

## Sample Classroom Activities

### Generating Class-wide Participation

Because I want my classroom to be an inclusive environment for students to share their ideas, I often incorporate out of class exercises like these that I can then use to generate discussion in the next class:

*“Bring three questions of your own design to class”*

I ask students to bring in three thought-provoking questions or issues related to our reading that they might pose to the rest of the class.

In the next class, I ask them to divide up into small groups of 3 or 4 to discuss their questions and as a group decide on two questions to ask their classmates. I tell them to think through which questions they think will generate meaningful and relevant discussion and how they might explain or qualify the question (perhaps telling us what prompted the question, or why a particular issue is more complicated or nuanced than we might have thought; perhaps they might even want to direct the class to a particular passage from which the question arose).

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### Texts and Contexts

While I often assign secondary readings that provide critical, historical, and/or cultural context for our primary readings, I also want my students to experience the excitement and challenges of doing their own background work, which they can then share with their classmates either in class or online through a class wiki. I have done variations on this exercise:

*“Identify a significant event that occurred in the 1910s and 20s (or the period in which our novel is both written and set).”*

I tell students to do some digging to find out a little more about the particulars of the event (Who were the major players? Where did this take place—was it a local, national, or international phenomenon? What events or changes led up to or followed this event?). In small groups or in a wiki entry, I ask students to consider how the novel or story explicitly or implicitly responds to, engages, interprets, or altogether ignores this event.

This short, informal assignment allows us to have ongoing and more participative conversations about contextual issues as well as authorial intentionality and writerly choices. It also gives them a small preview of the work they’ll do for their larger, independent research projects (course permitting).