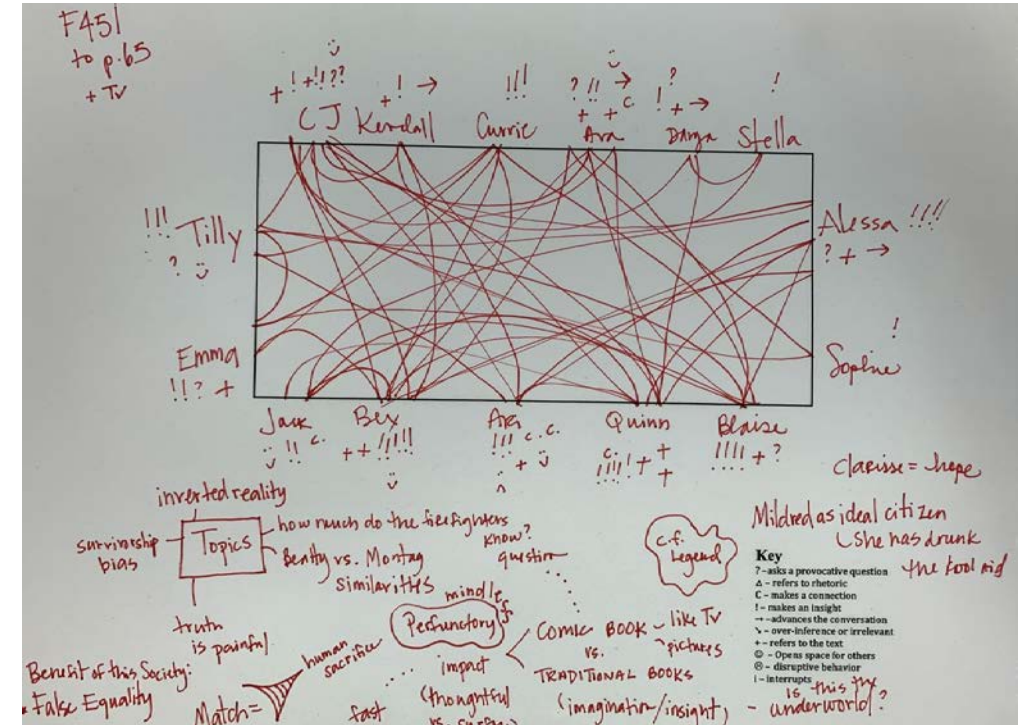
WRITE QUESTIONS,
MAKE CONNECTIONS,
SUMMARIZE, MAKE
INFERENCES, UNPACK
LANGUAGE

CONSIDER AND
CONNECT ANY
SUPPLEMENTARY
MATERIALS

Discussion Rubric

Objectives	Exceeds (EP)	Meets (MP)	Approaching (AP)	Developing (DP)
Engagement and Civility <small>Key: @, @, !, and other marks for participation</small>	Actively listens to peers using names / eye contact. Disagrees respectfully. Opens space for other students. Helps support the flow of the conversation. Advances the conversation.	Does not use names or eye contact all the time. Inconsistent connection with the group, but not disruptive. Listens fairly well. Sits up at the table. Respects classmates and has earned respect of classmates. Contributes equally during the discussion.	Likes to talk too much or not enough. Is disruptive by being withdrawn and quiet. Distracted from the group. Rarely uses names. Talks just to friends. Aggressive tone. Shuts down the conversation. Makes people uncomfortable. Can get sidetracked.	Exhibits disruptive behavior. Disconnected from the class. Uses technology inappropriately. Off topic or disruptive. Interrupts other students. Rests head on the table. Talks to other groups (or while in the outer circle).
Critical Thinking and Analysis <small>Key: Comment (1, 2, 3), P, A, C, I, →, V</small>	Makes connections to previous comments. Offers inferences. Shows attention to detail. Builds on other people's comments. Mines the text for meaning (figurative language, characterization, literary devices, motif, theme, rhetoric). Supports multivalence.	Comments are mainly related to the plot or setting. Uses textual evidence but could go deeper with insight or thoroughness. Comments lead into some commentary. Contributes multiple times throughout discussion with questions.	Reiterates statements that have already been made. Makes irrelevant comments. Ignores others' comments or questions. Speaks "around" the context or topic. Comments could be made without doing the work.	Does not often generate new ideas that further the discussion. Rarely offers new ideas. Does not show understanding of the materials. Regularly makes irrelevant comments. Makes off-topic comments.
Textual Evidence <small>Key: -</small>	Always cites evidence from the text when proving points, including page number.	Cites text a few times.	Sometimes uses a quotation as evidence to support a point.	Cites the text once or not at all.
Participation and Preparation <small>Key: All signs</small>	Takes part on a regular basis but does not dominate. Consistent, constructive participant. Thoroughly completed the preparation.	A bit dominant (could let others speak more). Could speak a more regularly. Mostly completes the preparation.	Has to be reminded to share time. Has to be reminded on occasion to speak up. Somewhat completes the preparation.	Does not participate. Does not complete the preparation. Does not bring the reading to the discussion.

Name: _____ Score: _____ Reading: _____



FEEDBACK AND REFLECTION (SELF/PEER)

Students then choose how to contribute:

Summarizing,
restating, clarifying

Offering examples of
evidence from the
text

Asking or answering
questions

Opening up space
for reluctant
participants

Commenting on the
word choice

Looking for patterns
or motifs

Asking for
clarification

Building on or
politely disagreeing
with other
comments

Analyzing the text

Advancing the
discussion

Making connections
(other texts,
situations, or
comments)

Recognizing when a
topic has been
exhausted

Unpacking literary
devices (symbols,
metaphors, etc.)

Reminding
others/themselves
not to dominate

Listening carefully

Modulating body
language and tone

Seeking clarification

Using names and
making eye contact



CONNECTION TO NGAC STANDARDS

CURRICULUM PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT

Demonstrate growth in cognitive, social-emotional, and psychosocial areas (2.4)

Students self-assess their learning progress (2.5)

Meet the interest, strengths, and needs of students (3.1.3)

Advanced, conceptually challenging, in-depth, and complex content for students with gifts and talents (3.1.4)

Goal setting, resiliency, self-management, self-advocacy, social awareness, and responsible decision making (3.2.1)

Cultivate social and emotional and psychosocial skills that support high achievement and talent development (3.2.2)

Responsive curriculum that connects to students' real-life experiences and includes multiple perspectives (3.3.1)

Educators encourage students to connect to others' experiences, examine their own perspectives and biases, and develop a critical consciousness (3.3.2)

Inquiry-based critical thinking, creative thinking, and problem-solving strategies (3.4.3)

Cognitive learning strategies - rehearsal, organization, and elaboration (3.5.2)

DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Incorporate person/social awareness and psychosocial skill development (1.6.2.E)

Create environments that establish trust, support, and collaborative action (4.1.3)

Feedback that promotes perseverance and resilience and focuses on effort, on evidence of potential to meet high standards, and on mistakes as learning opportunities (4.1.4)

Develop social competence manifested in positive peer relationships and social interactions (4.2)

Safe and welcoming climate for addressing personal and social issues (4.3.1)

Developing many forms of leadership and leadership skills (4.3.2)

Promote personal / social responsibility through advocacy and real world problem-solving (4.3.3)

Practice communicating, teaming, and collaborating with diverse individuals and across diverse groups, using positive strategies to address social issues (4.4)

Competence in interpersonal and technical communication skills (4.5)

Enrichment options to extend and deepen learning opportunities (5.1.2)



SAMPLE 7TH GRADE DISCUSSION



SAMPLE 8TH GRADE DISCUSSION

The background features a dynamic composition of colorful ink splatters in shades of purple, blue, yellow, and pink against a white backdrop. A large, dark grey rectangular area is centered on the page, containing the title text. Above the text, within this dark area, is a smaller orange rectangle with a white border.

PRACTICE DISCUSSION

THE OLD-MARRIEDS by Gwendolyn Brooks

But in the crowding darkness not a word did they say.

Though the pretty-coated birds had piped so lightly all the day.

And he had seen the lovers in the little side streets.

And she had heard the morning stories clogged with sweets.

It was quite a time for loving. It was midnight. It was May.

But in the crowding darknessss not a word did they say.

References

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- Blaschka, Amy. "Five Hard Truths About Soft Skills That Might Surprise You." *Forbes Magazine*, 12 Apr. 2019, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/amyblaschka/2019/04/11/five-surprisingly-hard-truths-about-soft-skills/#79e647e62383>.
- Corso, John. "Power Skills for the 21st Century – Strategic Thinking." *Georgetown University School of Continuing Studies*, 12 July 2019, <https://scs.georgetown.edu/news-and-events/article/7548/power-skills-21st-century-strategic-thinking>.