

Speed Dating

An Activity for Working with an Assigned Reading

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Overview

A set of index cards is prepared in advance by the teacher or student discussion leaders. Each card features a question asking students to explain and/or comment on a specific, important part of the assigned reading. Students pair off in rows facing each other. Each pair gets a card with a question on it. They discuss for 2-3 minutes, then switch partners and cards. The process is repeated as students work their way through new questions and new “dates.”

Thank you to the accelerated English students who first introduced me to this activity during their “Teacher-for-a-Day” session a few years back.

Benefits

- It gives students the opportunity to process the key ideas from the reading, clarify misunderstandings, see how other students approach the text.
- Being in pairs forces everyone to engage; thwarts tendency during whole-class discussions for a few strong, extroverted students to carry the conversation while weaker students hide in plain sight.
- Informal, low-stakes atmosphere makes it easier for students to acknowledge when they don’t understand something, ask each other for clarification, and call over the teacher when they can’t figure it out.
- Switching every few minutes enables the class to work its way through a whole reading in a relatively short period of time.
- It contributes to sense of community – students get the chance to interact with half their classmates during one speed dating activity.
- Students are more likely to do the reading for a class where they know speed dating will happen (people who “fess up” that they haven’t read can’t participate because they’ve got nothing to offer their “dates.”)

Sample Speed Dating Questions

“Review of Stanley Milgram’s Experiment on Obedience” by Diana Baumrind, originally published in *American Psychologist* 19, 1964, pp. 421-423. Reprinted in Behrens & Rosen’s *Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum*, 4th edition.

- “Because of the anxiety and passivity generated by the setting, the subject is more prone to behave in an obedient, suggestible manner in the laboratory than elsewhere.” (paragraph 2)

In your own words, explain what Baumrind means here and why this leads her to reject Milgram’s findings.

- In paragraph 4, Baumrind says that Milgram’s subjects were not treated with the respect that they deserve. What evidence does she give to back up this point?
- Milgram claims that he made sure participants left the lab “in a state of wellbeing. A friendly reconciliation was arranged between the subject and the victim, and an effort was made to reduce any tensions that arose as a result of the experiment” (quoted in Baumrind, p. 191).

What is Baumrind’s opinion of this – does she accept what Milgram says? Why or why not?

- Why does Baumrind bring up the Sabin vaccine? Do you agree with the point she is making here? Why or why not?
- How does Baumrind say that Milgram *harmed* his participants? (Be specific.) Do you agree with her on this? Why or why not?
- Does Baumrind accept Milgram’s claims that his experiment helps us understand what happened in Nazi Germany? Why or why not?
- Do you think that Milgram’s experiment meets the ethical guidelines for psychologists that Baumrind quotes in paragraph 11? Yes? No? Somewhat? Explain your reasoning.