


**Gregory Strong**  
**English Department**  
**Aoyama Gakuin University, Tokyo**  
**gregstrongtokyo@gmail.com**



**Teaching and  
Assessing an  
Integrated Skills  
Discussion Task**

In teaching discussion skills, numerous writers have emphasized **the importance of classroom opportunities to improve speaking and listening skills** (Brown, 2000; Ellis, 2005, in review; Hadley, 1993; Richards, 2003). Ferris (1998) noted the apprehension among 476 English language learners at three post-secondary institutions **about answering oral questions and interacting in small groups.**

Soonhyang (2006) surveyed East Asian graduate students who described small-group discussions as one of the most important activities in their course. Zengdong (2013) found that in questionnaires from Taiwanese and Mainland Chinese students, both perceived difficulties in speaking in academic situations.

This workshop describes the teaching and assessing of an integrated skills discussion task suitable for a pre-sessional EAP course

- 1) Students choose high interest topics drawn from online newspapers; or their field of study and lead a discussion.**
- 2) Through the task, students also learn how to take notes on their readings, employ an MLA/APA style in a short bibliography.**
- 3) Assessment is of the student discussions and written work.**

# **1.(a)RESEARCH**

- **More recent classroom-based research that even 10 hours of instruction improves Japanese students' small group discussion skills (Robinson, Strong, Whittle & Nobe, 2001)**
- **Modeling and performance scales in instruction (Richards & Rogers, 2001; Brown, 2000; Willis, 1996).**
- **Repetition in language fluency and accuracy (Bygate, 1996; Bygate, 2001)**

**1. (b)The Discussion task combines four skills and has a (1)pre-task phase, (2)performance or during-task phase, and a (3)post-task phase (Willis & Willis, 2007) Full description of the task (Strong, 2010).**

## **Pre-Task**

- Preparations
- Choosing materials
- Student planning
- Students rehearsing the task
- Teachers assisting small groups of students

## **Performance**

- Students perform the task before peers
- Other students respond to the performance, ie. answering questions, judging it

## **Post Task**

- Student reflection on their performance
- Teacher feedback and assessment

**READING AND WRITING:**

Choice of news topic from an online source, summarizing

**IN-CLASS:  
SPEAKING AND LISTENING:**

Explaining the topic to partners; questioning them

**REPETITION:** Taking the discussion to other small groups

**Students**

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graph TD; A[READING AND WRITING] --> D(Students); B[IN-CLASS: SPEAKING AND LISTENING] --> D; C[REPETITION] --> D;
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- 2. PARTS OF THE DISCUSSION TASK**
- 3. TURN-TAKING LANGUAGE**
- 4. THE TASK**
- 5. STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT**
- 6. TEACHER ASSESSMENT SCALE**
- 7. ADAPTING TO DIFFERENT LEVELS**
- 8. MANAGING THE TASK**
- 9. STUDENTS WRITTEN WORK**
- 10. DISCUSSIONS FOR STUDENTS  
FROM DIFFERENT DISCIPLINES**

## 2.(a) Parts of the Discussion Task

1. Students find articles from English newspapers like *The Japan Times*, or online sources.
2. Students submit a photocopy or print-out.
3. They cite the source using the MLA /APA style.
4. In point form, students take notes on the article:  
*who, what, where, when, why, how.*

## **2.(b) Parts of the Discussion Task**

5. They record vocabulary words
6. They prepare a summary based on their notes.
7. They write an opinion ("I thought that..." or "I felt that...")
8. Students prepare 3 discussion questions

# 3. Turn-taking Language

# Agreeing and Disagreeing

## ASKING OPINIONS

- Could you tell me your opinion?
- How do you feel about it?
- I'd like to ask... ?
- I'd like to know... ?
- I'm interested in... ?
- What do you think?
- What's your opinion?
- What's your idea?
- What do you have to say?

## AGREE

- Certainly, that's true.
- I agree.
- I have the same opinion.
- I feel the same way.
- Likewise (for me).
- Me too.
- Yes, that's what I think.

## DISAGREE

- I can't agree.
- I can't believe that.
- I disagree.
- I don't think so.
- I have a different opinion.
- I have another idea.
- I feel differently.

# Interrupting and Clarifying

<b>INTERRUPT</b>	<b>CLARIFY</b>	<b>GIVING REASONS</b>
<p>Excuse me for interrupting, but...</p> <p>I might add that...</p> <p>I'd like to say something.</p> <p>May I say something...</p> <p>Pardon me, but...</p> <p>Sorry, but...</p> <p>Wait a minute!</p> <p>Just a moment!</p>	<p>I beg your pardon.</p> <p>I didn't catch the last part.</p> <p>I didn't get that.</p> <p>Sorry, I don't follow you.</p> <p>What was that?</p> <p>Will you please explain...</p> <p>Would you mind repeating that?</p>	<p>And another thing...</p> <p>Because...</p> <p>Furthermore...</p> <p>Next...</p> <p>Now, I'll move to/go to</p> <p>Seeing as how...</p> <p>The main reason is...</p> <p>That's why...</p> <p>(This is)the reason why...</p>



The Discussion  
Leader moves to  
a new group

The Discussion  
Leader repeats  
the topic and  
questioning

# 5. Student (Self)- Assessment

# Student (Self)-Assessment

Explaining		Questioning		Communicating Non-verbally	
a) describing		c) asking questions		e) making eye contact	
b) summarizing		d) using follow-up questions		f) using gestures	

# 6. Teacher Assessment

Explaining		Questioning		Non-verbally Communicating	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Communicated the ideas in the article without reading</li> <li>b) Explained vocabulary when necessary, using only English</li> <li>c) Spoke clearly and loudly enough to be easily understood</li> </ul>	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Summarized your partners' comments after each question</li> <li>b) Used follow-up questions and rephrased questions as needed</li> <li>c) Directed the group by using names, to get others to speak</li> </ul>	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Frequent eye contact</li> <li>b) Appropriate and helpful gestures</li> <li>c) Good posture and sensitivity to others' nonverbal communication</li> </ul>
3	Any combination of 2 descriptors*	3	Any combination of 2 descriptors*	3	Any combination of 2 descriptors*
2	Any 1 descriptor*	2	Any 1 descriptor*	2	Any 1 descriptor*
1	Read the article aloud	1	Read the questions	1	No eye contact or gestures

# 7. Adapting to Different Levels

## Online Newspapers at

<http://www.onlinenewspapers.com>

### (1) BBC Learning English

- news articles, audio-files on articles, and a vocabulary list
- you can hear the story being read
- watch video content on it · crossword puzzles, exam skills, interactive games and quizzes
- grammar tips

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/newseenglish/>



Your account

News

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# NEWS EUROPE

Home World UK England N. Ireland Scotland Wales Business Politics Health Education Sci/Environment Technology Entertainment & Arts

Africa Asia Australia Europe Latin America Middle East US & Canada



## Related video / audio



Snow falls across England and Wales  
21 January 2015



Snow windscreen driver 'reckless'  
22 January 2015



'Getting back to normal after NY snow'  
27 January 2015

## British tourists trapped in snow in northern Spain

5 February 2015 Last updated at 16:53 GMT

Spanish police say they have rescued at least 220 people, including 100 from Britain, who were stuck in their cars in heavy snow in northern Spain.

Some had been stranded for up to 17 hours overnight, with temperatures falling as low as -15C (5F).



## (2) NHK

- provides students with text of a short video
- students watch the video and read the script

*[http://www.nhk.or.jp/daily/english/10\\_14.html](http://www.nhk.or.jp/daily/english/10_14.html)*

Video Quality  Low (256K)  High (512K)

## Torch relay ends amid confusion

In San Francisco, the Olympic torch relay has ended amid confusion after the city abruptly changed the torch route.

The torch lighting ceremony was held as scheduled on Wednesday. Thousands of protesters -- Tibetans and civic group members -- had gathered to rally against China's crackdown in Tibet.

But the 1st torchbearer left the relay course soon after she began to run and disappeared into a nearby warehouse.

Nearly 1 hour later, the relay resumed on a different street with two torchbearers running.

Scuffles broke out between police and some demonstrators trying to reach the course. The relay proceeded under tight security with many police officers and police vehicles lining the route.

A closing ceremony, initially scheduled on the waterfront, was held at San Francisco International Airport. But the relay organizer failed to offer explanations to news organizations concerning these changes.

- EU Parliament approves Olympic boycott resolution
- N.Korea expels 1 S.Korean official from Kumgang
- China urges firm stance against Dalai Lama

- Tibetan protesters hold rally in New Delhi
- Australia not to allow Chinese to guard torch
- Dalai Lama supports Olympics but criticizes China

## the observer

### Tony Blair: I will do what it takes to help Ed Miliband win general election

Former Labour prime minister seeks to end talk of rift as officials hold talks over campaign role

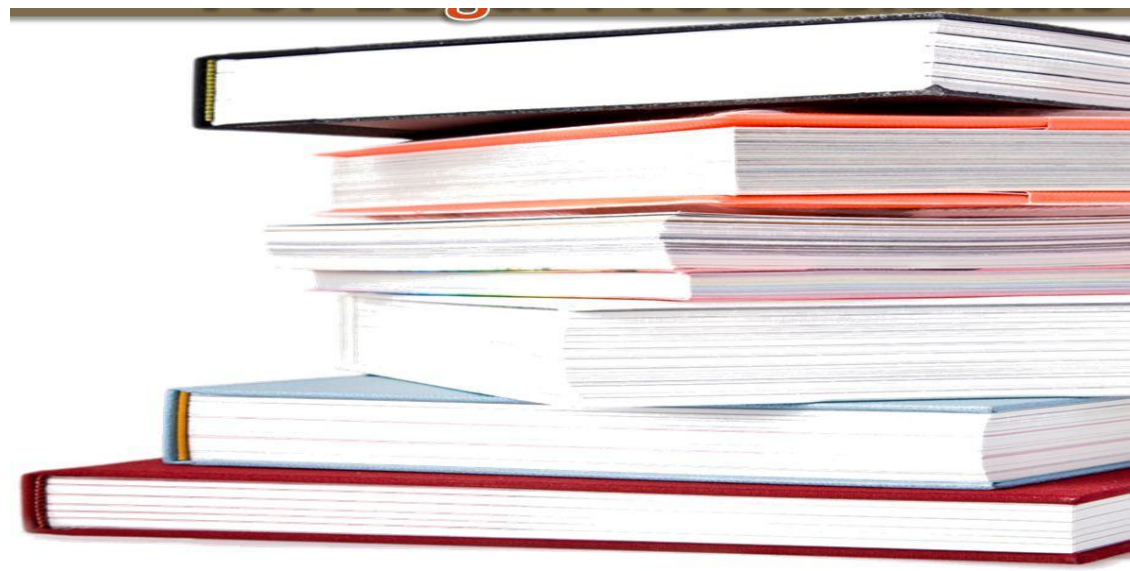
Pilloried by the press, beset by inner turmoil: how is Labour still in the lead?



Climate change marchers told to hire private security firm

# 8. Students' Written Work

# An MLA/APA Citation



## Source of the Article:

“Passengers the real heroes: Bus Driver”.  
*The Gold Coast Bulletin*. 14 July 2008  
<[http://www.goldcoast.com.au/article/2008/07/14/13642\\_gold-coast-news.html](http://www.goldcoast.com.au/article/2008/07/14/13642_gold-coast-news.html)>.

# Note-taking Using a Rubric

# 5 Ws & 1 H

*Who?*

*What?*

*Where?*

*When?*

*Why?*

*How?*



## 5 Ws & 1 H

*Who is the story about? Who did it?*

*What happened to him?*

*Where did this happen?*

*When did it happen?*

*Why did the youths hurt him?*

*How did they get away? Get caught?*

Source of the Article:

"Passengers the real heroes: Bus Driver". The Gold Coast Bulletin. 14 July 2008  
<[http://www.goldcoast.com.au/article/2008/07/14/13642\\_gold-coast-news.html](http://www.goldcoast.com.au/article/2008/07/14/13642_gold-coast-news.html)>.

Who? ----- David Newton

What? ----- was punched

When? ----- Monday 14 July 2008

Where? ----- Australia Fair, Southport

Why? ----- Telling off youths making graffiti in the bus

How? ----- A passenger told him that there were youths vandalizing the bus



Vocabulary

Attacked – trying to harm someone or something

Graffiti – paint or writing on something that spoils its appearance

Advised – gave someone some advice or information

Violent – injurious or destructive force

Hatch – an opening that serves as a doorway or window in the floor or roof of a building.

## Vocabulary

Attacked - trying to harm someone or something

Graffiti - paint or writing on something that spoils its appearance

Advised - gave someone some advice or information

Violent - injurious or destructive force

Hatch - an opening that serves as a doorway or window in the floor or roof of a building.

## Summary:

A 62 year old bus driver named David Newton was attacked after telling off youths about spray painting graffiti on the bus. While getting off the bus, a passenger informed Newton that there were youths in the back of the bus, spray cans and special marker pens, spraying graffiti. Newton caught the youths in the act and advised them that he was going to call the police. The three youths tried to escape from the bus, but another passenger stopped their escape, and the youths became violent. Then some of the youths escaped through the rear skylight hatch of the bus.

# Stating an Opinion

## My opinion:

Graffiti is a big problem within Japan right now as it was discovered that a group of university students have “tagged” one of the world heritage buildings in Italy. I don't understand why people would vandalize such famous buildings. Another recent case of vandalism in Japan is the case where a bullet train was vandalized and had the word 'Hack' spray painted on. It is believed that the artist sneaked in from the gap in the fence and had around 20-30 mins to graffiti. These people should be made to clean the graffiti, as a punishment, as well

# Preparing Questions

## Questions:

1. How do you feel about the rise in vandalism?
2. What do you think would be a fair punishment for the people who vandalized?
3. Why do you think young people vandalize objects?

# 9. Assessing Written Work

MLA/APA Citation	2
Note-taking (5Ws & 1H)	3
Vocabulary Words and Definition	3
Summary Writing	5
Stating an Opinion	4
Formulating 3 Questions	3

# Extension Activities

**Vocabulary Notebooks**

## Vocabulary Notebook

New Word\s	Definition	Example Sentence
<i>hard to come by</i>	not readily available	Good cheese is <b>hard to come by</b> in Tokyo
<i>looked into</i>	studied, examined, researched	she <b>looked into</b> a number of universities before choosing AGU
<b>neglect</b>	to fail to give enough care or attention to someone or something	I've been <b>neglecting</b> my journal recently

Double space your vocabulary notebook. Make it as clear and easy to read as possible

Use colour to make the new word leap off the page

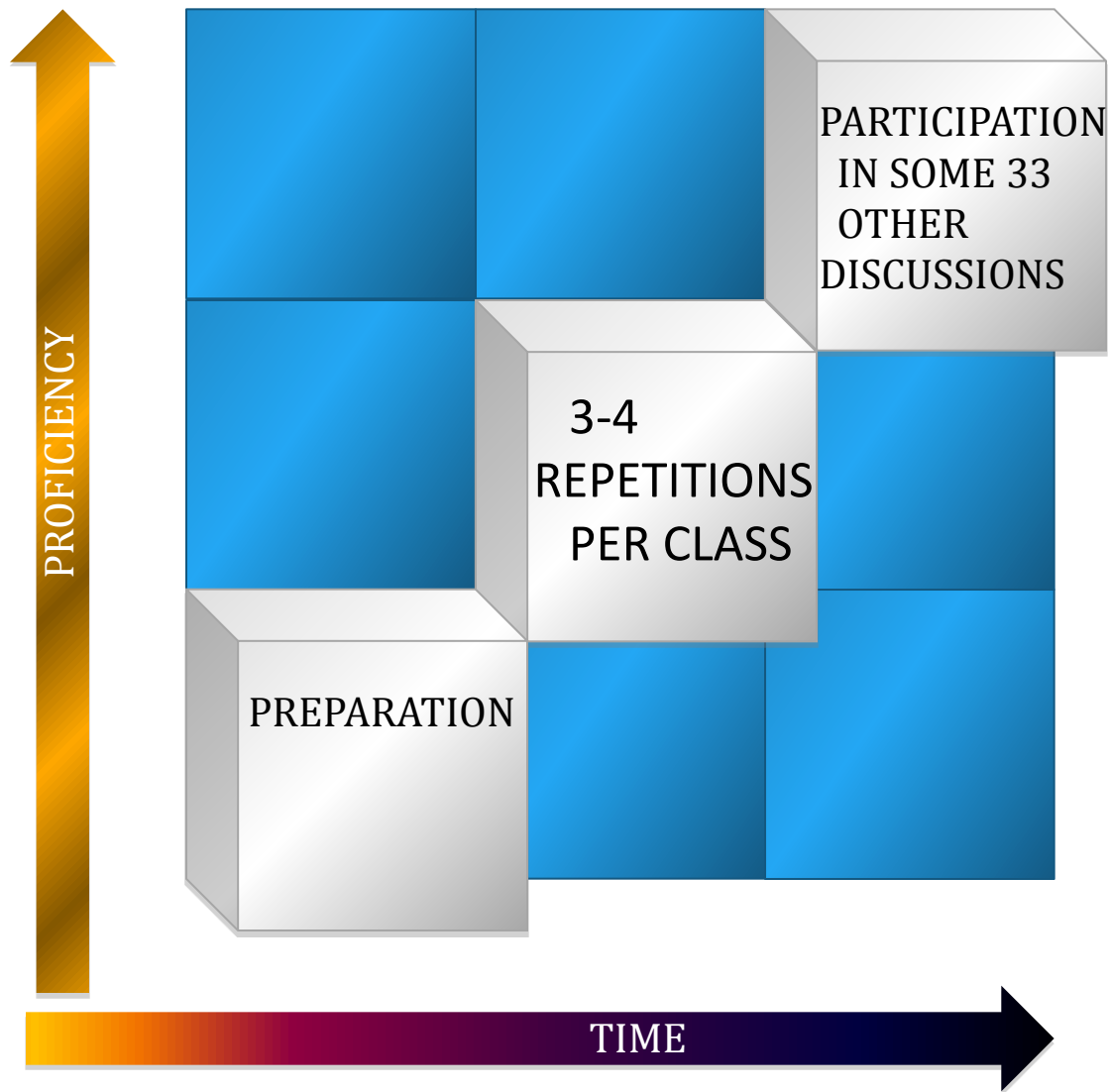
Always write an English definition, but also add a Japanese definition when you think you need it

Always write your own sentence. It's easier to remember

Keep updating your vocabulary notebook throughout the semester, and remember this is not just a list of words. The aim is to increase your vocabulary, so keep looking back through your notebook and try to learn the words. Try and use your new words as often as possible in your discussions, in presentations, in your journal, your book reports and your essays for writing class.



# STUDENT DISCUSSION ABILITY



# 10. Discussions for Students from Different Disciplines

**(a) Accounting, (b) Business, (c) Education, (d) Science**

Use the same principles of a read-summarize-tell-task: student choice of controversy, use of repetition in the discussion, written form of the paper, and the use of an assessment scale

# a) Accounting:

**Why 'Fair Value' Is the Rule: How a Controversial Accounting Approach Gained Support (Harvard Business School, Faculty & Research, March 2013, Karthik Ramanna**



HARVARD | BUSINESS | SCHOOL



## FACULTY & RESEARCH



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ARTICLE | HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW | MARCH 2013

**Why 'Fair Value' Is the Rule: How a Controversial Accounting Approach Gained Support**

### About the Author



**Karthik Ramanna**  
Accounting and  
Management

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<http://www.hbs.edu/faculty/Pages/item.aspx?num=44233>

*o* **‘Fair Value’ in accounting measures assets and liabilities at estimates of their current values— it’s a major departure from the centuries-old tradition of ‘keeping the books’ at historical cost.**

# **b) Business:**

**‘Fair trade vs Free Trade,’**

**Retrieved Feb 9, 2015**

**[http://www.economist.com/debate/overview/172,](http://www.economist.com/debate/overview/172)**

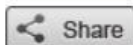
**The Economist Debates**



## Fair trade

*This house believes that making trade fairer is more important than making it freer.*

ENTER THIS DEBATE ▶



### Representing the sides



**Yes**



**No**

#### Ngaire Woods ■

*International Political Economy Prof. and Director, Global Economic Governance, Oxford University*

Carefully deployed special preferences and protectionism could be used intelligently to help to catalyse growth in African countries, and to improve the lives of the bottom billion. Conversely, the dismantling of special preferences has levied some high costs.

#### Jagdish Bhagwati ■

*Professor of Economics and Law, Columbia University*

If the demand for fair trade in the sense of demanding reciprocity in openness leads to others reducing their trade barriers, that is good. But if it leads to closing of one's own, because others do not yield to such demands, that is bad.

READ MORE ▶

		Closing (52 comments)		Post-debate (9 comments)	
Monday May	10	Wednesday May	12	Friday May	14
Guest		Statements	Guest	Decision	

# c) Education:

Learning disabilities in elementary school children, gender bias or social factors.

For a crash course in the *learning* disability (LD) *controversy*, one need look no ... (Coles' book, *The Learning Mystique: A Critical Look at "Learning. Disabilities ...*

<http://wac.colostate.edu/books/>

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## Chapter One

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# Learning Disabilities: The Controversy



# **d) Science:**

**– What is a definition of life? Is it reproduction and the ability to grow and evolve?**

[http://www.realclearscience.com/lists/real\\_science\\_controversies/what\\_is\\_life.html?state=stop](http://www.realclearscience.com/lists/real_science_controversies/what_is_life.html?state=stop)

(Image: Hydrothermal vent via Wikimedia Commons)

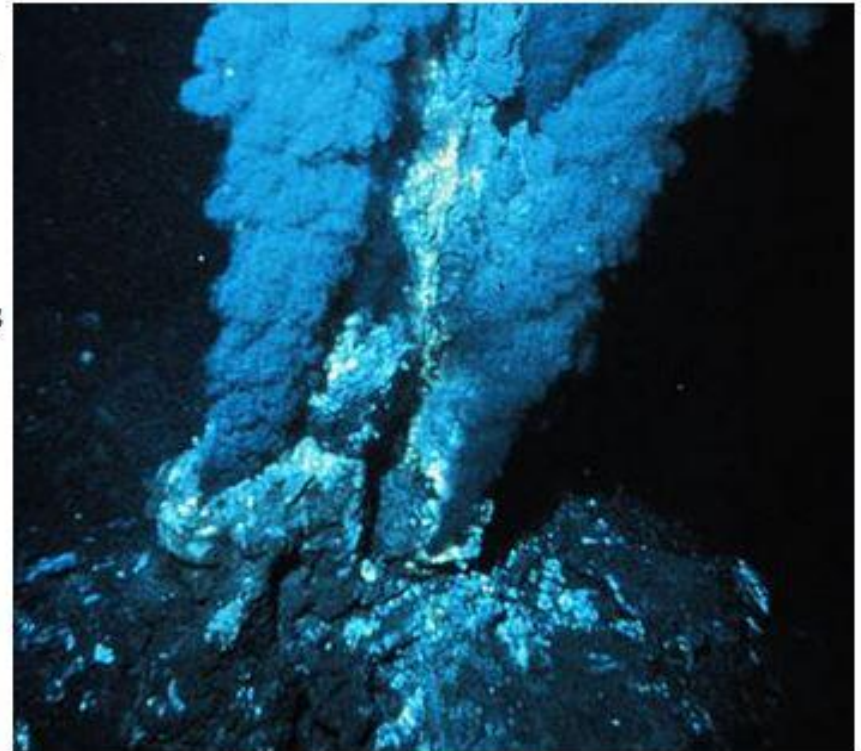
# What Is Life? Where Did It Come From?

**<< Are We Wrong About Radiation & Cancer?      What Is Consciousness? >>**

What is life? Where did it come from? These are probably the two most difficult questions in all of biology, and both are hotly debated.

The Biology 101 definition of "life" would include any self-replicating creature that can grow and evolve. But this is problematic because it excludes viruses and other obligate intracellular parasites that require a host to survive. And what about self-replicating pieces of DNA called transposons ("jumping genes"), or self-replicating proteins (e.g., prions, which can cause mad cow disease)? Do they qualify as life?

Even trickier than defining life is determining how it evolved in the first place. The early Earth was an inhospitable mix of inorganic compounds. In some way, life emerged, but how? The leading hypothesis is known as "**RNA World**," in which self-replicating RNA molecules served as the precursors of cellular life. But this idea, like all hypotheses of abiogenesis (and **there are many such hypotheses**), suffers from a lack of convincing evidence. In fact, bioinformatics



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