

## Jigsaw Project

A jigsaw project is a complex sequence of activities that helps a group of participants explore one aspect of a theme in depth, while gaining broader knowledge about other aspects of the same theme through interactions with their teammates. Typically, jigsaw projects combine reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

A jigsaw project engages each participant in two types of small groups: a three- or four-person base group, and an expert group. In the expert groups, participants read and interact, or become "expert" about a given topic; they bring their expertise back to their base group, where each is an expert on a different but related text or topic. Typically, there are three or four texts that focus on the same theme in a jigsaw project, and a variety of activities combine interactive and individual tasks in both the expert and base teams.

There are three moments in the basic structure of a Jigsaw Project:

1. **Base groups:** Teammates prepare to engage in the task by activating prior knowledge or emotions that relate to the task topic or theme. During this initial stage, group members also review their responsibilities: everyone is assigned to a different expert group and the three or four questions that are going to be explored in all of the expert-group reading assignments are reviewed.
2. **Expert groups:** These groups develop expertise in one aspect of the jigsaw theme. Their role is to understand the main points presented in their particular reading and to be prepared to present back to their base groups the expert group's consensus answers to the assigned questions. Once a group records their consensus statements, the teacher or facilitator must check them for content and clarity, since at the next stage of the activity these notes will be shared throughout the class.
3. **Base groups:** In this third stage, each base-group member shares the understanding developed in his or her expert group. After each base-group member makes his or her presentation, all participants engage in a conversation in which they underscore common denominators running through the texts read.

An example of this type of jigsaw is the "Plate Boundaries Jigsaw Project". Each of the three readings focuses on a different type of plate boundary found between tectonic plates. Each expert-group member develops deep expertise on one experience, through his or her reading, structured note-taking, expert-group discussion, and eventual presentation to his or her base group. By the final phase of the jigsaw project, base-group members have learned about all three boundaries and can discuss their common elements.

Some of the tasks in "Plate Boundaries" include Describe-Pair-Share, and Reading with a Focus. However, jigsaw projects can have many variations of task composition and sequence.

*Scaffolding:* Since jigsaw projects contain many tasks, all scaffolds are likely to support their implementation: modeling, bridging, contextualization, schema building, metacognitive development, and text re-presentation.

