

Opening Exercise

23. A PSALM OF DAVID

1. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
2. He makes me lie down in green pastures.
 He leads me beside still waters.
3. He restores my soul.
 He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
- 4 . Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
 I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
 your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
5. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
 you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
6. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
 and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

In a small group please introduce yourselves to each other then consider the four questions below. What features of any of these questions do you think would best generate a productive discussion in your classroom?

Q 1. In Psalm 23 there are many statements that develop the sheep/psalmist, shepherd/God analogy, but some of the images seem to step away from the analogy and only apply to the psalmist and God. Which if any of the ideas in psalm do you think only apply to the relationship between the psalmist and God?

Q 2. Which visual images in the psalm are most striking? Why?

Q 3. How does the author use color or shading in this psalm?

Q 4. What significant shifts in style, grammar, or tone do you notice in the psalm? (Follow up with “Why are they significant?”)

What I Learned about Discussion in 400 hours of Classroom Discussion

PRELIMINARY COMMENTS

Other ACCS Talks on Classroom Discussion:

1. 2023 Cultivating Conversation: Using Feedback & Grading to Improve Discussion – Bryan Lynch
2. 2022 Socratic Discussion – Creating Conversations That Transform – Heather Jennings
3. 2021 Fostering an Environment for Vibrant Discussions – Sarah Pape
4. 2020 Socratic Learning: How to Lead Discussions – Tim Dornlan
5. 2019 Effective Classroom Discussion – Chris Schlect

St. John's Practices:

1. Classic works & classical methodology
2. Classes are exclusively discussions
3. Oral assessments and oral performance review conferences with all teachers
4. Grades are “invisible”

My Practices:

1. Set days for discussion
2. Students read and prepare notes with three questions
3. Begin with a “70”
4. Missed discussion necessitates two-page essay
5. Room set-up reflects teacher's role

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Why discussion?

Discussion is basic to life.

We want to train students in careful reading, deep thought, disciplined curiosity, organized argument, articulate speech, and active listening.

“The one who does the work does the learning” (Exeter)



*“... selfless presence, attentive listening, and thought-filled words of a sustained conversation would better meet the needs of the soul.” (Joanne Jung, *The Lost Discipline of Conversation: Surprising Lessons in Spiritual Formation Drawn from the English Puritans* 18)*

I. Culture is key

II. Tailor your discussion to your purpose

III. With structure less is more

IV. With frequency, more is more

V. Teach that the text is the teacher

VI. Success depends on questions

A. Questions that begin a discussion

B. Questions that advance the discussion

C. Questions to broaden involvement

D. Questions that end well

VII. The table setting makes it a feast

VIII. During discussion do something

IX. Hobgoblins or false fiends

X. Fool's gold or false friends

Virtues of the classroom:

1. Fidelity

2. Initiative

3. Humility

4. Toughness

5. Integrity

6. Diligence

7. Zeal

8. Courage
