



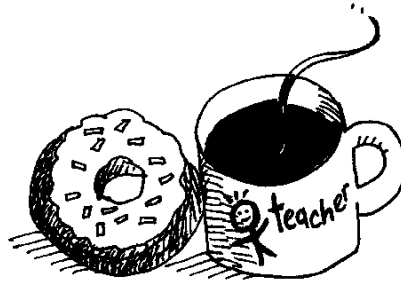
More on

Socratic Seminar

Everything from Setting Up Your Seminar

To

Evaluating Your Students on the Seminar



Hosting a Socratic Seminar

Socratic seminar is an opportunity for students to share their own ideas, build knowledge based on prior information being applied to new situations, test out their own hypotheses and perspectives against those of their peers, and arrive at an answer that has been constructed through personal experience, critical thought, rhetoric, and discourse. Basically, Socratic seminars are an in-class discussion that is focused upon a particular piece of text that students have spent time reading and analyzing. The discussion, however, differs from the typical teacher-led, question-and-answer discussion. In a Socratic seminar, students work cooperatively to construct meaning from what they have read. Student understanding deepens as the discussion progresses.

The basic procedure for a Socratic seminar is:

1. On the day before a Socratic seminar, the teacher hands out a short passage of text.
2. That night at home, students spend time reading, analyzing, and taking notes on the text.
3. During class the next day, students sit in a large, open circle.
4. Student volunteers read the passage aloud.
5. The teacher asks a single opening question that is written to be both open-ended and to encourage student discussion.
6. Students then engage in a discussion based upon the questions they have prepared prior to class.
7. After this discussion of the text, students assess each other's performance and give feedback.

Prior to participating in a Socratic seminar, students should have completed these five tasks while reading:

1. Circle any vocabulary words that they do not know or would have difficulty explaining to others.
2. Underline any key phrases.
3. Keep track of the story or idea as it unfolds.
4. Note word patterns and repetitions or anything that strikes the students as confusing or important.
5. Write down questions in the margins. (These questions become a warehouse of ideas for discussion.)
6. Complete the "Writing questions for Socratic Seminar" handout.

Guidelines for Socratic Seminar



1. Refer to the text when needed. Socratic seminar is not a test. It is a chance to understand the ideas, issues, and values reflected in the text.
2. Do not stay confused; ask for clarification.
3. Stick to the point currently under discussion; make notes about ideas you want to come back to.
4. Don't raise hands; take turns speaking.
5. Listen carefully.
6. Speak up so that all can hear you.
7. Talk to each other, not just to the teacher.
8. Discuss ideas rather than each other's opinions.
9. You are responsible for the seminar, even if you don't know it or admit it.

Hints to a Great Socratic Seminar



One goal of Socratic seminars is to understand the ideas and thoughts of others through asking questions and listening to answers. This means that seminar participants must practice how to agree and disagree. Participants must be able to disagree without being disagreeable. In order to do so, the participants should use the following suggestions as ways of framing their thoughts before they speak. Speaking and responding in a calm, collaborative manner is essential to good discussion and dialogue.

- I agree with _____ because...
- I agree with _____, but I want to add another reason why I think _____ is true.
- I disagree with _____ because...
- I'm not sure why _____ said that. Can you reword your comments to help me understand?
- I understand your point, but I want to add/disagree/give another side...
- This is what I think you are saying...Is that correct?
- I need to clarify this vocabulary word...



Writing Questions on Fiction for Socratic Seminar

1. Write a question about the text that will help everyone in the class understand the vocabulary, situation, or character evident in the text.

2. Write one question connecting the text to today's world.

3. Write a question dealing with the universal theme, or message about life, in the text. Your question should be written to encourage plentiful group discussion.

4. Write a deep-thinking question about the text that will require proof and group discussion as well as "logic" to discover or explore the answer to the question.

5. Write a question dealing with HOW the author chose to write this piece. How did he use language to get his meaning across? You may also choose to question the text's validity, use of language, implications for today's world, or parallels/conflicts with the culture and social mores of today's world.



Writing Questions on Documents for Socratic Seminar

1. Write a question about the text that will help everyone in the class understand the vocabulary, situation, or culture evident in the text.

2. Write one question connecting the text to today's world.

3. Write a question dealing with what you believe to be the main issue in the text. Your question should be written to encourage plentiful group discussion.

4. Write a deep-thinking question about the text that will require proof and group discussion as well as "logic" to discover or explore the answer to the question.

5. Write a question dealing with *WHY* this text is so important to a study of history and literature today. You may choose to question the text's validity, use of language, implications for today's world, or parallels with the culture and social mores of today's world.



Rate Yourself at Socratic Seminar

Positive Comments (check all that apply)

- I was prepared for the seminar.
- I was courteous to other students.
- I paused and thought before speaking.
- I listened to others give their opinions.
- I kept an open mind about opinions that were different from my own.
- I acted as a positive role model for others.
- I built on what was said before I gave my opinion.
- I used examples from the text to support statements.
- I felt comfortable speaking in the seminar.
- I gave my opinions clearly.

Negative Comments (check all that apply)

- I interrupted others.
- I engaged in side conversations.
- I did not look at the person who was speaking.
- I talked off the topic.
- I talked too much or not at all.

I deserve a letter grade of _____ for this seminar because
