



## A guide to class discussions for students

**Login to Connect at  
[connect.det.wa.edu.au](https://connect.det.wa.edu.au)**

Each class has the option to engage in **Discussions** in Connect, which need to be set up by a teacher. Class discussions can be used to help students communicate effectively with their teacher and peers.

## Starting your Discussion Group

Online discussions are an effective tool for teachers to regularly communicate with their students. They also provide a useful and secure online collaboration space that fosters student communication with their teachers and peers.

### Discussion Groups

**A** Community discussions are organised in discussion groups. Before students can participate in discussions, teachers must create a **Discussion Group**. The group represents a theme or topic for the discussions, in which multiple discussions can be created. For example, a group called 'School Planning' might have discussions on book lists, timetabling requests, nominations for committees or decisions on important dates. Click the **+** button to create a new Discussion Group.

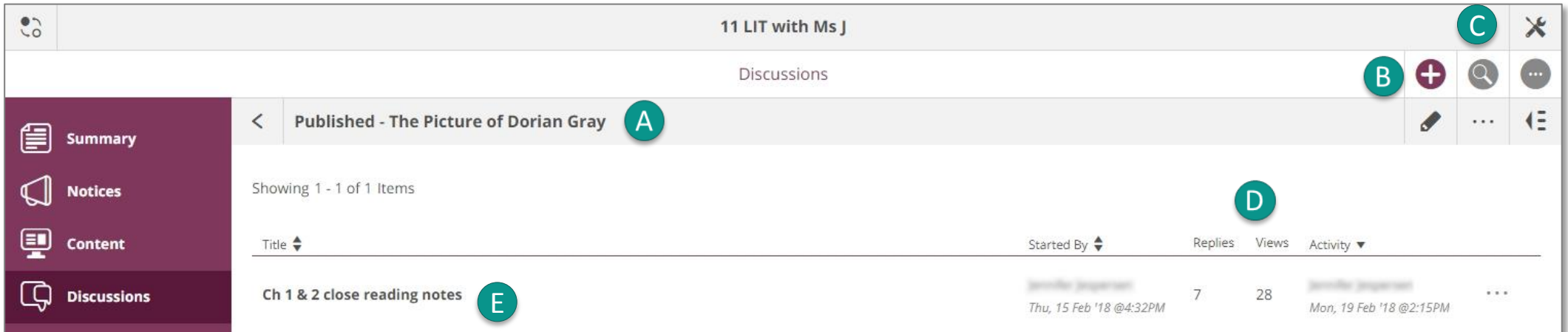
### Accessing your Discussion Groups

**B** Your discussion groups will be listed on the right hand side of your screen. On devices with smaller screens use the arrow to reveal the list.

The screenshot shows the 'Korda Class' page in the Connect WA Education system. The top navigation bar includes 'Classes', 'Communities', 'My Connect', 'Manage', 'Discover', 'Data Nav', and 'Learn'. The main content area is titled 'Korda Class' and 'Discussions'. A sidebar on the left contains navigation options: 'Summary', 'Grid', 'Notices', 'Content', and 'Discussions'. The main content area shows a 'Published - All' filter and a message: 'You have not yet published any Discussions. To create a Discussion Group or Discussion, click on the + Add button.' A 'Discussion Group' dropdown menu is visible on the right side of the page. A red circle 'A' highlights the '+ Add' button, and a red circle 'B' highlights the 'Discussion Group' dropdown menu.

## Starting a discussion

Discussions can easily be integrated into the learning process as an engaging tool for interactions where students discuss and problem-solve. For example, conceptual discussions and group problem-solving tasks can be facilitated very effectively through discussions.



The screenshot shows a discussion group interface for '11 LIT with Ms J'. The sidebar on the left has 'Discussions' selected. The main area shows a discussion titled 'Ch 1 & 2 close reading notes'. A table below shows activity statistics for this discussion.

Title	Started By	Replies	Views	Activity
Ch 1 & 2 close reading notes	Jennifer [unclear]	7	28	Jennifer [unclear]
	Thu, 15 Feb '18 @4:32PM			Mon, 19 Feb '18 @2:15PM

### Discussion Groups

**A** This is a discussion group that has been set up by a teacher and contains discussions related to the subject area of the discussion group.

### Starting a new discussion

**B** You can start a new discussion within a discussion group by clicking on the **+** button .

### Search for discussions

**C** You can search by key words to find past discussions.

### Discussion activity

**D** Navigate to activity statistics to see how many **Discussions** have been created within the group, who started them and how many **Replies** and **Views** each discussion received.

### Participating in a class discussion

**E** By clicking on a discussion title, you can open an existing discussion, read posts, add your own comment and attach an image or a file to your response.

## Using online discussions in Connect

Discussions are an easy and safe way to teach ICT capabilities, offering students opportunities to develop the relevant knowledge, skills, and behaviours to effectively investigate, communicate and create with ICT.

- A** **Flipped classroom**  
Online discussions can help students prepare for class activities by engaging them with new topics or content. For example, students can discuss their responses to a pre-class reading.
- B** **Student assessment**  
As all discussions are being archived, they can be used for formative assessment at the end of term, as a summative assessment activity or for self-reflection purposes.
- C** **Interaction and collaboration**  
By replying and commenting on each other's work students collaborate online towards a final product.
- D** **Promote independent learning**  
Discussions can be a space where students answer commonly asked questions, helping them prepare for exams, learn autonomously, eventually alleviating teacher workload.

The screenshot shows a discussion thread in the Connect platform. The title is "The Picture of Dorian Gray - Ch 1 & 2 close reading notes". The main post is by a teacher, dated Thursday, 15 February 2018 @4:32PM. The post asks students to share their notes on character, setting, symbolism, language style and imagery, and themes and ideas. There are buttons for "Comment", "Edit", and a menu icon. Below the main post, there are two comments. The first comment is by Morgan Fletcher, a student, dated Thursday, 15 February 2018 @5:29PM. It includes an attachment: "DG - Language Style and Imagery.docx (26 Kb)". The second comment is by Anthony White, a student, dated Thursday, 15 February 2018 @5:47PM (last edited Thursday, 15 February 2018 @6:05PM). The comment text reads: "Hey, Tom, Kishen and I were looking at symbolism throughout the first chapter and part the way into the second. We found that there were a few connotations within the quote 'Lord Henry pulled apart the daisy with long nervous fingers.' For example, as daisies can symbolise beauty and happiness, this statement can be read as Lord Henry symbolically destroying beauty with, or due to, the anxiety apparent in his fingers. Going further (and perhaps too

## Benefits of using discussions in the class

In Connect, discussions can be easily integrated into the daily teaching and learning activities. When using discussions to deliver learning programs, teachers:

- A Cater for different learning styles**

Discussions offer a way to differentiate teaching to meet the specific learning needs across a full range of abilities, such as allowing students to work at their own pace to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills.
- B Integrate a diverse range of tools and activities**

Discussions provide opportunities for richer class dialogues as well as additional ways for your students to demonstrate the depth of their learning.
- C Provide regular, prompt and constructive feedback**

A discussion provides a record of students' online contributions, enabling you to evaluate each student's performance and provide constructive and tailored feedback.
- D Provide opportunities for self and peer-review**

Discussion threads can be used as a stimulus for further discussion or as a record of group collaboration to inform your grading at the end of semester.

The screenshot shows a discussion thread in a platform called Connect. The title of the thread is "The Picture of Dorian Gray - Ch 1 & 2 close reading notes".

The first post is from a student named Sean Sullivan, dated Saturday, 17 February 2018 @3:24PM. The post contains the text: "Here's some analysis of themes and ideas from chapter 1. Hopefully will get chapter 2 up by Monday." and an attachment named "Dorian Gray (Chpt 1) Themes and Ideas Analysis.docx" (15 Kb). A red circle with the letter 'A' is next to the post.

The second post is from a teacher, dated Monday, 19 February 2018 @2:15PM, and includes a mention of Sean Sullivan. The text says: "Excellent notes, Sean. Succinctly summed up: I like your focus on the poking of fun at the establishment and their ideas." A red circle with the letter 'C' is next to the post.

The third post is from a student, dated Sunday, 18 February 2018 @1:26PM. The text says: "Here are some of the notes that Sean and I took about language style & imagery". A red circle with the letter 'D' is next to the post. Below the text, there is a small image of a notebook page with handwritten notes.

Each post has "Reply", "Edit", and "..." options below it.

## Managing Discussions

Teachers can easily manage discussions, including inappropriate comments, by replying, editing or even reporting and hiding a comment.

A

### Replying to a comment

You can respond to any comment in a discussion thread by clicking the **Reply** button and publishing a response.

B

### Editing a comment

As a teacher, you also have permissions to **Edit** student comments, allowing you to review and make changes to comments from students in your class.

The screenshot shows a 'Comments' section. At the top, a student comment says 'This is' and is marked as 'Reported' with a red button. A green circle 'C' is next to the comment. Below it, a teacher's response says 'Cody, I have deleted your previous comment after it was reported by another class member as "inappropriate". Please see me on Monday to discuss.' and 'Thanks, Ms J'. A green circle 'D' is next to the teacher's response. At the bottom right of the comment thread, there are buttons for 'Reply', 'Edit', and a three-dot menu.

### The nature of fear

The screenshot shows a discussion thread titled 'The nature of fear'. The post is by a teacher, posted 52 minutes ago. The text of the post asks for personal understanding of the world and significant human experience gained from interpreting various representations of life matters in texts. Below the post is a 'Comment' button and a three-dot menu. Underneath, there is a 'Comments' section showing a student comment that says 'This is a stupid exercise! I hate it!'. A green circle 'A' is next to the student's comment, and a green circle 'B' is next to the 'Reply', 'Edit', and three-dot menu buttons.

C

### Reporting an inappropriate comment

Every member of a Discussion Group, including students, can report a comment, however, the comment will still be visible. It is recommended to use this as an opportunity to discuss **applying social and ethical protocols and practices when using ICT** with your students.

D

### Hiding a comment

As a teacher, you also have the option to hide inappropriate comments from view. To do so, click on the **Action** button on the right and select **Hide** from the drop-down menu.