

**WHAT IS A GRADED DISCUSSION?**

A graded discussion gives the student an opportunity to verbally articulate what he/she is discovering during the reading of a piece of literature. The graded discussion also provides the opportunity to learn what it is to support a general idea with a quote from the text, to apply a lesson from the literature to real life, current events, or a spiritual truth. Finally, such discussions give each student the opportunity to hear other students' interpretations of the text and to persuade others to an alternate interpretation. Proverbs reminds us that "iron sharpens iron."

**HOW IS THE DISCUSSION 'GRADED'?**

As a student participates in the discussion (one can volunteer or Mrs. Wolfe can "volunteer them"), Mrs. Wolfe awards points according to the following rubric:

ONE point is given for a factual answer, such as "What is really occurring at the hatcheries in *Brave New World*?" or What activity initially gets Winston Smith into trouble in *1984*?

TWO points are awarded for an answer that requires some analysis of facts given in the literature, such as "How do Antonio and Shylock relate? An answer such as "He hates Shylock receives only 1 point. To state that Antonio does not collect usury and Shylock does tells a bit more. Another possible question would be this: From the way Portia's father established the lottery of caskets to find his daughter's husband, what kind of father was he? What did he seem to value in a husband for his daughter? While there is no actual quote for this kind of question (although you get some input from Nerissa's comments to her mistress, Portia), you can analyze what metal Portia's father chose and think about what that might say about the husband Portia's father would approve for his daughter. Be sure you have thought about WHY you think as you do about him.

THREE points are earned for an answer that uses logic and some outside information, such as "What was the attitude toward Jews in Shakespeare's day and how does that attitude influence Shakespeare's description of Shylock as a tight-fisted money manager?"

FOUR points are earned when the answer you give uses an actual quote from the text. Such an answer demonstrates your ability to handle the text. If a student can do this well, writing the compositions required will be made easier. You already know where you can find quotations that will support your general statements. For example, when answering the specific ways that Antonio had mistreated Shylock, quote the actual words from the text in your verbal answer in class.

FIVE points are awarded when a student pairs a quotation from the text to a famous quote, either from current news, the Bible, Greek mythology, another piece of literature, or history.

### **HOW DOES A STUDENT PREPARE FOR A GRADED DISCUSSION?**

- Read the material or listen to the play more than once during the week.
- Answer all the character identifications or worksheets I email to you. These sheets are collected only AFTER the graded discussion. If you have prepared these sheets well, talked about the play with your folks and classmates, and done some THINKING, you are ready.
- Do not hold back; each student has to play to earn points! Now, if someone starts to answer every question, I'll start to call on quieter students. Do not think an idea is off base in your thinking, particularly if you've talked with others and aren't quite sure. Students don't ever lose points for venturing a guess.