



Disciplinary Discussions—Element 2: Provide Extended and Supported Opportunities for Students to Engage in Disciplinary Discussions

Instructional Strategy—Layering Texts

Texts today go beyond traditional print materials to include written, visual, audio, and multimedia messages that convey information or ideas. A text set is a collection of texts that share a similar topic or content. They may be written by the same author or painted by the same artist, be examples of the same genre, illustrate the same setting or theme, or provide a different perspective on the same person, event, or concept.

Why Use This Strategy: Synthesizing across multiple texts is a necessary skill for twenty-first-century learning, and layering texts in a set raises the intellectual rigor of this task. Synthesis includes summarizing key information, uncovering patterns within texts, and integrating ideas. In order to synthesize texts, students must first analyze them to determine important information and concepts conveyed by the authors. Then the discrete parts of the texts and the ideas within them can be compared to parts of other texts in the set to form new ideas and understandings. Layering texts offers students multiple entry points into a conversation and provides many reasons to engage in meaningful and extended discussions. Teachers often layer

texts to offer greater accessibility for students because the text levels can vary to match the reading abilities represented in the classroom, which allows access for all.

When to Use This Strategy: Teachers layer texts when they want to increase student engagement, since the different formats featured in the text set can heighten student interest and motivate them to read. In addition, Layering Texts is an effective method of exposing students to multiple perspectives and purposes for creating the text. Finally, the texts in a text set are linked by their topic or content, and reading several texts layered this way helps round out concepts for students. When a teacher wants to emphasize key understandings, a text set provides opportunities to see important ideas repeated across texts.

How to Use This Strategy: Teachers strategically decide the order in which the texts will be presented to students based upon students' prior knowledge, student engagement, student proficiency levels, etc. These texts help students construct knowledge as they deepen their understanding by uncovering different texts.

Primary Grade Example Lesson: Provide Extended and Supported Opportunities for Students to Engage in Disciplinary Discussions

1. In this example, the teacher layers texts within a set that includes a poem, an informational text, and a song (audio and visual text) to support student discussions about amphibians. Students can use their individual Conversation Skills posters to support them in their disciplinary discussion. The emphasis is on giving students the opportunity to use the Conversation Skill.

Make sure the graphic organizer on page 61 is in each student packet. Depending on the ability of the students, the graphic organizer can be a projected or a shared online document so it can be used as a classroom chart that is filled in by the teacher with student input or by students as an interactive writing piece.

2. Reproduce the poem "I Am an Amphibian" (see below) and put it in student packets. Project the poem so all students can see it. Read the poem once. Ask students to listen to it again and think about what amphibian facts are in this poem. You can model this as a think aloud with the first four lines.

I Am an Amphibian

I am an Amphibian,
that is me.

I live in the water
and on land you see.

We are salamanders,
frogs or toads.

You won't catch us
walking down the road.

We start off as eggs

laid in a pond
 And develop gills and tails
 after we spawn.
 Lungs and legs are next you see
 that help us climb a tree.
 I am cold blooded,
 That is astounding?
 I am the same temperature
 as my surrounding.
 Amphibian!

- Place students into breakout rooms in Zoom or Google Meet and ask them to discuss with their partner the facts about amphibians in the poem. Have students underline the facts in their own copies as they discuss them. The number of sentence prompts and responses you use depends on your students. You can differentiate this by providing beginning students two or four prompts and responses while more capable students can use all of them. Again, make sure students have copies in their packets.

Prompts

One fact is...
 What other fact is there?
 What does that mean?
 Where does it say that?
 Do you agree?

Responses

What do you think?
 Another fact is...
 I think it means...
 It says it right here.
 I agree because...

- After students have discussed the facts in pairs, ask them to share out their facts to the whole class and you can record them on the projected graphic organizer in the column under "Poem." You can also project visual representations of the facts to help students remember the words.
- On the next day, have students meet with new partners in Zoom breakout rooms. Ask them to share one thing they learned about amphibians and why it is interesting. Explain they are going to be learning more facts about amphibians from a video. Show students the audio/visual text on amphibians on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ti0HDtRY8u4>. Watch it again and ask students to think about the facts they hear in the song. Have the lyrics written out on a handout in their packets and on the wall as a chart. Sing the song again as you point to the words (and sing the song throughout the week). Have students discuss the facts they heard in the song. Use the same sentence prompts and responses from yesterday.

Prompts

One fact is...

Responses

What do you think?

What other fact is there?

Another fact is...

What does that mean?

I think it means...

Where does it say that?

It says it right here...

Do you agree?

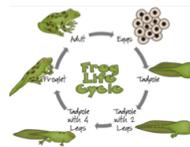
I agree because...

6. After students have discussed the facts in pairs on Zoom, ask students to share out their facts, and record them on the class graphic organizer in the column under "Video." You can post visual representations to the chart to help students. Compare the two columns: What is the same, and what is new information? Cross off anything in column 2 that is the same as column 1 so there isn't any duplicate information.
7. On the following day, have students meet with new partners in Zoom. Ask them to share one new thing they learned about amphibians and why it is interesting. Explain that today they are going to be reading a nonfiction article about amphibians (see below). They are going to be 'text detectives' and look for new facts about amphibians with their partners. If students are unable to read the text, you can project it and read it to them before they go into breakout rooms.

Amphibians

Amphibians are very unusual animals. The word amphibian means two lives. They live both in water and on land. They begin as eggs and then grow gills and tails. As they get older, they get lungs and legs. This is called metamorphosis.

Amphibians also have other interesting characteristics. First, they are cold-blooded animals. This means their bodies are the same temperature as the water or the air around them. Second, an amphibian's skin absorbs air and water. That makes it very sensitive to pollution. Next, amphibians are vertebrates because they have a backbone. However, unlike many vertebrates, they don't have any hair or fur. Finally, adult amphibians have an interesting diet! They like to eat spiders, beetles, and worms.



There are over 4,000 types of amphibians. The most common are frogs, toads, newts and salamanders. They are found on every continent except Antarctica.



Salamander



Newt



Frog



Toad

8. Direct them to talk to their partner and discuss any new facts about amphibians in the article. Have them underline the facts on their own copies as they discuss them. Use sentence prompts and responses.

Prompts

One new fact is...
What other new fact is there?
What does that mean?
Where does it say that?
Do you agree?

Responses

What do you think?
Another new fact is...
I think it means...
It says it right here...
I agree because...

9. After students have discussed the facts in pairs, ask students to share out their facts and highlight them on the chart paper. Then record them on the class graphic organizer in the column under “Text.”
10. Explain to students that, after they review all the facts about amphibians from the graphic organizer, they are going to meet in a group of four, two classroom students and two Zoom students. They will discuss which facts about amphibians they find most interesting and why. Then they will try to come to an agreement about which fact is most interesting. Choose a student on Zoom and model this process as a think aloud using sentence stems and the graphic organizer.
11. Process the use of discussion skills with your students by citing different students’ use of the skills that you witnessed as you monitored their discussions. You can monitor the discussions by walking around the classroom and listening in or by joining the different Zoom breakout rooms. Using the poll function in Zoom ask students to rate their use of each of the discussion skills and set goals for the next opportunity.

Intermediate Grade Example Lesson: Provide Extended and Supported Opportunities for Students to Engage in Disciplinary Discussions

1. The layers of this text set include photographs, an informational text, and song lyrics to support student discussions about the buffalo soldiers who served in the American Civil War. Students can use the Conversation Skills poster to support them in their disciplinary discussion.
2. Project three photos of buffalo soldiers. Students should have copies of these photos in their packets. An example can be found at the URL below. The graphic organizer (see below) should also be in the students’ packets. Ask students to think about what they see in the images. At this point, do not supply them with any information, but instead allow them to tap into their background knowledge or begin to make inferences based

on what they see. As you give them a couple of minutes to generate their own thoughts, place them into a breakout room with a partner to discuss what each of them noticed. Before launching the breakout rooms, tell them to use their graphic organizer and discuss “What can you conclude about the people in the pictures?” and have students fill in the “Pictures” column in the graphic organizer using the prompts provided as needed. After they have discussed the pictures, have them complete the prompt in the last row of that column: “We think...”

<http://bloximages.chicago2.vip.townnews.com/missoulian.com/content/tncms/assets/v3/editorial/4/9a/49a8c67c-2833-11e1-a9a7-001871e3ce6c/4eebc2b635ebe.image.jpg>

Layering Texts: Buffalo Soldiers

Pictures	Article	Lyrics
I noticed... Prompts: “I think...because...” “I also noticed...which supports my idea..” “I can see what you mean, but it could also be...” “I agree/disagree with you because...” “What else could we say?” or “What else do you notice?”	I learned... Prompts: “What did we learn from the text?” “I learned...” “What part of the passage supports our ideas from the photo?” “The part that supports one of the ideas is...” “How has our thinking changed based upon our reading?”	I learned... Prompts: “How do the lyrics inform our thinking?” “We can say that...” “What else can we say?” “How can we bring these ideas together?” “We can agree...” “What is our conclusion?” “Even though some might think that...we could conclude that...”
We think....	Our thinking has changed...	This adds....

We can conclude from the three texts that...

- Provide students with copies of the informational text entitled “Buffalo Soldiers” found below. Make sure this handout is in the students’ packet. Set the purpose for the reading by explaining to students that they are going to be reading about the people in the photos. While reading, they should think about what information in the text supports what they discussed when viewing the pictures and what new information they are learning. Choose an approach to reading the passage that best matches the needs of the students in your classroom. For example, you may ask students to read the text on their own, with a partner in Zoom, in a guided reading group, or by another method that supports your students’ understanding of the text’s content. When students have completed the reading, direct them to talk with their partners and fill in their graphic organizers under the “Article” column. Then place them into Zoom breakout rooms.

Buffalo Soldiers

Origin of the Buffalo Soldiers

After the Civil War, Congress established six all African American army regiments: the ninth and tenth cavalries and the thirty-eighth, thirty-ninth, fortieth, and forty-first infantries. Several years later, the four infantry units were reorganized into the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth infantries, and the cavalry and infantry often fought together. Each of these regiments contained approximately one thousand men, who became known as buffalo soldiers. Although we cannot be sure how they got their name, most people believe that Native Americans first called the troops buffalo soldiers because of their dark curly hair, the buffalo-skin coats they wore, and their bravery in battle.

Life as Buffalo Soldiers

Many of the original members of these segregated units were former slaves who had served in the United States Colored Troops during the Civil War. Although the pay was low (about thirteen dollars a month), many African American men enlisted because they could make more money in the army than by doing anything else. They were also given food, shelter, and medical help. So for many of the men who had been slaves, being a soldier offered dignity and a way to start a new life. In fact, for most African American citizens at the time, the buffalo soldiers were a symbol of hope for a better future.

On the Western Frontier

During the early years of their history, the buffalo soldiers' primary responsibilities were to help rebuild the country after the Civil War and to patrol the western frontier. They protected settlers, built forts, and mapped the wilderness. In 1885, some buffalo soldiers were sent to the Indian Territory to remove white settlers who were illegally claiming Native American land. During the same period, buffalo soldiers helped control the Native American tribes of the plains and the Southwest, escorted stagecoaches and payrolls, and fought cattle rustlers.

The Legacy of the Buffalo Soldiers

African American soldiers performed exemplary service in segregated units from the time buffalo soldier regiments were first formed until 1948, when President Harry Truman ordered the army to integrate. They earned many Medals of Honor and Certificates of Merit despite often being issued older horses, undependable equipment, and less ammunition than other regiments. At a time when many soldiers suffered from alcoholism, buffalo soldiers were rarely drunk. In addition, they were court-martialed less frequently than white soldiers were, and they deserted less often than white soldiers did. In fact, from 1880 to 1886, buffalo soldiers had the lowest desertion rate in the entire army.

4. Shut down the breakout rooms and bring the students back to the main room. Play the song "Buffalo Soldier" by Bob Marley and ask students to follow along with the print lyrics found in their packets (you can access the lyrics at the URL below). Then tell students to engage in another discussion in a breakout room with their partners regarding what they learned from the lyrics and write that in the "Lyrics" column. Now have students discuss and, when they come to consensus, fill in the last row, "We can conclude from the three texts that..."

<http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/bobmarley/buffalosoldier.html>

5. Shut down the breakout rooms and bring the class back together. Lead a class discussion by asking students to share with the entire class the evidence and thoughts they

recorded on their organizers. Document their responses on a corresponding anchor chart or projected chart, paraphrasing when appropriate.

6. Process the use of discussion skills with your students by citing different students' use of the skills that you witness during their discussion. Use a poll and ask students to rate their use of each of the discussion skills then have students set goals for the next opportunity.

partners by the end of the conversation. This is how students come to own ideas and the language of them.

Conclusion. These skills can be used in conversations across disciplines and grade levels as long as students learn how and when to use them as they talk. Students must also learn how and when to prompt their partner to use them. Supporting rich classroom conversations and teach the conversation skills requires planning and preparation. Teachers must thoughtfully and intentionally consider routines and protocols for interaction, including behavioral norms and ways for students to build on one another's ideas; scaffolds, such as prompt and response starters; effective questioning, including the capacity to formulate and respond to complex questions; and intellectually engaging work that encourages and allows all students to participate equitably and enact their agency.

Adapted from Common Core Standards in Diverse Classrooms ©2014 Jeff Zwiers, Susan O'Hara, & Robert Pritchard