



I explained that I would be keeping time on my watch to let students know when to move from one step to the next.

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As I observed my students actively talking about points they noted on their index cards, I felt a great sense of relief. I knew there was a strong possibility that my students would avoid the entire discussion altogether. Providing a space for students to rehearse their thoughts and discussion points rather quickly in a written format seemed to prepare them for engaging in a courageous discussion with other students. As I circled the classroom to listen in on each group's meeting, students did talk about race. Several of my jottings include student statements:

*I can't imagine having to walk into a courtroom to defend my marriage based on our skin color. It is truly awful!*

*I read a book over break that said, "love is love until it's not." During this time, love was love; unless it was between interracial couples, then it was illegal. I hate that anyone had to go through that and hate even more that people still experience these issues today.*

*I agree. This book made me even more aware of the racial issues in our country. I could never imagine not being able to marry someone simply based on the color of their skin! This doesn't make any sense.*

*This (interracial marriages being illegal) went on for too many years. People still have negative views towards interracial marriage. It is so important to talk and have these discussions.*

As we finished our small group discussions, I asked the students to consider and reflect on their participation in this activity. Below are several excerpts representative of their feedback:

*I like this (write-arounds) because you get to hear what your peers believe and their thoughts about it as well. I like how you can look back and take a moment to look at everything and write about your final thoughts and what you want to talk about. It really makes you think.*

*Shows different perspectives on a controversial topic that we might not be ready to talk about right away. Writing our thoughts down and then reading what other people wrote helped me think about what I wanted to point out when our group got the chance to talk.*

*I think this is a great method to integrate discussion into the classroom about things we don't normally talk about. It's a quiet activity, and everyone gets to use their "voice." It can also help connect students by sharing similar opinions.*

*The activity was interesting to see others' thoughts and ideas on the topic. This is a great way to get quiet students' voices heard because it is less confrontational than speaking up in class. It's a great activity for tough topics.*

This activity is by no means limited to children's literature; it would be a purposeful exercise in any discipline