



30 Great
CLASSROOM
DISCUSSIONS
for students **10-14** years old



WRITTEN BY **RON SHAW**



THE ACTIVITIES IN THIS BOOK ADDRESS MANY OUTCOMES IN THE SYLLABUS

30 Great Classroom Discussions

Intelligent Australia Productions

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30 Great Classroom Discussions

Teachers Notes

How to make the best use of this book.

Notes and prompts on the discussion topics.

Aims of this book

- To provide whole-class opportunities for discussion of interesting topics.
- To think in-depth about important issues.
- To become aware of one's own prejudices by seeing the other side of an argument.
- To enhance speaking skills.
- To enhance listening skills.
- To develop debating skills.

Intro Prompts and Prep Sheets

The book is made up of two key parts: **Intro Prompts** and **Prep Sheets**.

For successful class discussions both should be used.

1) Intro Prompts

These are preliminary teacher-directed questions and prompts, used to introduce the topic and to generate -in each student- initial thoughts about the issue to be discussed as a class.

Ideally, Intro Prompts should be given 2-4 days prior to the actual discussion.

2) Prep Sheets

These are given to all students at the time the Intro Prompts are discussed in class.

They can be completed during school time or at home (this is at the teacher's discretion). If completed at home parents may work with their children to come up with good ideas to include on Prep Sheets.

Teachers may -or may not- wish to view each student's Prep Sheet prior to the class discussion.

During the discussion all students should have their Prep Sheet with them.

Whole-class discussions v Two debating teams

Opening up the discussion to the whole class gives every student the opportunity to participate.

Some topics -not all are suited- may instead be debated by two debating teams; where this is done the non debaters could use the Prep Sheets to prepare arguments as well, ensuring lively post-debate exchanges.

Discussion Pointers

Where: Consider having children seated in a circle, perhaps in a large room, the school hall or undercover area. Alternatively, discussions can be carried on in the classroom, children seated at their desks.

Organisation: Ensure the discussion is not dominated by any individual(s). This is a forum in which every student has an equal opportunity to participate. Maintain awareness of, and encourage, quieter, shy children.

Introduction/Conclusion: The teacher or a selected student introduces the topic. Teacher to provide constructive remarks upon conclusion of discussion: praise for individual efforts could be given here.

Contributing to the discussion

Children should back up any statements they make with thoughtful comments and examples.

It is not enough to say, *"I think that plants are more important to us than animals."*

Rather, an acceptable contribution would be: *"I think that plants are more important to us than animals because we could do without animals but not without plants. If humans were the only animal species on Earth we could get all the nutrition we need from plants; this would include fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts and so on. We could have clothes made of cotton or other plant-based materials. Plants are essential but animals are not. Many animals are herbivores and if these were to die out because there were no plants there would be a break in the food chain and all animals, including humans, would come to an end. So yes, plants are certainly more important than animals."*

Intro Prompts

Topic #1 **Is Stealing worse than Lying?**

We all know and understand that it is not good to steal or lie but we would do well to examine these notions more closely.

- Are there degrees of stealing? Is stealing a car worse than stealing a pencil? If so, what makes it worse?
- If you take someone else's property with the intention of returning it at a later time is it stealing?
- Are there degrees of lying? Is a student who lies to his parents about his English test result telling a bigger lie than a child who says she didn't take a biscuit from the jar -when she actually did? If so, why?
- Is it OK to tell a lie and then say you were only joking when you get caught out?
- Can you think of any situation where it would be alright to steal?
- Would you care to relate a lie that was told to you?
- When you were little did you ever tell a lie to your parents? Would you like to share it here?
- Have you ever had anything stolen?
- Adults may be punished severely -even jailed- for stealing but are not punished for lying? Why do you think this is?

Topic #2 **Sporty v Brainy**

Most people would say that it's good to be sporty and it's also good to be brainy.

But which of these is best, and why?

- What are the advantages of being sporty? Are there any disadvantages?
- What are the advantages of being brainy? Are there any disadvantages?
- Which -sportiness or braininess- is of most use in life beyond school?
- If someone is not so sporty and would like to be, are they able to get better at sport through practise and training?
- Can extra study and practise make a person brainier?
- Someone who is lucky to be both sporty *and* brainy might be lacking in other areas. They might be envious of those who have qualities such as: sense of humour, cheerfulness, kindness, etc.
- If you were to list the 5 most important qualities you could have would sportiness be one of them. How about braininess? Make your list.

Topic #3 **Are Plants more important to us than Animals?**

Could humans get by without animals? Could we get by without plants? If we could only have animals OR plants which should we choose, and why?

- Most of us have pets. It's nice to have pets but are they absolutely necessary? What benefits do pets bring to humans?
- What is your favourite animal? What do you like about it? Do people have a favourite plant?
- Some animal species are threatened; others are endangered. What is the difference between these two terms?
- What are your thoughts about... experiments on animals; animals in circuses; animals in zoos?
- Do animals need plants? How?
- Are there any ways in which plants need animals?
- What are some different kinds of plants? (*flowering, fruit/nuts, cotton, rubber, trees, grass, etc.*)
- How do we use plants? (*food, medicines, shade, timber, paper, gardens, etc.*)

Topic #4 A World Without Bullies

We all know what bullying is. Bullies have been around for as long as anyone can remember and they're found throughout the world.

How would things be different if there was no more bullying?

- Which is the worst kind of bullying, physical or psychological? Explain.
- What kinds of people get bullied? (*'different' people, weaker people, ...*)
- What are some of the things kids get bullied over?
- What kind of people become bullies?
- Do you think bullies: Ever feel guilty? Ever apologise? Ever dislike themselves for their behaviour? Ever feel sorry for their victims?
- What are some ways in which bullies can be punished?
- Is bullying an illness?
- Can bullies be 'cured'? If so, how?
- Now, imagine a world in which there is no bullying at all. What would need to happen for such a world to come about?

Topic #5 Is it better to be an expert in one thing and know very little else or an expert in nothing and know a little about many things?

A world famous university professor, very clever in his field of Chemistry, wasn't able to do simple things like changing a light bulb or putting up a tent. His friend could do those simple things, and much more, yet was unknown (outside of his family and close friends). Who would you say was more successful? Who might have been the happier? Which of the two would you rather be?

- What are some things that people may be expert in? (*a sport, playing a musical instrument, mathematics, writing books, being funny, dancing, painting, singing, foreign languages, fixing things, general knowledge, acting,.....*)
- Do you know -or know of- anyone who is extremely good in one area (only) but knows little else?
- Could such a person be happy and content with their life?
- People who are experts in their field often make a lot of money...more than those who know about many things but are expert in none. Do you think this is fair?
- If you could be an expert in only one thing what would that be?

Topic #6 Animal species that are endangered or threatened receive more care and sympathy from us if they are attractive or cute. Do you agree? Should we care just as much about the not-so-pretty animals that are threatened with extinction?

Let's be clear about the term 'animals'. In this discussion the term refers not just to mammals, reptiles and amphibians but to *all* creatures: birds, fish, insects, spiders, worms, ...

- Do you have a favourite animal? If so, what do you like about it?
- What are some animals that almost everyone likes and what is it about them that is appealing? (*dolphin, panda, seal pup, koala, elephant, tiger, butterfly, ...*)
- Is there a particular animal you don't like? Why don't you like it?
- What kind of animals do people dislike? (*harmful animals: snake, spider, shark, crocodile...*)
- What are some animals that have gone extinct? (*dinosaurs, sabre-tooth tiger, woolly mammoth, dodo bird, ...*)
- Why do animals go extinct? (*human destruction of habitat, hunting, climate change...*)
- Is it important that we take steps to save threatened species? Why?
- Should we try to save *all* threatened species or only those creatures that many people count as their favourites? Why?

Topic #7 **Should we help a Stranger as much as we would help a Friend?**

We all know that it's good to help people in need but are there some people (friends) who deserve our help more than others?

- What do you make of this saying: *There are no strangers, only friends you haven't met yet.* ?
- What makes a friend?
- What is a stranger?
- If you needed help would you rather be helped by a friend or a stranger? Why?
- Are people wary of strangers? If you think 'yes', why do you think they are?
- Are friends 'better' than strangers? Why do we trust our friends more than strangers?
- We feel sorry for our friends if they suffer. Do we feel sorry for suffering strangers?
- Should we try harder to look upon strangers as friends?
- There is no law to say we should help those in need. Should there be such a law? If you think 'yes' what should happen to people who break this law?

Topic #8 **PART 1: What are some of the best things about our school?**

PART 2: In what ways could our school be improved?

Each school has its strengths (large play areas, comfortable classrooms, variety of sports options, etc); yet there may be ways in which the school could be improved. How do you see your school in these two areas? (NB this is not a discussion about teachers)

- Were you at a different school before this one? In what ways is your present school better, or not as good, as your previous school(s)?
- Is your school building older, medium-aged or modern? Is modern always better?
- What makes a good school?
- Do you prefer straight classes e.g. year 6 or year 8, to split classes, e.g. year 5/6 or year 8/9?
- Why must there be rules at school? What are some rules at your school?
- Do you think your school has a good policy on bullying?
- Do you think the children at your school have enough areas in which to play?
- What about these?...shady areas, canteen/tuckshop, wet area for art/craft, music room, musical instruments, school hall or undercover area, plants/gardens, climbing equipment, science equipment, sports equipment, sports field(s), basketball court/hoops,

Topic #9 **Imagine a World Without...**

What, if it were to disappear forever, would leave you devastated?

Your answer to this may be light-hearted/humorous, very serious, or somewhere in between. Try to be original by coming up with something that no-one else thinks of.

Perhaps it's a certain food, or drink. Maybe an animal. It could be a TV show, or a cartoon character. Other ideas: a human-made structure (Sydney Opera House?), a natural phenomenon (sunsets?), fish, mountains, holidays, the colour blue, football, books, numbers, flowers, birthdays, watermelon, beaches, The list is endless.

- Why is this so important to you?
- How would the world (or your world) be different without it?
- Who else, and what other things, would be affected by its loss?
- Can you think of anything that could be invented or introduced to replace it?

Topic #10 **Something that made me feel good**

Did something ever happen in your life that made you feel really special? Perhaps you won a race. Maybe somebody complimented you on something you did. Try to think of the one thing, above all others, that gave you a really great feeling.

- What kinds of things make people feel good about themselves?
- Have you ever helped a distressed (injured?) animal?
- Have you ever helped a distressed (injured?) person?
- Why do people feel good when they help others?
- Why do people feel good when they come first in a race, a test, a contest or a competition?
- Can wearing certain clothes make people feel good about themselves?
- Can receiving a much-wanted birthday or Christmas present make a person feel good?

Topic #11 **Did you Know?**

Our world -the universe- is full of interesting facts, most of which are unknown to us. So when we do discover such a fact it is good to share it with others. We can never know too many of these and the more we know the more we can appreciate both the marvels of Nature and the achievements of humans.

- Here are two interesting facts: (1) *A spider's thread is five times stronger than steel of the same thickness;* (2) *Of the millions of labourers who built the Great Wall of China many were common people, including children.*
- Have you ever come across a fact that was almost unbelievable and you found difficult to believe? What was it?
- Is there one area of Nature that you think has more 'unbelievable' facts than any other area? (perhaps the Universe -stars etc; the Sea; Micro-organisms,). Explain.

Topic #12 **Australia, Our Home**

Why is it good to know about the country we live in?

Do you think there is anything special about Australia?

- How much of Australia have you seen?
- Have you been to any other countries?
- Are you able to talk about Australia's climate, and how it varies so much?
- What are some things you know about Australia's unique animals?
- What are some things you know about Australia's unique plants?
- Can you describe Australia's flag?
- Do you know the states and territories and their capital cities?
- How much do you know about our state emblems?
- Do you know what goods Australia produces and trades?
- How much do you know about our rivers and mountain ranges?
- Do you know much about our unique landforms?
- What do you know about Australia's history?
- Can you think of any Australian icons? (*vegemite, Dame Edna Everage,.....*)

Topic #13 Should all Zoos be closed down?

Most people enjoy a visit to the zoo. Why?

What are the pros and cons of zoos?

- Do you think most large cities have a zoo?
- What is the purpose of zoos?
- What are the positive aspects of zoos?
- What are the negative aspects of zoos?
- What kind of people might enjoy zoos the most?
- What kind of people might not enjoy going to the zoo?
- Have you ever thought about zoos from the perspective of the zoos' animals?
- Who might be pleased if all zoos were closed down?
- Who might be disappointed if zoos were closed?

Topic #14 A Very Useful Invention is ...

What are inventions?

Are all inventions 'good'? Can you think of anything that was not a 'good' invention? What's an invention that you think has been very useful?

- Do you know the names of any inventors?
- What is an invention that has made a big difference to the world?
- Can you think of a common, everyday invention that we take for granted?
- Can you think of an invention that you could not do without?
- Is there something you'd like to see invented?

Topic #15 Dreams

There is still a lot we don't know about the hows and whys of dreams. In this discussion we hope to find some common threads.

- Are humans the only beings that dream?
- Some people say they dream in colour; others say their dreams are in black and white. What about your dreams?
- Would you say you dream every time you sleep?
- Do dreams only occur during night sleep or can they happen during day sleep?
- Are most dreams 'good' or 'bad'?
- What is a nightmare?
- What do you think causes people to dream?
- Is daydreaming really dreaming?

Topic #16 Getting Along

Why is it important to get along with others and what can we do to make this happen?

- Is it possible to get along with everyone you come into contact with?
- Why are some people easier to get along with than others?
- Some people are described as 'difficult to get along with'. What might be some reasons they're like this?
- What are possible reasons that two people may not get along together very well?
- Siblings (brothers and sisters) sometimes don't get along too well. What are some reasons for this?
- What kinds of qualities are possessed by those who are easy to get along with?
- At school we might occasionally need to work together with someone whom we find difficult to get along with. What is the best way of dealing with this situation?

Topic #17 **Is Maths overrated?**

Maths has always been considered an important subject at school. But is it given too much importance?

- Which do you think is more important, Maths or Reading? Why?
- Are you one of the lucky ones who has few problems with maths or is maths something you've always struggled with?
- Think about all the various things you learn about in maths. Which of these would you say are important to know, and why?
- What, if anything, is something in the maths syllabus that everyone should master?
- Maths is used in many jobs (surveying, engineering, architecture, ...). Can you think of any jobs where maths is never used?
- Some people would say that it was important to master maths in the time before calculators were invented but these days (with calculators to help us) maths has lost some of its importance. What do you say about this?

Topic #18 **Kid Power! *What can kids do to make the world a better place?***

A saying from the olden says is, "Children should be seen and not heard." This saying indicates that children don't have much to offer, that they can't really 'make a difference'. You might disagree with this. If so, what is one way you can think of that shows this old saying is very much out-of-date?

- Is there anything that children are better at than adults?
- Can adults learn anything from children?
- Older kids can be good role models for young ones; can this help make the world better?
- Can you think of any ways that kids can volunteer to do jobs for the elderly and needy?
- Would you say that showing respect and kindness to others, especially elderly people, is a good way for kids to make the world a better place?
- Here are some ways of communicating with others...post (letter or card); email; text; phone. How could you use any of these to help bring happiness to someone?

Topic #19 **Strength & Weakness**

Of the two types of strength -physical and mental- which is most important?

- There is no doubt that some people, from a very early age, are physically stronger than others. Do you believe that some people, from a very early age, are *mentally* stronger than others? (*one good example of mental courage is moral courage*)
- What does it mean to be mentally strong?
- Does everyone experience fear or only 'weak' people?
- People who are not so strong physically can do exercises to build up their physical strength. Is it possible to work on your mental toughness? (*training? discipline?*)
- Most would say that it takes courage to be physically brave (such as putting your body 'on the line' in a contact sport). What about someone who -for whatever reason- chooses not to go along with her/his peers and thereby risks their disapproval...would you agree that this takes mental courage?
- Suppose your own values convince you that your peers, who ask you to join them, are about to engage in some behaviour you don't agree with. You need to make a decision: to join with them or to let them know of your disapproval. Do you agree that 'going along with the crowd' simply because you fear their rejection is easier than being 'true to yourself' and saying 'No'? Can you say that saying 'yes' indicates weakness and saying 'no' shows you are strong?

Topic #20 A World Language?

Should everyone in the world be able to speak a common language?

- Which languages are spoken by the most people? (*Mandarin Chinese, English, Spanish, Bengali, Hindi, Arabic,...*)
- What advantages do you see in having a world language, one that all can speak and understand?
- Have you ever learnt a foreign language? Did you find it difficult to learn?
- Although Mandarin is spoken by the most people is it spoken by many people outside of China?
- Spanish and French (and to a lesser extent German) are spoken in several countries around the world but the most widely-spoken language is English (though it's not necessarily the first language of some nations).
- A made-up language, Esperanto, was designed to be a world language; it is a phonetic language (spelt as it sounds) and is relatively easy to learn. However the idea has never quite caught on. Why might this be?
- English is the language of pilots, of most science and medical journals, and of computers; this makes it a very important language. Most people agree that English seems to be the world language, the most useful language to know. English is now being taught in schools in many countries around the world.
- There are those who say that it is not important to preserve (hold on) to languages that are spoken by fewer and fewer people; they argue that people in those societies would do better to learn the world language (English) and 'forget' their native tongue. Do you think it would be a pity if certain languages were simply forgotten; if so, why?
- Some say there could be two world languages, English and Chinese (Mandarin), and that it would be good if all people, one day, were bilingual in these. What do you say to this idea? What advantages would there be? What disadvantages?

Topic #21 Art

Art (paintings/drawings) can bring a lot of pleasure to people. How?

- Doing v viewing....both of these can be enjoyable. What is it about painting a picture that gives enjoyment to an artist? What gives enjoyment to someone admiring a painting?
- Have people always painted and sketched? Why do they do this?
- What are some materials that can be used to (a) draw or paint with (b) draw or paint upon ?
- Do all people like to create pictures by drawing or painting? Do all very young children?
- What happens to completed works of art? (*hung on walls in homes, offices, art galleries,*)
- What are some types of paintings/drawings? (*landscape, still life, portrait,*)
- Is a cartoonist a real artist? Do you know the names of any cartoonists?
- Do you think everybody likes to look at 'nice' paintings? Or is it only certain types of people?
- Think about some of the pictures that hang in your home. What, and where, are they?
- Perhaps some of the pictures on the walls in your home are photographs. Photographs lack the creativity of works of art but can they look as 'good' on a wall?
- What makes a good landscape or seascape painting?
- There are those who prefer drawing scenes than drawing people or animals. Which of these do you most like to draw?
- Not all people agree on whether a piece of art is praiseworthy. What is meant by the phrase, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder"?

Topic #22 Illness & Disease

We should try to learn as much as we can about illness and disease. These affect all of us, our families and friends included.

- What is the difference between illness and disease?
- Can all diseases be 'caught'? What does contagious mean?
- What do you know about the common cold?
- What are viruses?
- What are bacteria?
- What is the worst illness you have had? Have you ever been in hospital?
- A common medical condition is asthma. What do you know about asthma (symptoms, cause, treatment)?
- Has anyone in your family ever been very ill?
- We all know that doctors and nurses treat people who are unwell. Who are some others in the health industry whom we may go to for advice and/or treatment? (*naturopaths, physiotherapists, psychologists, chiropractors,*)
- Some serious illnesses can be caused, or made worse, by consuming harmful substances such as alcohol (diseases of liver/kidney/heart), tobacco (lung cancer, heart disease, stroke) and recreational drugs (depression/psychosis). Do you know of anyone who has suffered from these illnesses and were any of the above harmful substances involved?
- Why is diet important in maintaining good health?
- Why is exercise important in maintaining good health?
- Why is rest and adequate sleep important in maintaining good health?

Topic #23 Safety

Safety is something we should all be concerned with, at home, at school and everywhere else.

- In what part of the home do most accidents occur?
- Do you think there should be a First Aid kit in every home? If so, where should it be kept?
- Should there be a First Aid kit in every car?
- Should all homes and buildings be equipped with a fire extinguisher?
- Would it be good if First Aid courses were compulsory, even for children?
- Ambulance officers, police officers and fire officers may be called upon when proper safety precautions are not followed. Give examples.
- What do you know about water near electricity, e.g. hairdryer near basin of water? What other hazards are present in the bathroom?
- What dangers are associated with electrical appliances, fittings, cords, cables, plugs and sockets?
- What precautions should people take in the kitchen? (*don't leave stoves unattended, etc*)
- What should we never put in our mouths or ears?
- What should we be aware of during hot summer days? (*sunburn, beach and pool rules*)
- What do you know about (pedestrian and bicycle) road safety?
- What is 'stranger danger'?
- What are Safe Houses?
- What do you know about Neighbourhood Watch?
- When should you not answer the phone?
- What phone number can you ring for any general emergency?

Topic #24 UFOs & Aliens

People in many parts of the world have reported seeing UFOs and some claim to have encountered aliens. Are these reports to be believed?

- What do the letters UFO mean?
- Why are many people fascinated by UFOs?
- In the reported sightings what shape are most UFOs?
- Has anyone you know ever seen a UFO?
- If you saw a UFO would you be excited, afraid, both or neither?
- Some UFOs have been de-mystified when suitable explanations for their appearance have been put forward. What natural occurrences have caused people to imagine they've seen an alien spacecraft? (*unusual atmospheric conditions, fireflies,*)
- Do you believe flying saucers (or any other non Earth-based spacecraft) exist?
- Do you believe that Earth has been inhabited by an advanced civilisation pre-dating our own?
- Would you say there may be life elsewhere in our Solar System? If so, what planets would be the most likely to support life?
- If aliens do exist what do you think they might look like?
- Would aliens most likely be hostile or friendly? Why?
- Would you say aliens would be able to talk? If 'yes', would they probably have a language unknown to us? If 'no', how might they communicate with one another?
- There are those who believe that aliens are among us here on Earth, right now....they may even be people we know! What do you think of this?

Topic #25 Respect & Manners

Elderly (and not-so-elderly) people really enjoy coming across children who are polite, have good manners and show respect.

"This is how *we* were," they say.

Older people (mostly) deserve your respect and politeness.

This discussion explores the reasons why having good manners and being respectful are qualities you should embrace.

- We know what good manners are and we know what it means to be polite. But how would you define respect?
- What are some ways in which people show they are badly mannered?
- Make up an example of someone who is disrespectful.
- Can you think of a time when someone did not show you any respect?
- On public transport offer your seat to the elderly, the infirm, and expectant mothers.
- Take your place in a queue...don't push in.
- Importance of these...not yelling out; saying please and thankyou; smiling rather than frowning; showing your gratitude (to parents, etc); not being greedy; saying, "After you"; holding a door open for someone; extra consideration for people with disabilities; quietness in a library, place of worship, etc; correct eating and table manners

Topic #26 Is Sport overrated?

Many of us get a lot of pleasure out of sport, whether it's through participating, watching or both. But if there were no sports we would have more free time to pursue other activities and interests. Is there too much emphasis placed on sport?

- Name one famous male and one famous female sports star. Now do the same for mathematicians. And now for contemporary artists (Picasso, Rembrandt etc are not contemporary). It was easier to name the famous sports stars wasn't it? Is that because there are no very gifted mathematicians or artists alive today?
- What *is* sport?
- What are some benefits of being involved in sport?
- What is your favourite team sport? Why do you like it?
- What is your favourite individual sport? Why do you like it?
- Do you think team sports are better than individual sports or vice versa?
- What is a sport you don't like? Why don't you like it?
- If you had a chance to play in a sporting match or do something else of your choice would you choose the sport? If not, what would it be that you'd choose?
- Who are some sporting heroes? Do you think they deserve to be called heroes?
- In what sports do people earn the most money?
- Are top sportsmen and sportswomen paid too much?
- How important should winning be in sport?
- What is meant by 'good sportsmanship'?
- Do you think there are some sports in which competitors are too aggressive, too competitive?
- What activities/interests/pursuits would you say are more interesting, enjoyable or useful than playing sport? (*learning to play musical instruments, learning foreign languages, studying, playing electronic games, playing board games, reading...*)
- Are there any sports that you think are too violent? (*boxing?*...)
- Are you aware of any sports where violence has occurred among rival spectators?
- Are there any sports that are cruel? (*horse racing? bull fighting?*)

Topic #27 Movies

All of us have probably enjoyed watching some excellent movies, at the cinema, on television or on DVD. What is the best movie you've ever seen and why do you think you enjoyed it so much?

- What is your preferred type of movie watching...cinema, television or DVD?
- Are there any movies you've seen more than once?
- Do you have a favourite *kind* of movie? (*comedy, suspense, fantasy, adventure*)
- Who are your favourite male and female actors?
- Is there a character from a movie you'd like to be, just for a day?
- Of all the characters you've seen who would be the most villainous?
- And the funniest?
- The most talented or cleverest?
- The most heroic?
- If you were ever to act in a movie what kind of character would you like to play?
- Why do you think some people enjoy violent movies?
- What would be some of the best things about being a famous movie star?
- What would be some of the worst things about being a famous movie star?

Topic #28 Reading

Centuries ago most people were illiterate; they could neither read nor write. The only people who were literate were royalty and the clergy. Though there are still many illiterate people in the world most people can read and write.

In this discussion we are going to see why reading is so very useful and important.

- Did your parents ever read to you when you were little? What were your favourite books back then?
- Would you say that you read more in books or on the computer?
- Who are your two favourite authors?
- What are your two favourite books (or stories)?
- What do adults like to read? (*newspapers, magazines, recipe books, websites,....*)
- What do children like to read? (*books, comics, websites,....*)
- Which school subjects most rely on reading?
- Can you think of any school subjects that don't rely on reading?
- Why do drivers need to know how to read?
- How do vision-impaired (blind) people read?
- How would your life change if you suddenly lost the ability to read?
- If no-one in your family could read how would things be different when shopping?
- If no-one in your family could read how would things be different when planning a holiday?
- If no-one in your family could read how would things be different in their leisure time?

Topic #29 Families

In days gone by families were all pretty much the same, often a mother and father with quite a few children. These days families may be quite different from one another; some families have an 'only child' and there are many blended families. In this discussion we will learn about some different family types and how each of us fits into her/his own family.

- Where do you 'fit' in your family? *eg 2nd eldest of four*
- Would you like to have more siblings? If so, how many?...brothers/sisters?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of being an only child?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of being part of a large family?
- Are there any times in the year when it is nice to feel part of a family? (*Christmas; Easter; holidays; birthdays*)
- Once it was rare for mothers to go out to work. This was the father's role. Do you know of any families where the mother goes off to work and the father stays home and does the housework?
- Would you like to have your own family one day? If so, what size family would you like and would you want your children to be girls, boys or both?

Topic #30 **Something I think is Amazing**

Here are some things that some people might find amazing... *the value of π (pi) goes on forever: $\pi = 3.14159265358979323846264338327950288419716939937510.....$, Chameleons change colour, the universe has no end (or does it?!), a straw looks bent in a glass of water, hummingbirds can fly backwards, the universe is rapidly expanding, gravity is a force but it can't be seen, some humans have run 100m in less than 10 seconds, the human heart beats more than two billion times during a lifetime, dogs can hear sounds that we can't, bats can 'see' where they're going in dark caves, rainbows are arcs made up of seven main colours.*

- What is meant by the word 'amazing'?
 - What are some synonyms of amazing?
 - If a person finds something is amazing does everyone else always find it's amazing?
 - What is something amazing you've seen?
 - What is something amazing you've heard about?
 - What is something amazing you've read in a fictional book (or comic)?
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Prep Sheets

*** Very Important Note***

Teachers should make it a firm rule that in each of the discussions, no individuals (students, teachers, other) known to the group, should be cited as examples, good or bad -by name, or otherwise implied.

30 Great Classroom Discussions

Student's Name

Date

Is Stealing worse than Lying?

Curriculum Areas Covered

- Health
- Society & Environment

Themes Dealt With

- Behaviour and morals
- Judgements
- Citizenship

Pre-discussion questions to consider:

Is it ever alright to steal? If so, when? Is it ever alright to lie? If so, when?

Some Thoughts

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Notes on stealing: *thoughts, examples, etc.*

Notes on lying: *thoughts, examples, etc.*

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30 Great Classroom Discussions

Student's Name

Date

Sporty v Brainy

Curriculum Areas Covered

- Health
- Society & Environment

Themes Dealt With

- Values
- Judgements
- Citizenship

Pre-discussion question to consider:

If you could only be sporty or brainy which would you choose, and why?

Some Thoughts

Notes on sportiness:

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Notes on braininess:

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30 Great Classroom Discussions

Student's Name

Date

Are plants more important to us than animals?

Curriculum Areas Covered

- Science
- Society & Environment

Themes Dealt With

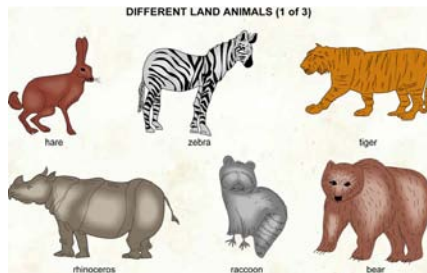
- Ecology/ ecosystems
- Interdependence
- Pets

Pre-discussion question to consider:

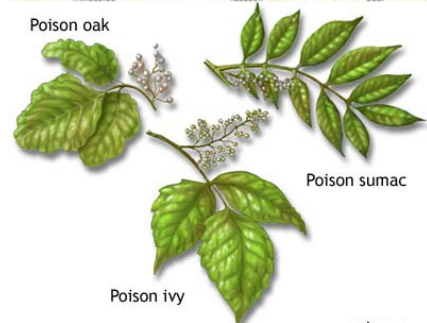
How would our lives be different if we had no animals? or... no plants?

Some Thoughts

Notes on animals:



Notes on plants:



Summary

30 Great Classroom Discussions

Student's Name

Date

A World Without Bullies

Curriculum Areas Covered

- Health
- Society & Environment

Themes Dealt With

- Friendship
- Tolerance
- Citizenship

Pre-discussion question to consider:

What needs to happen for there to be a world without any bullying?

Some Thoughts

Notes:

More Notes:



Summary

30 Great Classroom Discussions

Student's Name

Date

Expert vs All-rounder

Curriculum Areas Covered

- Health
- Society & Environment

Themes Dealt With

- School
- Work
- Happiness

Pre-discussion question to consider:

Is it better to be an expert in one thing and know very little else or an expert in nothing and know a bit about many things?

Some Thoughts

Notes: *thoughts, examples, etc.*

More Notes: *thoughts, examples, etc.*



Summary

30 Great Classroom Discussions

Student's Name

Date

Endangered & Threatened Animals

Curriculum Areas Covered

- Science
- Society & Environment

Themes Dealt With

- Animal Rights
- Endangered Species
- Human 'Superiority'

Pre-discussion question to consider:

Animal species that are endangered or threatened receive more care and sympathy from us if they are attractive or cute. Do you agree? Should we care just as much about the not-so-pretty animals that are threatened with extinction?

Some Thoughts

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Notes: *thoughts, examples, etc.*

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More Notes: *thoughts, examples, etc.*

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Summary

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30 Great Classroom Discussions

Student's Name

Date

Friends & Strangers

Curriculum Areas Covered

- Health
- Society & Environment

Themes Dealt With

- Behaviour and morals
- Judgements
- Citizenship

Pre-discussion questions to consider:

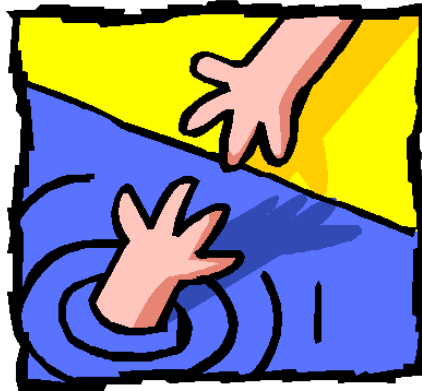
We all know that it's good to help people in need but are there some people (friends) who deserve our help more than others?

Should we help a stranger as much as we would help a friend?

Some Thoughts

Notes: *thoughts, examples, etc.*

More Notes: *thoughts, examples, etc.*



Lend a Hand

Summary

30 Great Classroom Discussions

Student's Name

Date

Our School

Curriculum Areas Covered

- Society & Environment
- others

Themes Dealt With

- Rules, Obligations
- Priorities
- Building & maintenance

Pre-discussion questions to consider:

- **What are some of the best things about our school?**
- **In what ways could our school be improved?**

Some Thoughts

Our School: *Strengths*

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Our School: *Suggestions*

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30 Great Classroom Discussions

Student's Name

Date

Imagine a World Without...

Curriculum Areas Covered

- Language (creative thinking)

Themes Dealt With

- Various

Pre-discussion questions to consider:

What would you miss most if it were to go away forever?

How would this affect the way you live your life?

Some Thoughts

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Why I like it.

Affects of its loss.

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30 Great Classroom Discussions

Student's Name

Date

Curriculum Areas Covered

- Health

Themes Dealt With

- Kindness
- Succeeding/Winning
- Helping/Caring

Something that made me Feel Good

Pre-discussion questions to consider:

What kinds of things make people feel good about themselves?

What was something that made you feel quite special?

Some Thoughts

Notes: *What can make a person feel good?*

Notes: *What can make a person feel good? continued*



Summary

30 Great Classroom Discussions

Student's Name

Date

Did You Know?

Curriculum Areas Covered

- This topic may cover all curriculum areas.

Themes Dealt With

- Any are possible

Pre-discussion question to consider:

Our world -the universe- is full of interesting facts.

What interesting fact have you discovered and would like to share with the class?

Some Thoughts

Background notes to do with this interesting fact.



More background notes to do with this interesting fact.

Summary

30 Great Classroom Discussions

Student's Name

Date

Australia, Our Home

Curriculum Areas Covered

- Studies of Society & Environment

Themes Dealt With

- Fauna, Flora, Industries
- Emblems, Icons, Topography
- States, Cities, People

Pre-discussion questions to consider:

Why is it good to know about the country we live in?

Do you think there is anything special about Australia?

Some Thoughts

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Notes

More Notes



Summary

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30 Great Classroom Discussions

Student's Name

Date

Should all zoos be closed down?

Curriculum Areas Covered

- Studies of Society & Environment
- Science & Technology

Themes Dealt With

- Animals
- Animal ethics
- Endangered species

Pre-discussion questions to consider:

Most people enjoy a visit to the zoo. Why? What are the pros and cons of zoos?

Some Thoughts

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30 Great Classroom Discussions

Student's Name

Date

A very useful invention is ...

Curriculum Areas Covered

- Science & Technology
- Studies of Society & Environment

Themes Dealt With

- Inventions
- Inventors

Pre-discussion questions to consider:

What are inventions? Are all inventions 'good'? Can you think of an invention that was not good? What's an invention that you think has been very useful?

Some Thoughts

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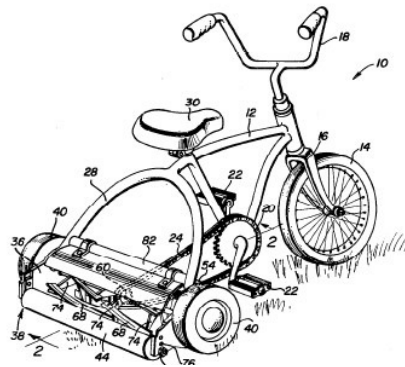
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30 Great Classroom Discussions

Student's Name

Date

Dreams

Curriculum Areas Covered

- Health & Fitness
- Science And Technology

Themes Dealt With

- Sleep
- Brain/Nervous System
- Memory
- Life experiences

Pre-discussion questions to consider:

What are dreams and what causes them? Are dreams 'good' (healthy)? Is day-dreaming really dreaming? What are some common dreams? What's a vivid dream you once had?

Some Thoughts

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30 Great Classroom Discussions

Student's Name

Date

Getting Along

Curriculum Areas Covered

- Health & Fitness

Themes Dealt With

- Tolerance
- Fairness
- Friendships

Pre-discussion questions to consider:

Why is it important to get along with others? What can cause problems in relationships? What are some of the best ways to resolve differences?

Some Thoughts

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30 Great Classroom Discussions

Student's Name

Date

Is Maths Overrated?

Curriculum Areas Covered

- Mathematics

Themes Dealt With

- School
- Work
- Shopping

Pre-discussion questions to consider:

Is maths given too much importance at school? Is there any aspect of maths that every person needs to know? When do we need to use maths in our daily lives? Have calculators made the learning of maths unnecessary?

Some Thoughts

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30 Great Classroom Discussions

Student's Name

Date

Kid Power!

Curriculum Areas Covered

- Studies of Society & the Environment

Themes Dealt With

- Service/Helping
- Self-confidence
- Apathy

Pre-discussion questions to consider:

How can kids help out in their community? Can kids -individually or collectively- help bring about changes by writing to politicians, business leaders, etc? Are there any ways that kids can use their youthful ideas and imaginations to help bring about better ways of doing things?

Some Thoughts

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30 Great Classroom Discussions

Student's Name

Date

Strength & Weakness

Curriculum Areas Covered

- Health & Fitness

Themes Dealt With

- Friendships
- Peer Pressure
- Individuality
- Morals
- Citizenship

Pre-discussion questions to consider:

Which is more important, physical strength or mental strength? What does it mean to be strong? When does saying 'No' show more strength than saying 'Yes'?

Some Thoughts

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More Notes



Summary

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30 Great Classroom Discussions

Student's Name

Date

A World Language?

Curriculum Areas Covered

- Language
- Studies of Society & Environment

Themes Dealt With

- Communication
- Evolution of Language
- Changing world
- Cross Cultural differences

Pre-discussion questions to consider:

Would the world be better or worse off with fewer spoken languages? What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a world language which everyone can speak and understand? Should English be that language? How would you feel about having to learn to speak Mandarin (Chinese)?

Some Thoughts

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30 Great Classroom Discussions

Student's Name

Date



Curriculum Areas Covered

- Art

Themes Dealt With

- Sketching
- Painting

**** In this discussion 'Art' refers to drawing, sketching and painting pictures. ****

Pre-discussion questions to consider:

What are the different kinds of art? What do you like to sketch/paint? Are cartoonists artists? Are there any artists whom you admire? Who gets the most pleasure out of art, the artist or the admirer?

Some Thoughts

Notes

More Notes



Summary

30 Great Classroom Discussions

Student's Name

Date

Illness & Disease

Curriculum Areas Covered

- Health and Fitness

Themes Dealt With

- Causes of disease
- First aid
- Health & Hygiene

Pre-discussion questions to consider:

What is the difference between illness and disease? What are some common diseases? Do you or anyone you know suffer from asthma? What is known about the causes and treatment of asthma? What steps can we take to keep ourselves in good health?

Some Thoughts

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More Notes



Summary

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30 Great Classroom Discussions

Student's Name

Date

Safety

Curriculum Areas Covered

- Health & Fitness
- Studies of Society & Environment

Themes Dealt With

- First Aid
- Emergency Call No.
- Safety at home, on the roads, at the beach, etc

Pre-discussion questions to consider:

Where do most accidents occur? What do I need to know about safety in the home, on the roads, at the beach, etc? Are there any emergency phone numbers I should know?
 Would it be good to know some basic First Aid?

Some Thoughts

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30 Great Classroom Discussions

Student's Name

Date

UFOs & Aliens

Curriculum Areas Covered

- Science & Technology
- Studies of Society & the Environment

Themes Dealt With

- Life
- The Universe
- Religion
- Humans
- Aliens

Pre-discussion questions to consider:

What are UFOs? Where do you think UFOs come from? What might aliens look like? Do you think there may be life elsewhere in the universe? Could there be life on another planet in our Solar System?

Some Thoughts

Notes

More Notes



Summary

30 Great Classroom Discussions

Student's Name

Date

Respect & Manners

Curriculum Areas Covered

- Heath & Fitness

Themes Dealt With

- Authority Figures
- Conduct: Home
- Conduct: School
- Conduct: Community

Pre-discussion questions to consider:

Why should we show respect to our elders? Should we *always* respect those who are older? Who deserves our special consideration?

Some Thoughts

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More Notes



Summary

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30 Great Classroom Discussions

Student's Name

Date

Is Sport Overrated?

Curriculum Areas Covered

- Health & Fitness
- Studies of Society & the Environment

Themes Dealt With

- Individual Sports
- Team Sports
- Sporting Heroes
- Role Models

Pre-discussion questions to consider:

Are sports different from games? Instead of playing/watching sport could you be doing better things with your time? Why are some sporting champions regarded as heroes? Why do many top sportspeople earn more money than top mathematicians?

Some Thoughts

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30 Great Classroom Discussions

Student's Name

Date

Movies

Curriculum Areas Covered

- Studies of Society & the Environment

Themes Dealt With

- Entertainment
- Leisure time
- various

Pre-discussion questions to consider:

What is the best movie you've ever seen and why do you think you enjoyed it so much? Would you rather watch movies at the cinema, on television or on DVDs? Who are your favourite movie stars? What kind of movies do you like most?

Some Thoughts

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30 Great Classroom Discussions

Student's Name

Date

Reading

Curriculum Areas Covered

- Reading
- English

Themes Dealt With

- Learning
- Leisure time
- Libraries
- Computers

Pre-discussion questions to consider:

Is reading the most important thing we learn at school? Why do we need to be able to read? Do adults and children read the same kinds of things?

Some Thoughts

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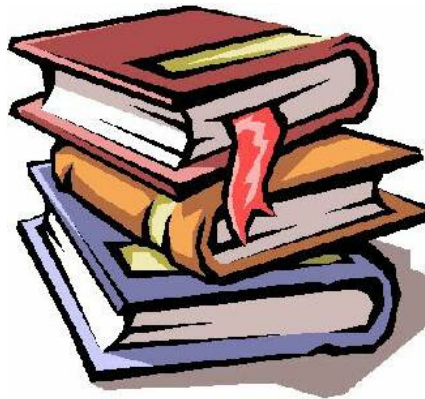
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30 Great Classroom Discussions

Student's Name

Date

Families

Curriculum Areas Covered

- Studies of Society & the Environment
- Health & Fitness

Themes Dealt With

- Parents
- Only Child
- Health/Care/Support
- Emergencies

Pre-discussion questions to consider:

Do you think there are advantages to being an only child? What are the disadvantages? What roles do the different family members have?

Some Thoughts

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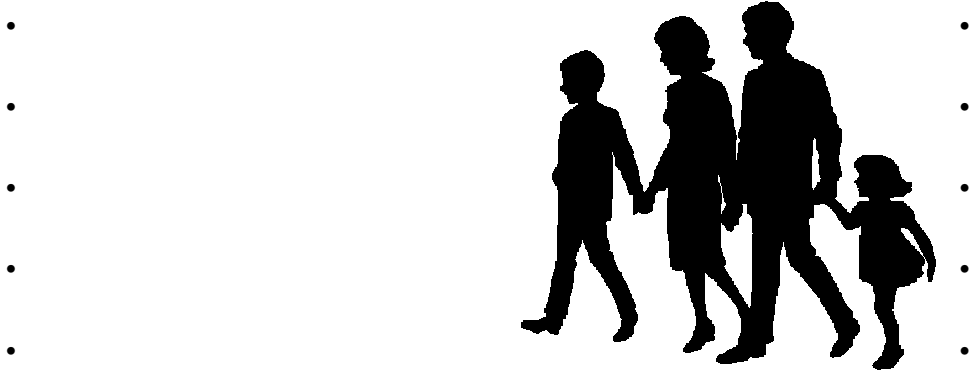
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30 Great Classroom Discussions

Student's Name

Date

Something I think is Amazing

Curriculum Areas Covered

- Studies of Society & the Environment
- Science & Technology
- Art
- Mathematics

Themes Dealt With

- various

Pre-discussion question to consider:

What I find amazing you might not, and vice versa. Why can this be? Are there some things that *all* people would consider amazing?

Some Thoughts

Background information on the subject of my talk.

More background information on the subject of my talk.



Summary