

## Tents for Talking – Instructions & Rationale

“Tents for Talking” is a structured way for students to discuss a literary piece using domain-specific academic language.

The ‘tents’ are set up on a desk or table where students are sitting in small groups.

Students take turns using the question stems on those tents to discuss the reading material.

**Rational:** This is great for all kinds of students because it helps guide them to feeling more comfortable with academic language. It works well for ESL / ELL students as well as native speakers. It works for struggling students and for higher-level students. It allows all students in a group to have access to the same academic language. You can see how built-in, automatic differentiation is so easy with

**What else can I do once I’ve used the Tents for Talking several times and my students are really understanding the concept? What’s next?**

After students have read a selection silently, provide a blank “tent” (one per group). Allow students to work together to fill both sides of the tent with main ideas, important words or phrases, etc. This part is pretty open because it’s all about the important elements *they* are gathering from the passage. Then have student groups switch the tents with each other and begin a discussion about the text using those tents. Repeat as many times as desired. From there, engage students in a whole class discussion of the key elements on the tents they created. Student groups can return the tents to the original groups (or not!). Follow up with some quiet writing time where students can use some of the words/phrases/ideas from the tent. This writing can be further developed into an actual essay on another day, or it could serve as an informal exit ticket. The possibilities are endless :)

You can also use the words and phrases on the tents as Exit Tickets or Warm Ups/ Do-Nows. Have students choose a word or phrase and provide a written response to the reading material based on that word or phrase from the Tent. Add to the rigor by having them include examples and text evidence! Now you have a way to get students engaged in an academic discussion about the reading material since they can begin by sharing their written responses based on the Tents.