**Book Discussion Format**

**Stage One - Taste It**.

Discuss basic knowledge of your subject.

What do we know about the **author** that might be significant to the reading? Did the author write in reaction to something?

Is the **time period** in which the book was written significant to the reading? What is the setting of the story?

What images and metaphors are used?

**What are the central ideas and themes**?

Is there an argument in this book? Why did the author write this book or article? To convince you of a truth; give you an emotional experience? Did the writer succeed? Why or why not?

Discuss the facts of the reading. Who were the characters. What happened (the basic plot)?

What does the central character(s) want? What is standing in his or her way? What strategy does he or she pursue in order to overcome this block?

The goal of this stage is to know *what* the writer says.

**Stage Two - Swallow It**.

Take the knowledge into your own understanding by evaluating the reading. Is it valid? Is it true? Why? Why not?

What do you think about these ideas? Decide if the information is correct or incorrect. Am I persuaded?

Make connections between cause and effect, historical events, scientific phenomena, words, and their meanings.

Am I transported? Do I see, feel, hear the writer’s world? Can I sympathize with the people who live there? Which ones, and why? Do I understand their wants and desires and problems? Or am I left unmoved?

The goal of this stage is to understand *why* and *how*.

**Stage Three - Digest It**.

Now that you know *what*, *why* and *how*, the final question is: *So what*?

What does the writer want me to do, believe or experience?

Am I convinced that I must do, or believe, what the writer wants me to do or believe? Have I experienced what the writer wants me to experience? If not, *why*?

Fold the reading into your own understanding. Let it change the way you think–or reject it as unworthy and be able to explain why.

Express your opinion about the facts you have accumulated and evaluated.

Articulate your opinion about the reading.

Many people jump to stage three, giving their opinion, long before they have a chance to understand the topic under study. Don’t form an opinion before you understand.

The goal of this stage is to *form your own opinion* and be able to defend that opinion.

Taste, swallow, digest; find out the facts, evaluate them, form and express your own opinion.