

Collaborative Discussions

Name: _____

Date: _____

Score: ____ / 10



Quick Review

In a strong collaborative discussion, students (1) come PREPARED with ideas based on the reading, (2) FOLLOW agreed-upon rules (taking turns, listening), (3) ASK and ANSWER specific questions that move the conversation forward, (4) BUILD ON or RESPECTFULLY DISAGREE with others' ideas, and (5) REVIEW the key ideas at the end. Off-topic personal stories and polite-but-empty comments slow the group down.

PART 1 — READ

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.



Transcript: Discussion in Ms. Park's class - Tuesday, after reading

MS. PARK: Today we're discussing 'Why Should Cities Plant More Trees?' Who wants to begin with a main idea from the article?

JAMAL: The article's strongest reason was the temperature one. It said city blocks with mature trees can be up to 8 degrees Fahrenheit cooler than blocks without them - that's a real measurable benefit, not just a feeling.

PRIYA: I want to build on Jamal's point. The article also said that lower street temperatures cut down on summer air-conditioning use, so the same trees help families lower their electric bills. So Jamal's temperature point connects to a money point.

CARLOS: Wait, can you say more about that 8-degree number? Was it the whole city, or a single block compared to another single block? I want to make sure I'm reading it the same way.

DEV: My uncle has a really big oak tree in his backyard. We had a barbecue there in July and the burgers were really good.

JAMAL: Carlos, good question. The article said the 8 degrees was a block-to-block comparison - one shaded street compared to a nearby un-shaded street, not the whole city. So bringing Priya in too: shade lowers the temperature on that block AND lowers the cooling bill on that block.

MS. PARK: Anyone want to RESPECTFULLY disagree or add a different angle?

PRIYA: I see Jamal's point, but the article also mentioned that trees take 10 to 20 years to grow big enough to provide that level of shade. So one missing piece is what cities do in the short term, before the new trees are mature.

MS. PARK: Good. Who wants to pull the big ideas together?

CARLOS: Based on what Jamal, Priya, and I talked about, I think the article is really making one connected argument: planting trees helps cities in two measurable ways (cooler streets, lower bills), but the benefits take time, so cities need a long-term plan, not a one-summer fix.

PART 2 — PRACTICE

Read the discussion transcript and answer the items. Four sixth graders are discussing the article 'Why Should Cities Plant More Trees?'

1. Which student response BEST shows the speaker came PREPARED based on the reading?
 - A. Dev's comment about the barbecue at his uncle's house.
 - B. Ms. Park's question, Who wants to begin with a main idea?
 - C. Jamal's opening, which names a SPECIFIC measurable claim from the article (the 8-degree cooling number).
 - D. Carlos's question about how he read the number.



2. Which student response is the clearest example of BUILDING ON another speaker's idea?
 - A. Dev's barbecue comment.
 - B. Priya's response that begins, *I want to build on Jamal's point*, and connects temperature to energy bills.
 - C. Carlos's clarifying question about the 8-degree figure.
 - D. Ms. Park asking who wants to begin.
3. Why is Dev's barbecue comment a WEAK contribution to this discussion?
 - A. It is too short.
 - B. It uses the wrong tone for a class discussion.
 - C. It is OFF TOPIC - it doesn't connect to the article's argument about cities and trees.
 - D. It contradicts what the article says.
4. Which sentence shows Priya RESPECTFULLY DISAGREEING or adding a new angle?
 - A. Priya saying, *I want to build on Jamal's point*.
 - B. Priya saying, *I see Jamal's point, but the article also mentioned trees take 10 to 20 years to grow - so cities need a short-term plan too*.
 - C. Priya repeating Jamal word for word.
 - D. Priya remaining silent for the rest of the discussion.
5. Which student DRAWS THE DISCUSSION TOGETHER by reviewing the key ideas?
 - A. Jamal at the very start, when he names the temperature claim.
 - B. Dev when he tells the barbecue story.
 - C. Carlos at the end, when he names what Jamal, Priya, and he discussed and pulls the points into one connected argument.
 - D. Ms. Park when she asks who wants to begin.
6. Which is the BEST way to ASK A CLARIFYING QUESTION in a discussion?
 - A. That's wrong, and you obviously didn't read the article.
 - B. Whatever, I don't even care.
 - C. Wait, can you say more about that 8-degree number? Was it the whole city, or one block compared to another?
 - D. I already knew that, so let's move on.
7. Which response BEST shows the speaker is LISTENING ACTIVELY (and not just waiting to talk)?
 - A. Jamal's later response, which DIRECTLY answers Carlos's clarifying question with specific information.
 - B. A student saying, *Anyway, here is my new idea about something else*.
 - C. A student saying, *I already knew that, so let's move on*.
 - D. A student saying, *You don't make any sense*.



8. Which sentence would be the BEST way for Dev to REDIRECT his comment back to the discussion?
- A. My uncle's oak tree shades almost his whole backyard - it feels noticeably cooler under it than out in the sun, which actually matches Jamal's point about block-to-block temperature differences.
 - B. My uncle's barbecues are the best summer food, no question.
 - C. Can we talk about backyards instead of cities now?
 - D. I think we should drop this topic - I'm bored.

9. Imagine you join the discussion right after Carlos's closing synthesis. Write ONE sentence that BUILDS on his ideas AND adds a NEW point from the article.

10. Write ONE CLARIFYING QUESTION you could ask Priya about her point that trees take 10 to 20 years to mature. The question must keep the conversation moving forward.



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	Coming prepared means having a specific idea drawn from the reading. Jamal cites a measurable claim from the article. A is off-topic personal experience. B is a teacher prompt, not student preparation. D shows good follow-up, but isn't the prepared opening.
2. B	Priya NAMES Jamal's point and EXTENDS it (temperature -> bills) - the textbook example of building on. A changes the subject. C asks for clarification but doesn't extend an idea. D opens the discussion.
3. C	The problem is RELEVANCE - the comment is about a backyard barbecue, not about city trees. A is wrong (length isn't the issue). B is wrong (the tone is fine). D is wrong (it doesn't contradict anything).
4. B	B uses the I-see-your-point-but-also pattern: it ACKNOWLEDGES the partner's idea, ADDS NEW evidence from the article, and PROPOSES a different angle. A is building, not adding a different angle. C is repetition, not disagreement. D is non-participation.
5. C	Drawing together means PULLING IDEAS into a bigger picture. Carlos names the contributors and synthesizes the three points. A opens. B is off-topic. D is a teacher prompt.
6. C	A clarifying question (a) names the SPECIFIC point that was unclear and (b) asks the speaker to explain it more - that's exactly what Carlos's question does. A attacks the speaker. B disengages. D dismisses.
7. A	Active listening shows up when a speaker actually addresses the previous speaker's question with relevant information. A does this. B changes the subject. C dismisses. D insults.
8. A	A keeps Dev's personal example but TIES it directly to Jamal's article-based point - that's how to bring an off-topic comment back. B stays off topic. C tries to change the subject. D disrupts the discussion.
9.	Answer: Examples: (1) Building on Carlos's synthesis, the article also said that shaded sidewalks make people more likely to walk, so trees could improve health on those same blocks too. (2) That fits with what the article said about property values - the same blocks that get cooler also tend to gain neighborhood value over time. (3) Adding to Carlos's point about long-term planning, the article mentioned that some cities now plant young trees alongside putting up temporary shade canopies for the years in between. Accept any single sentence that (a) NAMES OR REFERENCES Carlos's synthesis (or another speaker) and (b) ADDS a new related idea drawn from the article. NOT acceptable: an off-topic personal story, a comment that just repeats what Carlos said, or a comment that doesn't reference the previous discussion at all.



10.

Answer: Examples: (1) Priya, did the article say what cities can do during those 10 to 20 years before the trees provide real shade? (2) When you say 10 to 20 years, do you mean before the trees can reach their full size, or before they offer measurable cooling? (3) Did the article mention if any cities plant faster-growing tree species to shorten that waiting period?

Accept any QUESTION (must end with a question mark) that (a) addresses Priya's specific point about tree maturity AND (b) asks for information that would move the discussion forward. NOT acceptable: a statement instead of a question, a question on a totally unrelated topic, or a question that simply restates what Priya already said.



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