What you will need for QSSSA:

Question(s) and Sentence Stem(s)

(Optional) Note Taking Paper for Yourself

Overview of QSSSA:

The QSSSA stands for:

Q: Question - Give students a question to discuss.

S: Stem - Provide them with a sentence stem to answer the question.

S: Signal - Students think of an answer individually and signal when they are ready.

S: Share - Students get with a partner to share answers.

A: Assess - You randomly call on a few students to share their answers and/or walk around and listen in to their conversations.
How to organize QSSSA:

1. Question:
This activity works with any topic. You just need a topic-related, open-ended question for students to discuss.

Examples:
• What are two things you learned from the passage?
• What was the problem in the story?
• What do you not understand about earth’s layers?

2. Stem:
After giving students the question(s) you want them to discuss. You then provide them with a sentence stem(s) to answer the question. i.e. In the passage, I learned that... Last weekend, I... I don’t understand...

3. Signal:
You then give students time to think of the answer they want to share. When students are ready, they signal to the teacher with some sort of hand gesture or pose. i.e. thumbs up, muscle flex, light bulb “I have an idea” pose with one finger in the air and happy expression. If some students are ready quickly while others are still thinking, you can have those waiting students write their answer with their finger in the air.

4. Share:
When all students are ready, students get with a partner and share the answer(s) they thought of.

5. Assess:
You can assess students by having a few volunteers share their answers and/or you can walk around the class while students are discussing and attend to how students are using the language. You can take notes so that you remember any issues you would like to come back to work on more later. You can also ask students to write a response.
More Examples of QSSSA

Main Characters in a Story
Who are the main characters in the story? Why are they important? | The main characters in the story are... They are important because... | Raise your hand when you can finish the sentence.

Earthquakes
Why do earthquakes happen? | Earthquakes happen because... | Stand up when you can finish the sentence.

Tops and Bottoms Story
Do you think the rabbit in Tops in Bottoms was right to do what he did to the bear? | I think the rabbit was... He should have... He shouldn’t have... | Do five jumping jacks when you can finish the sentence.

Benefits of QSSSA
- This activity requires no preparation.
- Students get an opportunity to verbalize what they are learning which helps solidify target vocabulary and sentence structures.
- Everyone student is participating and few students are waiting around.
- Check out this article by Valentina Gonzalez on how to organize this activity.
- You can also read this article by Katie Toppel on Culturally Responsive Communication where she recommends this activity in the context of being culturally sensitive when setting up speaking activities.
- Have you tried this activity? How did it go? Leave your comments below!

For more ESL teaching activity ideas & strategies, visit: kid-inspired.com