

Engaging in Collaborative Discussions

Name: _____

Date: _____

Score: _____ / 10



Quick Review

In a collaborative discussion, students (1) come PREPARED with ideas based on the reading or topic, (2) BUILD ON one another's ideas instead of changing the subject, (3) ASK CLARIFYING QUESTIONS when something is unclear, and (4) DRAW CONCLUSIONS that pull the group's ideas together. Off-topic comments and unrelated personal stories slow the group down.

PART 1 — READ

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

Discussion transcript - Room 14, Tuesday morning

MR. RUIZ: Today we're talking about the article on why cities need trees. Who wants to start?

ANA: I think the most important reason is that trees lower the temperature in cities. The article said city blocks with lots of trees can be up to 8 degrees cooler than blocks without trees.

BEN: That's interesting. I want to add to what Ana said - the article also says shade from trees helps people use less air conditioning, which saves energy. So cooler streets AND lower energy bills.

CARLA: Wait, can you say more about the 8 degrees? Was that the whole city or just one block? I want to make sure I read that part right.

DEV: My uncle has a really big tree in his backyard. Last summer we had a barbecue there and the burgers were really good.

ANA: It was just one block compared to another block - like one street with shade trees compared to one without. So pulling Ben's point in: shade lowers the temperature on the street AND lowers what families spend on cooling.

MR. RUIZ: Good. Anyone want to draw a conclusion from what we've heard so far?

BEN: Based on what Ana and Carla pointed out, I think trees in cities help people in two connected ways - they keep streets cooler AND they save families money on energy.

PART 2 — PRACTICE

Use the discussion transcript below to answer the items. Four students are discussing the article 'Why Do Cities Need Trees?'



1. Which student response **BUILDS ON** another speaker's idea?
 - A. Dev's comment about the barbecue at his uncle's house.
 - B. Mr. Ruiz asking, Who wants to start?
 - C. Ben's comment that begins, That's interesting. I want to add to what Ana said.
 - D. Ana's first comment naming the most important reason.
2. Which student asks a **CLARIFYING QUESTION**?
 - A. Ana, when she says cooling can be 8 degrees.
 - B. Carla, when she asks Ana to say more about the 8 degrees.
 - C. Dev, when he describes his uncle's barbecue.
 - D. Mr. Ruiz, when he asks who wants to start.
3. Why is Dev's barbecue comment a **WEAK** contribution to this discussion?
 - A. It is too long for the conversation.
 - B. It contradicts the article.
 - C. It uses the wrong tone for school.
 - D. It is **OFF TOPIC** - it does not connect to the article about why cities need trees.
4. Which sentence would be the **BEST** way for Dev to **REDIRECT** his comment back to the topic?
 - A. My uncle's tree gives so much shade that his backyard feels much cooler than the rest of the neighborhood, which fits Ana's point about trees lowering temperatures.
 - B. My uncle says barbecues are the best summer food.
 - C. I think we should talk about backyards instead of cities.
 - D. Can we talk about something else now? I'm bored.
5. Which student **DRAWS A CONCLUSION** from the discussion?
 - A. Ana, when she shares her first reason at the start.
 - B. Dev, when he tells the barbecue story.
 - C. Ben, when he says, I think trees in cities help people in two connected ways - they keep streets cooler **AND** they save families money on energy.
 - D. Carla, when she asks for clarification about the 8 degrees.
6. Mr. Ruiz says, *Anyone want to draw a conclusion from what we've heard so far?* What does this suggest about a strong discussion **ENDING**?
 - A. A discussion should end as soon as one person makes a good point.
 - B. A discussion benefits from someone **PULLING** the contributions together into a bigger idea.
 - C. A discussion should end with the loudest student getting the last word.
 - D. A discussion should always end with everyone agreeing on every detail.



7. Which is the BEST way to disagree RESPECTFULLY in a class discussion?
- A. That's wrong, and you obviously didn't read the article.
 - B. Whatever, I don't even care.
 - C. You're not allowed to think that.
 - D. I see it differently - the article also mentions ____, which suggests another interpretation.
8. Carla wants to make sure she UNDERSTANDS Ben's point before responding. Which sentence would be BEST?
- A. So you're saying that shade lowers temperatures AND lowers energy bills - is that right?
 - B. Anyway, here is my new idea about something else.
 - C. I already knew that, so let's move on.
 - D. You don't make any sense.
9. Imagine you join the discussion right after Ben's conclusion. Write ONE sentence that BUILDS on his idea AND ties it back to the article.

10. Write ONE clarifying question you could ask Dev to BRING HIM BACK to the discussion topic.



Answer Keys

- 1 A B C D
- 2 A B C D
- 3 A B C D
- 4 A B C D
- 5 A B C D


- 6 A B C D
- 7 A B C D
- 8 A B C D
- 9
- 10

Explanations

1. C	Building on means CONNECTING to a previous speaker's point and adding to it. Ben names Ana's idea and extends it. A changes the subject. B opens the discussion. D is a first contribution, with nothing yet to build on.
2. B	A clarifying question asks the speaker to explain or clarify a SPECIFIC point. Carla does exactly that. A is a statement, not a question. C is unrelated. D is a discussion-starter, not a clarifying follow-up.
3. D	Dev's comment is about a backyard barbecue, not about whether cities need trees. The problem is RELEVANCE . A is wrong (it's short). B is wrong (it doesn't disagree with anything). C is irrelevant - the tone is fine.
4. A	A keeps Dev's personal observation but TIES it back to the article's idea about trees and cooling. B stays off topic. C tries to change the subject. D disrupts the discussion.
5. C	Drawing a conclusion means PULLING IDEAS TOGETHER from the discussion. Ben names two students' contributions and combines them into one bigger idea. A opens. B is off topic. D asks.
6. B	Mr. Ruiz is asking for a SYNTHESIS - pulling ideas together. A ends the work too early. C is not a discussion norm. D is unrealistic and not the goal of group discussion.
7. D	D disagrees by NAMING the difference and pointing to evidence (the article). A attacks the speaker. B disengages. C shuts down conversation. Only D builds the discussion forward.
8. A	A RESTATES Ben's point in Carla's own words and asks for confirmation - a textbook clarifying move. B changes the subject. C dismisses. D insults.
9.	Answer: Examples: (1) Ben's two reasons connect to one more - the article also says cooler shaded streets get more visitors, so trees can even bring more business to neighborhoods. (2) Building on Ben's point, the article mentions that shaded sidewalks make people more likely to walk, so trees may improve health too. (3) That makes me think the article is really making one big argument: trees give cities cooler streets, lower bills, AND healthier people. Accept any single sentence that (a) NAMES OR REFERENCES Ben's contribution and (b) ADDS a new related idea or restates the connection. NOT acceptable: a comment that changes the subject (e.g., another personal story) or simply repeats Ben's words.
10.	Answer: Examples: (1) Dev, that's interesting - does your uncle's tree make the yard feel a lot cooler in the summer, kind of like Ana's point? (2) How much cooler does your uncle's backyard feel compared to a part of the yard with no tree? (3) Do you think the tree at your uncle's house cools the air the same way the article says trees cool city blocks? Accept any QUESTION (must end with a question mark) that (a) acknowledges Dev's comment respectfully and (b) connects it back to the article's topic of trees cooling cities. NOT acceptable: a statement, a put-down, or a question on a totally unrelated topic.



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