

TOUCHSTONES®
VOLUME I
Digital Binder

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TOUCHSTONES®
DISCUSSION PROJECT

About the Touchstones® Discussion Project

The Touchstones Discussion Project is a nonprofit organization founded on the belief that all people can benefit from the listening, speaking, thinking, and interpersonal skills gained by engaging in active, focused discussions. Since 1984, Touchstones has helped millions of students and others develop and improve these skills in school, work, and life. For more information about the Touchstones Discussion Project, visit www.touchstones.org.

All contents developed by:

Geoffrey Comber
Howard Zeiderman
Nicholas Maistrellis

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by Touchstones Discussion Project

PO Box 2329

Annapolis, Maryland 21404

800-456-6542

www.touchstones.org

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Worksheet 1: The Preliminary Discussion

Individual Work

1. Which ground rule will be the most difficult for the class to follow?

2. Which ground rule will be the most difficult for you to follow?

3. Which goal of Touchstones discussions would you most like to achieve?

4. Write two sentences explaining why you wish to achieve this goal for yourself.

Worksheet 3: Outside Experience and Group Formation

Individual Work

Write a question about the text.

Small Group Work

Share your question with the small group. Get feedback from your group about how you can reformulate your question. Be prepared to share your reformulated question with the class.

Worksheet 5: Opening Questions and Class Responsibility

Guidelines for Opening Questions

In the first few classes, your teacher asked you to create an opening question for the discussion. Some questions have been read to the whole group. Your teacher then asked you a question to start the discussion and will continue to do this for a number of classes. At this stage of Touchstones, the purpose of your writing down and reading a question aloud is to let everyone in the class know what you would like to hear discussed and what you think is important or interesting about what you read. This has been and remains valuable even if your question or what interested you has not been discussed. However, at some point during the year, you might want the opportunity to ask a question that does start the discussion.

Here are some helpful guidelines for creating an opening question:

1. Keep it short so that it will be easy for others to understand and remember.
2. Remember that it is just one of the many ideas that the group will discuss.
3. Connect the question to the ideas in the reading in some way.
4. Focus on ideas that you think would interest other people in the class.

Writing an Opening Question

After reading the guidelines above, think of an opening question for Aristotle's *The Physics*. Write that question below.

Worksheet 6: Starting to Talk about the Text

Individual Work

1. Choose one sentence in the text with which you agree. Write it below.

2. Choose one sentence in the text with which you disagree. Write it below.

Small Group Work, Part 1

Compose an opening question in your small group. Write that question below.

Small Group Work, Part 2

In your small group, talk about how you can better follow the ground rules. Use the space below to keep track of good suggestions.

Worksheet 7: Conclusion of the First Stage

Individual Work

Think of an opening question that you would like the class to discuss. Write it in the space below.

Small Group Work

Share your opening question, and then talk about it with your small group. Reformulate your opening question on the basis of this discussion and write the revised question below.

Worksheet 8: Judging Classroom Activity

Individual Work

1. Jot down an opening question about the text.

2. List three things that you and your classmates can do to improve your discussions.

(1)

(2)

(3)

Worksheet 9: Judging a Text

Individual Work, Part 1

Do you agree or disagree with Sir Isaac Newton's Law A?

Agree

Disagree

Small Group Work

Devise an opening question in your small group.

Individual Work, Part 2

After the discussion, do you agree or disagree with Sir Isaac Newton's Law A?

Agree

Disagree

Worksheet 10: Observers and Participants

Individual Work

When it is your turn to observe the discussion, listen carefully and complete the following:

1. How many people are in the discussion group?

2. Periods of silence: Decide when a period of silence occurs, and each time put an "x" next to the reason why.

a. People are thinking about what to say next. _____

b. People have run out of things to say. _____

c. People are bored. _____

3. What percentage of students contributed during the discussion?

4. How many people did not speak at all?

5. How would you grade this discussion? Why?

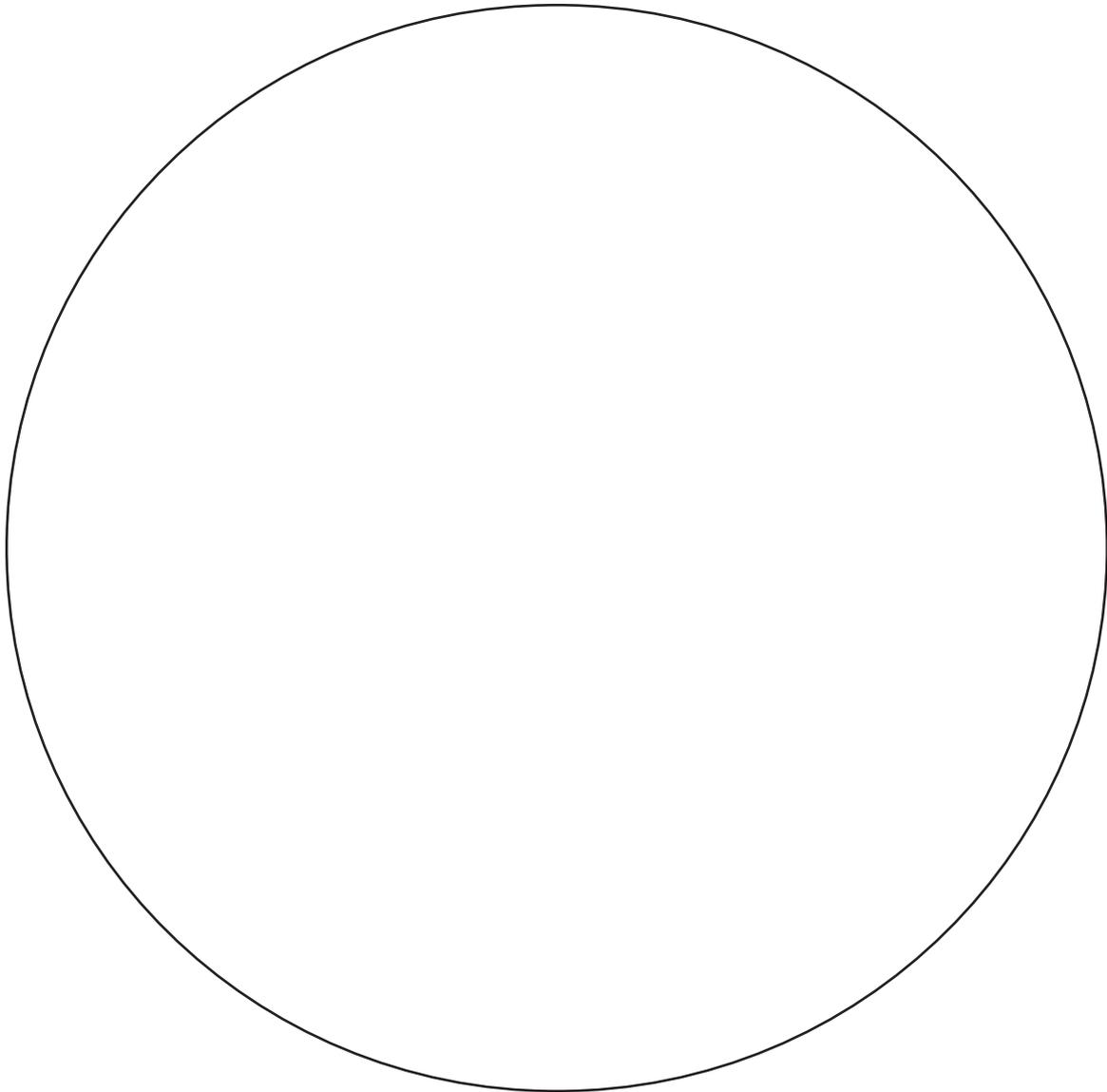
Worksheet 11: Looking at Yourself

Small Group Work

In your small group, respond to the question: “What are the best ways to begin a discussion?” Write your notes in the space below and be prepared to report your group’s answers to the whole class.

Worksheet 12: Poles of Activity: Who Speaks to Whom

Participation Map



Directions to Observers: Each time someone speaks, draw a line from the location of the speaker to the location of the next speaker.

Worksheet 13: Texts That Cause Factions

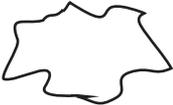
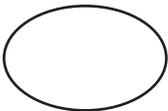
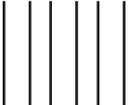
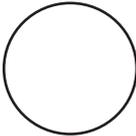
Group Work

In your group that is either for or against experimentation on animals, together write a paragraph criticizing or defending the practice of animal experimentation.

Worksheet 14: Facing One Another

Individual Work

Consider the shapes in the left-hand column below, and then complete the chart by considering the positive and negative aspects of each shape for the purpose of discussion.

Arrangement:	Positive Aspects	Negative Aspects
Semicircle 	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Rectangle 	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Amorphous 	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Oval 	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Rows 	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Circle 	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.

Worksheet 15: Two Voices Saying the Same Thing

Small Group Work

1. Indicate which statement you support by clicking on the button below.

Newton's "Law A"

Huygens' "Hypothesis I"

2. List three reasons why you support the text that you do.

i.

ii.

iii.

Worksheet 16: Listening and Repeating

Pair Work

Read the sentence below silently a few times. While you are reading, think about where you are pausing or stopping. You and your partner should then decide who will read the sentence aloud first. While one person reads the sentence aloud, the other should add punctuation, using a comma (,) to represent any pauses in the reading, even if they are slight; a period (.) for a complete stop in the reading; and a semicolon (;) for anything in between. You and your partner should then switch roles. Use your space bar to locate your punctuation in the appropriate place on each line.

And besides these two have maybe started the chase to amuse themselves or perhaps they are

both chasing a third person or perhaps the first is an innocent man and the second wants to

murder him and so you would become an accessory or they are merely running separately

home to bed or perhaps the first has a gun.

Small Group Work

Come to an agreement on one set of punctuation marks. Mark them on the sentence below.

And besides these two have maybe started the chase to amuse themselves or perhaps they are

both chasing a third person or perhaps the first is an innocent man and the second wants to

murder him and so you would become an accessory or they are merely running separately

home to bed or perhaps the first has a gun.

Worksheet 17: An Exercise in Listening

Individual Work

Is it true that all humans “naturally” or “by nature” want to know? Give reasons why or why not in the space below.

Small Group Work

In your small group, discuss what it means to want to know “by nature” or “naturally.” Come to a consensus on two reasons Aristotle’s claim that “All human beings naturally want to know” might be true and two reasons why it might be false. Write them in the spaces below.

Aristotle’s claim might be true because—

1.

2.

Aristotle’s claim might be false because—

1.

2.

Worksheet 18: Proofs and Arguments

Small Group Work

Your teacher will assign your group a segment of the proof, and ask you to complete either exercise 1 or 2 below.

1. Prepare your small group's section of the proof, either in Euclid's words or your own. Be prepared to present this to the class by drawing it on the board or in a program you can share electronically.

2. Pick out a part of your small group's section of the proof that you find difficult to accept or think others might find difficult to accept. Why is it problematic? Be prepared to explain this to the class.

Worksheet 19: Listening for Differences

Individual Work

Write a short restatement of the first two paragraphs of Mencius's *The Seven Books*.

Small Group Work

1. Each member of the group should read his or her restatement aloud.
2. When everyone has read, compare the restatements.

Worksheet 20: Asking Questions

Individual Work

Does music interfere with listening to the words that accompany it? Why?

Small Group Work

Two of you will ask each other questions about your responses to the Individual Work. You may use the questions below or make up your own. Each of you should have a chance to both ask questions and respond to them. The third group member will act as a moderator. The moderator's job is to listen to the other two students and help them ask clear questions and provide clear answers. The moderator will also report on the small group work to the large group.

1. Do you think that Saint Augustine is right or wrong to worry about music interfering with listening to the words that accompany it?

2. Why?

3. Now try to get clearer about "Why?" Asking these questions may help:

- a. Do you like music with words better than music by itself?
- b. Are religious words with music different from songs we usually listen to?
- c. When you sing, are you aware of the words you are singing?
- d. Do you remember the words of a song the first time you hear it?

Worksheet 21: Taking the First Step

Individual Work

Write an opening question for William James's *The Will to Believe*.

Worksheet 22: Making Room for Others

Small Group Work

What could the Melians have said or done to convince the Athenians to leave peacefully? Share your answer with your group members and discuss.

Worksheet 23: Introduction to Leadership Roles

What Should a Touchstones Discussion Leader Do?

Listed below are 10 situations in which a Touchstones discussion leader must make a decision about what to do. Three possible actions are given for each situation. For each situation, select the intervention you would choose as the discussion leader.

1. If there is a five-second period of silence, I would
 - a. ask another question;
 - b. call on a student to speak; or
 - c. wait a little longer to see whether a student will speak.

2. If the group strays very far from the text, I would
 - a. bring the class back to the text;
 - b. allow the discussion to continue if many students are participating in it; or
 - c. ask the students whether they think they are talking about the reading.

3. If some members of the group keep talking to their neighbors, I would
 - a. tell them to stop and remind them of the ground rules;
 - b. ask them whether they would like to say what they just said to the whole group; or
 - c. pretend not to notice it.

4. If a few students always do most of the talking, I would
 - a. keep the group divided into small groups for most of the next two classes;
 - b. speak to the students outside of class and let them know they are making it difficult for others to speak; or
 - c. allow the whole class to discuss how the discussion can be improved.

5. If a few students always get into arguments with one another, I would
 - a. find a way for these students to cooperate with one another by giving them joint responsibility for some class activity;
 - b. point it out to them the next time they start to argue; or
 - c. select other students as observers for a discussion and hope they report on it during the discussion about group dynamics.

Lesson 23: Introduction to Leadership Roles

6. If a few students make it impossible for there to be any discussion at all, I would
 - a. remove them from the class;
 - b. make them observers; or
 - c. let the whole group discuss the situation.

7. If there is a 15-second period of silence, I would
 - a. ask another question;
 - b. call on a student to speak; or
 - c. wait a little longer to see whether a student will speak.

8. If some students are always silent, I would
 - a. observe whether they participate during small group work; and if they do, not worry;
 - b. speak to the students outside of class to find out how to make it easier for them to speak;
 - c. remember what they bring up in their opening questions. If the discussion is ever about that question, I would mention that fact during class and ask those individuals their thoughts.

9. If some students always interrupt or refuse to listen to certain other students, I would
 - a. put these students together for small group work;
 - b. point out the general problem to the class without mentioning names and ask how the whole class could improve the situation; or
 - c. ask a few other students to act as observers and bring this up in the discussion on discussion.

10. If some students are interested in certain texts and not in others, I would
 - a. explain that what makes a discussion interesting is not the text but what the students bring to it;
 - b. let the group members talk about why they are interested in some texts and not in others; or
 - c. assume this feeling will pass when the students have more experience, and I would not bring it up.

Student Leadership Guide

You, a few of your classmates, and your teacher will conduct an upcoming discussion class. A text has already been chosen for your class and now you must decide which of the activities listed below you will use. Although the lesson plan has already been written for you, feel free to modify it on the basis of your answers to the following questions.

1. Should the students write out their opening questions?
2. Should the students do small group work?
3. What should they work on in small groups?
4. Should each student leader be a member of a small group?
5. Before a question is asked to start discussion in the large group, should each student read a possible opening question?
6. Should all the students be participants or should some act as observers? If some are to be observers, should they fill out the observation sheets, draw maps of who speaks to whom, or do something else? Should there be just a few observers or as many as half the group? Should the observers and participants switch roles? Should they report to the group after the discussion?
7. Should there be a discussion about the discussion? If so, should this happen in the large group or in the small groups?

Student-Led Touchstones Discussions

Lesson 24: First Student-Led Discussion: *The Ethics*, Aristotle

Discussion Leader 1: _____

Discussion Leader 2: _____

Discussion Leader 3: _____

Discussion Leader 4: _____

Lesson 25: Second Student-Led Discussion: *The Assayer*, Galileo

Discussion Leader 1: _____

Discussion Leader 2: _____

Discussion Leader 3: _____

Discussion Leader 4: _____

Lesson 26: Third Student-Led Discussion: *The Iliad: Achilles and Priam*, Homer

Discussion Leader 1: _____

Discussion Leader 2: _____

Discussion Leader 3: _____

Discussion Leader 4: _____

Lesson 27: Fourth Student-Led Discussion: *Second Treatise of Civil Government*, John Locke

Discussion Leader 1: _____

Discussion Leader 2: _____

Discussion Leader 3: _____

Discussion Leader 4: _____

Lesson 28: Fifth Student-Led Discussion: *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Immanuel Kant

Discussion Leader 1: _____

Discussion Leader 2: _____

Discussion Leader 3: _____

Discussion Leader 4: _____

Worksheet 24: First Student-Led Discussion

Student Leader Planning Checklist

- Complete the worksheet entitled “Introduction to Leadership Roles.”
- Choose the individual and small group activities and write them on the worksheet for the lesson.
- Choose any other activities and write them on the worksheet for the lesson.
- Give the completed lesson worksheet to your teacher for photocopying.
- Devise one opening question that all the student leaders agree on and record it.
- Devise at least one follow-up question each.
- With your co-leaders, review the text, lesson plan, worksheet activities, and questions the day of or day before your class.

Individual Work

1.

2.

Small Group Work

1.

2.

Other Activities

Note: Fill in the activities you wish to use when you lead the class. Have the teacher make photocopies of your worksheet for all members of the class. You will be responsible for distributing the photocopies to the class.

Worksheet 25: Second Student-Led Discussion

Student Leader Planning Checklist

- Complete the worksheet entitled “Introduction to Leadership Roles.”
- Choose the individual and small group activities and write them on the worksheet for the lesson.
- Choose any other activities and write them on the worksheet for the lesson.
- Give the completed lesson worksheet to your teacher for photocopying.
- Devise one opening question that all the student leaders agree on and record it.
- Devise at least one follow-up question each.
- With your co-leaders, review the text, lesson plan, worksheet activities, and questions the day of or day before your class.

Individual Work

1.

2.

Small Group Work

1.

2.

Other Activities

Note: Fill in the activities you wish to use when you lead the class. Have the teacher make photocopies of your worksheet for all members of the class. You will be responsible for distributing the photocopies to the class.

Worksheet 26: Third Student-Led Discussion

Student Leader Planning Checklist

- Complete the worksheet entitled “Introduction to Leadership Roles.”
- Choose the individual and small group activities and write them on the worksheet for the lesson.
- Choose any other activities and write them on the worksheet for the lesson.
- Give the completed lesson worksheet to your teacher for photocopying.
- Devise one opening question that all the student leaders agree on and record it.
- Devise at least one follow-up question each.
- With your co-leaders, review the text, lesson plan, worksheet activities, and questions the day of or day before your class.

Individual Work

1.

2.

Small Group Work

1.

2.

Other Activities

Note: Fill in the activities you wish to use when you lead the class. Have the teacher make photocopies of your worksheet for all members of the class. You will be responsible for distributing the photocopies to the class.

Worksheet 27: Second Student-Led Discussion

Student Leader Planning Checklist

- Complete the worksheet entitled “Introduction to Leadership Roles.”
- Choose the individual and small group activities and write them on the worksheet for the lesson.
- Choose any other activities and write them on the worksheet for the lesson.
- Give the completed lesson worksheet to your teacher for photocopying.
- Devise one opening question that all the student leaders agree on and record it.
- Devise at least one follow-up question each.
- With your co-leaders, review the text, lesson plan, worksheet activities, and questions the day of or day before your class.

Individual Work

1.

2.

Small Group Work

1.

2.

Other Activities

Note: Fill in the activities you wish to use when you lead the class. Have the teacher make photocopies of your worksheet for all members of the class. You will be responsible for distributing the photocopies to the class.

Worksheet 28: Third Student-Led Discussion

Student Leader Planning Checklist

- Complete the worksheet entitled “Introduction to Leadership Roles.”
- Choose the individual and small group activities and write them on the worksheet for the lesson.
- Choose any other activities and write them on the worksheet for the lesson.
- Give the completed lesson worksheet to your teacher for photocopying.
- Devise one opening question that all the student leaders agree on and record it.
- Devise at least one follow-up question each.
- With your co-leaders, review the text, lesson plan, worksheet activities, and questions the day of or day before your class.

Individual Work

1.

2.

Small Group Work

1.

2.

Other Activities

Note: Fill in the activities you wish to use when you lead the class. Have the teacher make photocopies of your worksheet for all members of the class. You will be responsible for distributing the photocopies to the class.

Worksheet 29: Reflecting on Touchstones Discussions

Individual Work

1. Rate your participation in the Touchstones discussions this year. Select your choice, with “1” being very poor and “10” being excellent.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. Why did you rate yourself that way?

3. What could you do to improve your participation?

4. What could you do to improve the discussion?

5. What explanation would you choose to explain why you have not always been as active a participant as you could be?

- a. The texts are usually too difficult.
- b. Too many people talk at once.
- c. I have not been sure what I could say that would help the discussion.
- d. I prefer to listen.
- e. I have a difficult time expressing what I want to say.
- f. I have not thought about what I could do differently before this activity.
- g. Other _____

6. Consider the following questions after the discussion: How was your participation today? Were you able to try new strategies? If so, what strategies did you try? If not, why not?