



The Great Books Foundation

## Reflection and Mentoring Tools for Shared Inquiry Leaders

Self-reflection and mentoring and coaching by colleagues are a teacher's most powerful learning opportunities. The tools here are designed to support these learning processes by targeting the following elements of the Shared Inquiry method:

1. A teaching stance of open-minded curiosity about students' ideas
2. A focus on interpretation and a deeper understanding of the text
3. Questioning strategies to help students generate ideas, support ideas with evidence, and respond to one another's ideas

These tools will give teachers and leaders feedback that directly supports their mastery of the Shared Inquiry method and their students' growth in reading comprehension and critical thinking.

### Contents:

Leader Reflection (for teachers and other Shared Inquiry Leaders) .....	2
Shared Inquiry Discussion Inventory (for mentors trained in Shared Inquiry) .....	7
Shared Inquiry Walk-Through (for mentors not trained in Shared Inquiry) .....	10

For a strong mentoring program, we recommend that mentors attend the Great Books Foundation's 300-level professional development course, Peer Coaching and Mentoring. Visit [www.greatbooks.org](http://www.greatbooks.org) and click on Professional Development.



## Leader Reflection

**(For teachers and other Shared Inquiry leaders)**

Your students' progress is closely tied to your own development as a Shared Inquiry discussion leader. The leader reflection form (page 3) is designed to help you recognize your own strengths and challenges and identify needed changes as you incorporate the Shared Inquiry method into your teaching. The form is adapted from the assessment kit in the Junior Great Books Series 3–5 Leader's Edition.

The leader reflection form focuses on the key critical-thinking elements—idea, evidence, and response—found in the Great Books critical-thinking rubrics. Because your students' critical-thinking skills are supported by your own questions, thinking about your students' achievement will enable you to see areas in which you can improve your questioning strategies to help them.

The classroom culture objective refers to the level of energy, enthusiasm, and confidence your students exhibit in Great Books. This, too, is an important indicator of your students' learning and one you can address with questioning strategies.

### How to Use the Leader Reflection Form

Use the leader reflection form (page 3) after you have graded your students' work in three or four units.

1. Make a copy of the form to write on and keep completed reflections so you can compare your progress from time to time throughout the year.
2. Referring to the left-hand column, consider the overall level of achievement of your class for each of the four areas: idea, evidence, response, and classroom culture. Note your own observations of your students' breakthroughs and struggles.
3. Decide on one element to focus on for the next several units. It may be an area for faster progress or a problem to solve.
4. Consider the strategies in the right-hand column: How can you use them to achieve your goal? How might your students respond?
5. Decide on a few suggested strategies to use or think of your own strategies.
6. If possible, meet with colleagues to fill out your forms and discuss both your students' work and your own use of the questioning strategies. You can give one another insight and professional support. If you are working with a Great Books consultant, he or she will also be able to help you set and meet your goals as a discussion leader.



## Leader Reflection

The left-hand column shows likely student behaviors in four areas: idea, evidence, response, and classroom culture. For each, likely student behaviors are shown in order, from simple beginning behaviors to more complex ones. The right-hand column lists strategies that address each area as a whole. The strategies are arranged in two groups, based on their likely difficulty for you as a leader.

	<b>Date:</b>	
	<b>I see that my students:</b>	<b>My focus for the next several units will be to:</b>
<b>IDEA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk about the text in general terms</li> <li>• Give short, superficial answers</li> <li>• Give thoughtful answers</li> <li>• Give answers based on motives and causes</li> <li>• Explain answers</li> <li>• Extend their ideas while trying to keep them consistent</li> </ul> <p><b>Observations:</b></p>	<p><b>Ask follow-up questions to help students clarify ideas</b></p> <p><b>Simpler strategies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ask students to tell you more about their idea</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pause to think about each student's comment before asking a question</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Weigh students' specific words and phrases and ask what they mean by them</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Invite students to ask questions when they do not understand one another's ideas</li> </ul> <p><b>Advanced strategies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Set a relaxed pace in discussion, giving students sufficient time to explore ideas</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use the seating chart to remind students of earlier comments and ask whether they wish to add anything or have changed their minds</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Near the end of discussion, ask students for their final answers to the focus question</li> </ul> <p><b>Further strategies:</b></p>



	<b>I see that my students:</b>	<b>My focus for the next several units will be to:</b>
<b>EVIDENCE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Retell parts of the story</li><li>• Point to relevant passages</li><li>• Offer simple explanations for pointing to certain passages</li><li>• Offer an idea based on evidence from the text</li><li>• Explain how evidence supports an idea</li><li>• Build support from different parts of the text</li></ul> <p><b>Observations:</b></p>	<p><b>Ask follow-up questions for evidence and support</b></p> <p><b>Simpler strategies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Ask students to hold up their books and to point out a passage so everyone can find it</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Show students how to cite passages by page number, paragraph, and line</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Ask the group to suggest passages that support a student's idea</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Invite students to read passages aloud as evidence</li></ul> <p><b>Advanced strategies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Ask for evidence consistently</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Suggest passages and ask if they support the idea</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Ask students to comment on evidence cited by another student</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Ask students how they would relate another student's evidence to their own ideas</li></ul> <p><b>Further strategies:</b></p>



	<b>I see that my students:</b>	<b>My focus for the next stage will be to:</b>
<b>RESPONSE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Allow others to speak</li><li>• React briefly to other students' answers</li><li>• Hear and consider other students' answers before speaking</li><li>• Agree or disagree with other students' ideas</li><li>• Explain why they agree or disagree</li><li>• Contribute to other students' ideas</li></ul> <p><b>Observations:</b></p>	<p><b>Ask follow-up questions for listening and responding</b></p> <p><b>Simpler strategies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Coach students in listening and discussion manners</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Avoid paraphrasing or repeating comments myself</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Focus on one idea at a time, letting the group discuss it thoroughly before moving on to another idea</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Invite students to suggest evidence for other students' ideas</li></ul> <p><b>Advanced strategies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Refer to the seating chart to ask students specifically about other students' ideas</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Encourage students to ask one another follow-up questions</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Ask students to summarize classmates' ideas when they comment on them</li></ul> <p><b>Further strategies:</b></p>



	<b>I see that my students:</b>	<b>My focus for the next several units will be to:</b>
<b>CLASSROOM CULTURE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Phase in and out</li><li>• Hang back from participating</li><li>• Direct comments at the leader</li><li>• Direct comments to the group</li><li>• Think through ideas spontaneously and without apparent self-consciousness</li><li>• Demonstrate discussion skills (offering ideas, giving evidence, and responding to others) in other subject areas</li></ul> <p><b>Observations:</b></p>	<p><b>Show openness to students' ideas (no single right answer in mind)</b></p> <p><b>Simpler strategies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Discuss the text with a colleague to get another perspective</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Anticipate better comprehension over time rather than immediate mastery</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Circulate while students complete the Building Your Answer page to see the variety of ideas, to know what to expect during discussion</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Call on students to participate; ask them follow-up questions to get their ideas out</li></ul> <p><b>Advanced strategies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Give my students other ways to participate, such as reading aloud their Building Your Answer responses or commenting on another student's idea</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Prepare for each story by thinking through several different answers to the discussion questions (alone or with colleagues)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Avoid unintentionally favoring some students (calling on or questioning them more)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Be patient as students read longer, more difficult texts</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Encourage students to demonstrate discussion skills, (offering ideas, giving evidence, and responding to others) in other subject areas</li></ul> <p><b>Further strategies:</b></p>



## **Shared Inquiry Discussion Inventory**

**(For mentors trained in Shared Inquiry)**

Mentors and coaches who are observing Shared Inquiry discussion can use the discussion inventory (page 8) to watch for the most important elements of Shared Inquiry practice. The inventory will help you provide teachers with useful feedback on both their strategies as a discussion leader and their students' participation.

The Shared Inquiry discussion inventory is designed for use by observers who have participated in Great Books training in Shared Inquiry. Observers who are not trained in using Shared Inquiry should instead use the Shared Inquiry walk-through form, which follows the inventory.

### **How to Use the Shared Inquiry Discussion Inventory**

Before the observation, ask the teacher you will be observing to brief you on any special circumstances and to point out areas in which he or she especially wants feedback.

1. Read the text to be discussed in advance.
2. Review the Shared Inquiry discussion inventory so the items are fresh in your mind.
3. Observe the discussion, taking notes on the teacher's questions and the participants' responses.
4. Referring to your notes, fill out the inventory immediately after the discussion. When you debrief with the teacher, refer to your notes to provide specific examples with your comments.



## Shared Inquiry Discussion Inventory Form

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Selection: \_\_\_\_\_ Time begin: \_\_\_\_\_ Time end: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Shared Inquiry discussions this year \_\_\_\_\_

### **About the Shared Inquiry Discussion Leader**

**In the items below, note examples of the leader's strategy for each element of Shared Inquiry discussion.**

1. The leader opened discussion with a basic interpretive question.

---

---

---

2. The leader remained open-minded and avoided signaling "right answers."

---

---

---

3. The leader asked participants to cite and explain evidence from the text to support their answers.

---

---

---

4. The leader asked participants whether they agreed or disagreed with one another.

---

---

---

5. The leader showed curiosity about ideas and encouraged participants to develop them.

---

---

---



6. The leader helped the group distinguish and develop different ideas.

---

---

---

**About the Students**

**In the following items, note examples of students' behavior for each student objective in Shared Inquiry discussion.**

7. The students wrote their answers before and after discussion.

---

---

---

8. The students spontaneously offered evidence for their responses.

---

---

---

9. The students spontaneously responded to one another (agreed or disagreed with one another's responses, questioned one another).

---

---

---

10. The students were engaged and thoughtful.

---

---

---

Additional comments:

---

---

---

---



## Shared Inquiry Walk-Through

**(For mentors not trained in Shared Inquiry)**

Mentors and instructional leaders can use the walk-through form (page 11) to collect a quick but accurate impression of a teacher's use of the Shared Inquiry method in all Great Books activities. It can be used to assess the progress of an implementation across several classrooms or grade levels.

You need not have participated in Great Books training to use the walk-through form, although the training will help you provide more effective mentoring.

### **How to Use the Shared Inquiry Walk-Through Form**

Schedule the walk-through for a time when teachers are conducting Great Books activities—for example, during the sharing questions or directed notes activities or during Shared Inquiry discussion. Consult with the teachers beforehand on any special circumstances in their classes.

The most effective walk-throughs involve several observers who compare their findings and formulate action points together. Include instructional leaders and teachers in the walk-through group.

1. Schedule at least 10 minutes in each classroom, so you can observe a reasonable sample of teacher and student behaviors. Prepare a walk-through form for each classroom to be visited.
2. Review the walk-through form before beginning observations, so the items are fresh in your mind. If you like, divide the items on the form among the members in the walk-through group, or agree to focus on a few.
3. In each class, take notes about the teacher's and the students' behaviors on a walk-through form.
4. Compare your observations for several classes and identify areas of achievement and action points to share with the teachers as a group.



# Shared Inquiry Walk-Through Form

Classroom: \_\_\_\_\_ Observer: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

	Comments	Shared Inquiry approach	Student-driven approach	Teacher-driven approach
<b>Learning Objective</b>		Think independently to find deeper meaning in text	Connect personal experience to the text	Understand and adopt a standard interpretation of the text
<b>Student Talk or Writing</b>		Suggest, explain, and support ideas about what the text means	Share impressions, feelings, and opinions related to the text	Recite answers that advance the teacher's interpretation
<b>Teacher Talk</b>		Ask open-ended questions about what the text means	Observe, ask an occasional question	Explain, ask factual "checking" and "leading" questions
<b>Key Behaviors</b>		The teacher expresses open-minded curiosity about each student's ideas.	The teacher lets the students discuss as they wish.	The teacher has "right answers" in mind.
		The teacher focuses the activity on a question that is open to divergent answers.	Students find their own focus for discussion or writing.	The teacher focuses activity on a specific interpretation or conclusion.
		The teacher asks students to support their ideas with evidence from the text.	Students may or may not support ideas from the text, personal experience, or other sources.	The teacher presents evidence or elicits predetermined evidence.
		The teacher encourages students to agree or disagree with one another.	Students may or may not address one another's ideas.	The teacher restates and compares ideas and draws conclusions.