

# YOUTH LEAD NOW!

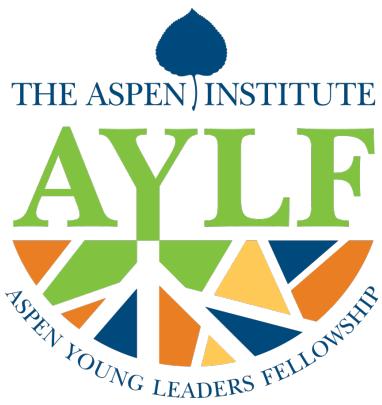


THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

**Finding Your Movement:**  
How Discovering Your Passion  
Can Lead to Societal Change

Next Step Curriculum

## Brought to you by



The Aspen Young Leaders Fellowship (AYLF) identifies, cultivates, and amplifies future generations of talent to engage in the values-based leadership essential for transforming their lives and society for the better. AYLF is a place-based, multi-site program that nurtures a cadre of diverse youth committed to addressing the most compelling social, political, and scientific issues facing their communities.

The Aspen Challenge aims to help young people INSPIRE, ENGAGE, & LEAD. Young people are moments away from being tomorrow's decision-makers and this program offers them a chance to practice their critical thinking, tap into their creativity, and offer their fresh perspective on issues within our society.



Wyzant is Youth Lead Now!'s go-to platform that connects youth of any age with expert online tutors. From help staying on track, to exam prep, to upskilling so you're competitive in the job market, Wyzant tutors specialize in student success. The impact of personalized instruction goes well beyond the classroom by empowering every student to build confidence, resilience, and mastery.

To see our community and partner organizations across the nation, visit the Youth Lead Now! Website.



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**Y**outh Lead Now! **Next Step Curriculum** is a professionally developed curriculum that can be paired with the Youth Lead Now! event. Our goal is to provide you with the resources to maximize the benefits of Youth Lead Now! in your own organizations and families.

This **Next Step Curriculum** can be utilized in a wide variety of contexts from an in-class lesson or training program to a family dialogue or personal reflection. We provide varying formats below that can be easily adapted to fit your needs and continue the learning process started in the original webinar.

### **The formats work as follows:**

**Format 1:** The “Next Step Curriculum” provides a curated list of potential debrief questions that can help a group or individual make deeper meaning of the Youth Lead Now! conversation. We encourage you to host an “after party” immediately following the main event or soon after viewing. Our team is happy to share guides for setting up and participating in experiences on the Zoom platform. Reflection questions offer a starting point for individual and/or group reflection on the themes of a given webinar. Our goal is to make extending the learning as easy as possible for you.

**Format 2:** The “Text-Based Dialogue” builds on the Aspen Institute’s 70-year history of engaging in deeper conversations using “texts” (e.g., literature, poetry, spoken word, art) as a starting point for conversation. This format introduces new content that can be used to drill down on the themes of the webinar to extend learning. It is a catalyst piece for continuing conversation. Using these materials, you will have framing for ongoing learning that you can lead with your constituents, friends, or family, bringing the magic of the Aspen seminar into your lives.

### Format 1: Youth Lead Now! Debrief

#### **Set the stage for the participants' group dialogue by explaining (in your own words):**

Group dialogue differs from traditional debriefs in several key ways:

- The focus is on participants' lived experiences
- The goal is more dialogic with participants asking and engaging one another to understand
- There is a focus not just on what is said but on the process (or how) the dialogue unfolds as well.
- Acknowledge that for some participants, this form of dialogue may seem intimidating as it can be more personal. That is okay. Again, the Youth Lead Now! Next Step Curriculum is designed to help develop all learning muscles including those that participants may not be fond of or use often.

#### **If you are debriefing in a group, lay out ground rules for your debrief such as;**

- We create space for all voices to be heard in the room,
- We position disagreement as opportunities for learning,
- We challenge ideas not people or their inherent worth,
- Any other guidelines the group would like or needs to follow.

**Remember, the role of the moderator is not to walk through the prompt questions like a script. These are just suggestions. The goal is to serve as a conductor drawing out conversation, framing ideas, and pushing for depth.**

#### **The Talk**

- What resonated in what Leah Thomas shared and why?
- How does that connect to your own experiences?
- What didn't land well or what are you curious about and why? How do these reflect your own experiences?

#### **Your Experience**

- How could you incorporate or leverage your passions to create societal change?
- Where in your life and passions do you see the idea of "intersectionality" playing out?
- How can we incorporate lessons from this experience into our discovery of our passions and our pursuits of societal change?

**Closing may feel abrupt** or as if it is cutting off conversation. Remind participants this debrief is designed to open up conversations - not complete them. Encourage the participants to continue exploring these themes, questions, and lessons for as long as they need to.

## Format 2: “Language” by Camille T. Dungy Text-Based Dialogue

### Instructions

If this is the first text-based dialogue for any participants using the Next Step Curriculum, it may be helpful to quickly set the stage for this process and how it is different from a traditional dialogue.

The Aspen Method focuses on using texts as a vehicle to explore what it means to be human, our values, and society. Texts become an in-road to personal reflection, deep dialogue, and the contemplation of values.

### We want participants to consider what the text stimulates for them and why.

- What feelings does a text elicit for a person?
- What are the author(s)’ primary arguments, messages, or themes? To what extent does it resonate for a fellow and why?
- What can we learn from considering the text in a contemporary context?

### Remind participants of ground rules.

- We create space for all voices to be heard in the room.
- We position disagreement as opportunities for learning.
- We challenge ideas not people or their inherent worth.

Aspen text based dialogues usually take 45 minutes to dig fully into a reading. Utilizing the Next Step Curriculum, you should feel free to adjust timing based on your circumstances. We recommend you spend no less than 20 minutes on any text; anything less will not be conducive of a productive dialogue.

### Open the dialogue by asking participants to reference the reading on the following page. We want participants to have the written text in front of them.

Explain that we will spend a set amount of time on the “text.” The conversation won’t be finished when we end, and that is part of the process.

Begin the process by asking a participant to read the poem aloud for the group. Due to the length of the poem, it may be interesting to have multiple participants read aloud; take notes on the different inflections, pauses, or emphasis as it may add rich insight to the dialogue.

After the poem has been read, utilize the questions on the following page and/or ask your own!

Remind participants there is no right or wrong answers in a text-based dialogue.

## Potential Themes

- Where in our lives nature can inspire us.
- How understanding “language” around us can inform our passions.
- Where our multiple identities can impact our voice.

## The Text

- What emotions or feelings does this poem surface for you?
- What do you think the author meant by “Silence is one part of speech, the war cry of wind down a mountain pass another”
- What nature symbolism sticks out or particularly speaks to you? Why?
- Why do you think the author titled this poem “Language”?
- Do you feel tension in this poem?

## Your Life

- When have you had to work to understand the “language” around you?
- In your experiences, what is “the bank” you “map [your] life around”?
- To what extent have you felt tension between your multiple identities?

## The Lessons

- What can this experience teach us about “language”?
- How can we map our lives in a way that fulfill us?
- What might this poem teach us about creating societal change?
- How can we thrive in a place of intersectionality?

**Closing this dialogue** can move in a variety of directions. Closing may feel abrupt or as if it is cutting off conversation. Remind participants that text-based dialogues are designed to open up conversation not complete them. Encourage participants to continue exploring these themes after the dialogue.

No two facilitations of a text-based dialogue should be the same. The mosaic of people in the room and context should necessarily shape where the dialogue goes.

Remember, the role of the moderator is not to walk through the prompt questions like a script. These are just suggestions. The goal is to serve as a conductor drawing out conversation, framing ideas, and pushing for depth.

## **“Lagrange”**

by Camille T. Dungy

Silence is one part of speech, the war cry  
of wind down a mountain pass another.  
A stranger’s voice echoing through lonely  
valleys, a lover’s voice rising so close  
it’s your own tongue: these are keys to cipher,  
the way the high hawk’s key unlocks the throat  
of the sky and the coyote’s yip knocks  
it shut, the way the aspens’ bells conform  
to the breeze while the rapid’s drum defines  
resistance. Sage speaks with one voice, pinyon  
with another. Rock, wind her hand, water  
her brush, spells and then scatters her demands.  
some notes tear and pebble our paths. Some notes  
gather: the bank we map our lives around.

FROM BLACK NATURE: FOUR CENTURIES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN NATURE POETRY  
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