

Dialogues in History



Using Socratic Discussions
in Social Studies

SOCRATIC DIALOGUES

Because the meat of Socratic dialogues are the big questions of life, students, like their adult counterparts, are involved in making decisions about how to live their lives. They are encouraged to practice habits of mind and heart that further the individual and society. As a result, the school fulfills its primary purpose: preparing thoughtful citizens for active involvement in a democratic society.

Effective seminars occur when participants study the text closely in advance, listen actively, share their ideas and questions in response to the ideas and questions of others, and search for evidence in the text to support their ideas.

An effective Socratic Seminar creates *dialogue* as opposed to debate. *Dialogue* creates "better conversation." As William Issacs states in ***Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together***, *dialogue* is a conversation in which people (students) think together in relationship. Thinking together implies that you no longer take your own position as final. You relax your grip on certainty and listen to the possibilities that result simply from being in a relationship with others---possibilities that might not otherwise have occurred."

DIALOGUE AND DEBATE

The practice of Socratic Seminars teaches students to recognize the differences between *dialogue* and debate and to strive to increase the qualities of *dialogue* and reduce the qualities of debate in each Socratic Seminar. Some of the most significant differences between *dialogue* and debate are presented below.

Dialogue	Debate
is collaborative: multiple sides work toward shared understanding	is oppositional: two opposing sides try to prove each other wrong
one listens to understand, to make meaning, and to find common ground	one listens to find flaws, to spot differences, and to counter arguments
enlarges and possibly changes a participant's point of view	affirms a participant's point of view
reveals assumptions for examination and reevaluation	defends assumptions as truth
creates an open-minded attitude: an openness to being wrong and an openness to change	creates a close-minded attitude, a determination to be right
one submits one's best thinking, expecting that other people's reflections will help improve it rather than threaten it	one submits one's best thinking and defends it against challenge to show that it is right
calls for temporarily suspending one's beliefs	calls for investing wholeheartedly in one's beliefs
one searches for strengths in all positions	one searches for weaknesses in the other position
respects all the other participants and seeks not to alienate or offend.	rebutts contrary positions and may belittle or deprecate other participants.
assumes that many people have pieces of answers and that cooperation can lead to a greater understanding	assumes a single right answer that somebody already has.
remains open-ended	demands a conclusion

Discussions

Reason for holding discussions:

1) **Understanding/clarification of content**

The main purpose for holding these discussions is for you to develop a better understanding of the topic. This is a time for you to get clarification on concepts/issues that you didn't understand.

2) **Differing perspectives on issues**

Understanding that there are often differing perspectives on issues is a helpful skill to have in life. There may be some issues that people will disagree on – this is perfectly fine. It is helpful however to understand the other person's perspective. *Keep an open mind at all times.*

3) **Persuasion**

Persuading people to your way of thinking is obviously a useful tool in life. You can use intellectual reasoning and a variety of persuasion techniques to attempt to sway people to your way of thinking. Remember however, that the main purpose for the discussion is to develop a better understanding of the topic.

4) **Problem-Solving**

Sometimes the overall discussion issue presents a problem for the students to solve. For example, a discussion on the Vietnam War might engage students in a discussion on whether or not the U.S. should have become involved in the political quagmire of Vietnam in the late 50's early 60's. Another issue might be "The Draft". What would you do if you were drafted in 1968? You will most likely arrive at multiple solutions.

* Students should avoid "unloading of emotional feelings" in discussion. Students should not worry about winning the discussion.

Discussion strategies:

Showing professionalism

- Showing respect to other people in the discussion
- Disagreeing politely

Clarifying for other or getting clarification

- Asking specific questions of clarification
- Adding information to a stated claim
- Defining terms, events, or facts

Sensitivity

- Always listen and respond to the last person that spoke.
- If two or more individuals speak at the same time back off and let the person who has participated the least speak first.
- Always be polite.

Stating the Issue

- Keeping the discussion focused on one topic/issue at a time.
- Pursue issues systematically.
- Use an agenda.

Continuity

- Smooth flow is important.
- Jumping off topic too quickly destroys continuity. Make sure everyone has an opportunity to speak on the issue.
- Hammering a topic too long can disrupt continuity(flow).

Transitions

- Use explicit (overt) transitions to move from one issue/topic to another.
- A good idea is to summarize the trend of the discussion and then introduce the new agenda item.

Relevance

- If a person jumps into a new topic/issue when the agenda item has not been thoroughly discussed then you should question the relevance of what is being said.
- This might force the person to make a transition if it is called for.

Building Consensus

Stipulation and Concession

- Two ways to move discussion forward when two parties are arguing.
- Concession means one person gives in.
- Stipulation means that someone stipulates, or agrees to accept the other persons stand to move the discussion forward.

Agenda –

- Always have an agenda
- Put Issue headings with bulleted questions underneath.
- Look for big picture issues, especially those that can create conflict of opinion or varying perspectives.

Summarizing the trend

- Discussions can get jumbled and all over the place and students need to occasionally summarize what has been said about the issue.
- Sometimes this technique is used prior to making a transition

Roadblocks

- Failure to listen and pursue issues systematically.
- Proof by repetition.
- Monopolizing.
- Personal Attack.
- Worrying about Winning

Dialogue Starters

“I’d like to hear _____’s opinion.”

“So the big issue really is.....”

“Going off of _____’s idea, ...”

“I totally agree with.....”

“Is that relevant to our topic?”

“I’m not really clear about....”

“I agree with _____ about ...”

“I totally disagree with _____’s statement.”

“I’m going to have to disagree with you _____.”

“I think _____ was on the right track with he/she said ...”

“I would like to add to what _____ said.”

“_____ is on the right track, however ...”

“I would like to add another point to support what _____ said.”

“In addition to what _____ said, I feel that...”

“I would like to emphasize the idea that....”

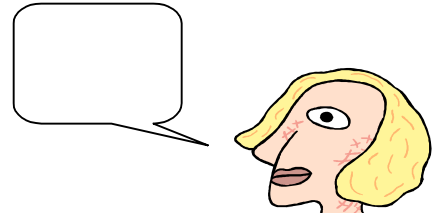
“It sounds like we all agree that _____ and we should move on to the next agenda issue.”

“What I just heard you say was....”

“Do you think...?”

“How.....?”

“I’m worried that I didn’t quite understand _____. Could someone explain it to me.”



“I’m curious as to how.....”

“The bigger issue here really is about _____.”

I think we’ve pretty well exhausted this topic/issue. Let’s move on.”

“It seems that we have two schools of thought and we’re not going to be able to come to consensus.”

“Could someone help me better understand...”

Name: _____

Hour: _____

Socratic Dialogue

Discussion Topic Question: _____

	Advanced	Proficient	Basic/Minimal
Preparation	<p>Thorough and explicit notes on all agenda items</p> <p>Several key excerpts identified</p> <p>Prepares several questions on unclear factual information</p>	<p>Notes taken on some agenda items</p> <p>A few key excerpts identified</p> <p>Has prepared a few questions on material or information that is unclear</p>	<p>Few notes taken on agenda. Minimal effort to prepare notes</p> <p>No excerpts prepared for discussion</p> <p>No questions prepared on unclear information</p>
Discussion Content	<p>Uses text evidence to support ideas</p> <p>Uses text information to bring clarity and understanding of the issue</p> <p>Makes connections between ideas</p> <p>Demonstrate a clear understanding of the stated issues</p>	<p>Inconsistent use of text evidence to support ideas or claims</p> <p>Uses some text information to bring clarity and understanding to issues, but at other times does not have supporting textual information</p> <p>Demonstrates some understanding of some of the stated issues</p>	<p>Rarely uses text to support position or to provide evidence</p> <p>Rarely uses text information to bring clarity to an issue</p> <p>Rarely understands the major issues</p>
Discussion Skills	<p>Always listens and pursues issues systematically.</p> <p>Always states issues and adds new information to already stated claims.</p> <p>Always uses one or more of the following discussion concepts: sensitivity, transition statements, questions relevance, summarizes the trends, asks insightful questions</p>	<p>Sometimes listens and pursues issues systematically.</p> <p>Occasionally states issues and adds new information to already stated claims.</p> <p>Sometimes uses one or more of the following discussion concepts: sensitivity, transition statements, questions relevance, summarizes the trends, asks insightful questions</p>	<p>Rarely listens and pursues issues systematically. Rarely states issues and adds new information to already stated claims. Rarely uses one or more of the following discussion concepts: sensitivity, transition statements, questions relevance, summarizes the trends, asks insightful questions</p>
Comments:			
Overall Grade:			

Three Level Thinking

Level 1 Content	You must think hard about the content or issue topic and what you want to add to the discussion, BUT
Level 2 Listen to Others	You must also <u>listen</u> to what other students are saying so you are sensitive and so that you don't repeat others or cause the discussion to go off track or in circles, But
Level 3 Discussion Process	You must also think about the discussion process at the same time. Thoughts like “should I make a transition, should I challenge relevance, should I summarize” are all going through your mind at the same time.

Socratic Seminar
Websites

By creating *dialogue*, Socratic Seminars foster active learning, critical thinking, and close reading skills as participants explore and evaluate the ideas, issues, and values in a particular text. An effective seminar consists of four interdependent elements: (1) the text being considered, (2) the questions raised, (3) the seminar leader, and (4) the participants.

- **The Text** - A seminar text can be drawn from readings in literature, history, science, math, health, and philosophy or from works of art or music.
- **The Question** - An opening question has no right answer; instead it reflects a genuine curiosity on the part of the leader. An effective opening question leads participants back to the text as they speculate, evaluate, define, and clarify the issues involved. Responses to the opening question generate new questions from the leader and participants, leading to new responses. In this way, the line of inquiry evolves on the spot rather than being predetermined by the leader.
- **The Leader** - In a Socratic Seminar, the leader plays a dual role as leader and participant. The seminar leader consciously demonstrates habits of mind that lead to a thoughtful exploration of the ideas in the text. As a seminar participant, the leader actively engages in the group's exploration of the text.
- **The Participants** - In a Socratic Seminar, participants share with the leader the responsibility for the quality of the seminar. Effective seminars occur when participants study the text closely in advance, listen actively, share their ideas and questions in response to the ideas and questions of others, and search for evidence in the text to support their ideas.



About Oscar Graybill, M.Ed

514 South Division Street
Walla Walla, WA 99362
Phone : (509) 522-2594



In Socratic seminars, students perform in a "variety of thought-demanding ways to explain, muster evidence, generalize, apply concepts, analogize, represent in a new way..." (Perkins 1993). In other words, they engage in active learning. The assumption is that when students actively and cooperatively develop knowledge, understanding, and ethical attitudes and behaviors, they are more apt to retain these attributes than if they had received them passively.

Students also are schooled in the art of intellectual discourse. In another central feature of these seminars, three to five students act as observers on a rotating basis. Using an observation form, they tally how many and what kind of contributions classmates make, whether they use evidence to support ideas and ask questions of others, and whether they yield to others when several wish to speak at once - in short, whether they demonstrate habits of conversation and mind that educators seek in students.

Students learn to paraphrase, defer, and take turns, as well as to deal with frustration when waiting. They do not raise their hands, but use body language, eye contact, and mutual respect to "read" the seminar process. Teachers in other classes report that students in these seminars exhibit these practices more frequently than do those who have not had the benefit of seminars.

Learning the Basics

Within the context of interesting issues that capture the imagination of students, the seminar process accomplishes other important educational objectives: vocabulary development, interpretative and comparative reading, and text analysis. For example, the lone student in the seminar who said Francis Bacon would "not at all" agree with Ngonyama said that Bacon required public, state-sponsored revenge and that Ngonyama never considered that option. His persuasive comments, based on close reading, encouraged classmates to examine the text in a new light.

Students also gain experience in synthesis and evaluation - the higher levels of cognition of Benjamin Bloom's much-used taxonomy. The process thereby achieves results that often elude other forms of classroom instruction. Indeed, because seminars require reasoning, predicting, projecting, and imagining, students must gather and analyze information before they can construct ideas (Woolever 1987).

Literacy and Character

Using compelling texts that lead to discussions is only one of the twin components that interest students in learning and lead to a discussion of issues. The seminar also supports intellectual and character development by cultivating ways of working together to question, disagree, negotiate, appreciate different points of view, and solve problems. As Brown (1991) has said:

Literacy is first of all a process of making meaning and negotiating it with others.... This literacy of thoughtfulness [is] used to convey both reasoning and the collaborative aspects of literacy, the caring about and working with others.

Substantive texts also help students explore their relations with others and gain intellectual and emotional maturity. This process by no means guarantees instantaneous respect for others, nor does it eliminate the conflict that is all too common in schools these days. It does, however, guide students to develop more respectful, tactful, and kinder attitudes and behaviors. And, as Heath (1994) insists:

[Schools can change if] adults are as committed to the maturation of students' character and selves as to their minds, and [if] teachers empathetically understand the interpersonal world of students as the students themselves perceive it.

Through the process of active learning and cooperation, Socratic seminars also help build self-esteem. Feelings of self-worth are inextricably tied to feelings of competence - the ability to independently construct meaning and arrive at thoughtful ideas, and to be validated for this by others. Contrary to a popular notion, self-esteem "training" will not bolster academic achievement. Instead, as Alfie Kohn (1994) observes:

Students acquire a sense of significance from doing significant things.... When students meet, make decisions, and solve problems regarding carefully chosen works, they reflect on important values.... They then get the message that their voices count ... [and] gain a sense of belonging and active participation in their community.

Literacy and Ethics

As adults, we know that the kind of moral decisions that engage students and the kind we encounter regularly are not always clear-cut. Most decisions require choices among competing values. A seminar is an important occasion for students to confront such conflicts and actively work out solutions, testing their ideas against writers and their peers.

For example, the seminar at Paul Junior High School was followed the next week by a discussion of a short story, Richard Wilbur's "The Game of Catch," in which a 7th grade boy gets even when he feels left out of a game with two other boys. The opening question: "Who is most responsible for what happens, Monk, Scho, or Glennie [the story's three characters]?"

Of course, textual evidence was central in clarifying students', understanding of motives. They talked about how the problem could have been avoided and who should have exerted leadership to see that it was. In some classes, however, students pondered other hypothetical situations, including whether the outcome would have changed if girls had been in the same situation.

Some might argue that it is the teacher's responsibility to state categorically what is right and what is wrong. But consider what happened in a seminar at Washington, D.C.'s Shepherd Elementary School. Students there read a story called "The Parsley Garden" concerning a young person's petty theft. The seminar leader did not state that stealing is wrong, but the story propelled students to discuss such complex issues as: Does one theft as a young person define you as a thief? What is fair punishment? How should it be decided, and by whom?

The following day, students returned with definitions of theft. They had obviously given considerable thought to motives, actions, and consequences.

The Teacher as Facilitator and Participant

As a seminar leader, the teacher's role is to guide students to (1) a deeper and clarified consideration of the ideas of the text, (2) a respect for varying points of view, and (3) adherence to and respect for the seminar process.

The leader questions, helps paraphrase and restate ideas based on students' responses, and helps students solve problems when they are at loggerheads. The leader also models behaviors that are expected from students - listening, thinking, and interaction:

"What I heard you say was -."

"Can you compare Tamika's response to what you heard Jose say?"

"Where is the evidence in the text for what you said?"

"I want to hear what Monica thinks."

There is no need to preach protocol - when students see it, they will follow suit. Teachers may also participate in Socratic seminars themselves. Since 1987, groups of teachers from D.C. elementary and secondary schools have met five to six times a Year to do just that. The teachers repeatedly praise the renewed spirit and authentic experience of being in a learning community, rather than merely talking about creating one. They, like their students, "learn to think critically and

analytically and to solve problems that are important to them" (Barth 1990).

As seminar leaders in their own classrooms, these adults have gained confidence in their abilities as teachers. At first, they report, the necessary letting go makes them feel as though the discussion might get out of control. Because they do not have predetermined questions with acknowledged answers, they must accept student responses, develop follow-up questions, and keep track of students who may be having side conversations. At the same time, they must listen intently and help students make connections and ask questions. This requires agility, but the payoff is well worth it.

The power of seminar participation was demonstrated dramatically at an action lab at ASCD's 1992 Annual Conference in Washington, D.C. Twenty-five conferees were trained in Socratic dialogue. They then observed 20 students from D.C. public schools in a Socratic seminar. Both students and conferees read "Marriage Is a Private Affair," a short story by Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe. Both groups had the same opening questions; and both groups thought, talked, and constructed meaning together about the roles and responsibilities of parents and children. Significantly, the conferees commented that the students demonstrated intellectual and emotional insights that they, as adults, had overlooked.

Revitalizing the Teaching Climate

As the process of Socratic seminars spills out of the formal seminar, it alters the whole school's instructional climate. Not only are students acquiring information in a different way, but they also are doing so at the high end of the thinking/reasoning process. Students who trust their own reasoning test better. And students whose schooling is connected to their experiences are more actively engaged in their own learning.

Socratic Seminars are the result of the work of Mortimer Adler, Director of the Institute for Philosophical Research in Chicago. Adler published *The Paideia Proposal* (1982) and *Paideia Problems and Possibilities* (1983) in which he argued that education should be rooted in three goals: the acquisition of knowledge, the development of intellectual skills, and the enlarged understanding of ideas and values. The first goal can be accomplished through textbooks and didactic teaching in the content areas. The second goal can be developed through coaching, exercises, and supervised practice. The third goal can be achieved through Socratic Questioning and Active Participation using books (not textbooks), other works of art, or involvement in artistic activities (*Paideia Proposal 23*). The seminar begins with a teacher's question but is entirely different from the Socratic questioning style which many teachers already employ.

Teaching by discussion imposes still other requirements. For older children, it calls for more than a fifty-minute class period. It calls for a room in which the participants in the discussion sit around a table instead of in rows. The teacher is one of the participants, not the principal performer standing up in front of the group.

The teacher's role in discussion is to keep it going along fruitful lines—by moderating, guiding, correcting, leading, and arguing like one more *student!* The teacher is first among equals. All must have the sense that they are participating as equals, as is the case in a genuine conversation. (*Paideia Proposal 54*)

The seminar is more than a common classroom discussion in that it is focused on a text—book, painting, poem, film clip, scientific hypothesis, etc. The Socratic Seminar is also a performance assessment, and as such, it begins with *outcomes*. Numerous critical thinking skills are addressed through the seminar method including analysis of text, synthesis of ideas, evaluation of concepts, and inferential reasoning. Of course, speaking and listening skills are developed as well. Socratic Seminars also include a written dimension. Students can write about the ideas presented or evaluate the quality of the seminar itself (participation, quality of comments, insights, new ideas). These activities can be used by all disciplines as teachers engage in discussing and evaluating concepts and texts in all content areas be they musical scores, paintings, mathematical theorems, or scientific experiments.

Three Kinds of Teaching and Learning

These three columns do not correspond to separate courses or disciplines, and one kind of teaching or learning is not confined to any one class.

COLUMN ONE	COLUMN TWO	COLUMN THREE
<p>Acquisition of Organized Knowledge by means of: Didactic Instruction, Discovery Learning, Textbooks, and other aids in these content areas: Language and Literature Mathematics Natural Science History Geography</p>	<p>Development of Intellectual Skills (Skills of Learning) by means of: Coaching and Supervised Practice in the operations of: reading, writing, speaking, listening, calculating, problem-solving, observing, measuring, estimating, exercising critical judgement, performing in the fine arts</p>	<p>Enlarged Understanding of Ideas, Values, and Issues by means of: Socratic Questioning in seminar discussions of: imaginative and expository literature, works of visual and musical art, mathematical theorems, scientific inquiry</p>

What to Do

1. Choose a text. Good texts are ones that interest the students. Paragraphs and lines (or portions of a score or painting) need to be easily identified and referenced.
2. Design possible opening questions. Good opening questions:
 - arise from genuine interest or curiosity on the part of the teacher,
 - are open to interpretation (no right or wrong answer),
 - foster analysis and a greater understanding of the text,
 - are supportable by the text (answered by reference to the text),
 - are framed in such a way that they generate dialogue from the students.
3. Teach any background information necessary for a good understanding of the text. This prevents the need for the teacher to interrupt the discussion to clarify or provide additional information.
4. Have the students put their desks in circle so that they can see each other. Provide an empty desk for the "hot seat."
5. Choose an *outer circle* to critique, trouble-shoot, record main and dropped ideas, journal on what they heard, etc. Students who didn't do the necessary reading or randomly chosen students make up the outer circle. These students may sit in the "hot seat" if they want to participate.
6.
 - A. Start by explaining the Socratic Seminar to the students. Explain that the conversation is theirs, and that your question is a starting point which they can move away from as they pose ideas and questions that are more interesting to them as long as the new ideas and questions can be discussed in terms of the text.
 - B. Tell the students to direct their comments *to other students* and explain to them that you will not comment on what they say, since this will cause them to talk to you rather than to each other. It may help if you look down or avoid eye contact until the discussion takes off on its own.
 - C. Encourage the students to think before they talk, try to comment, or add on to what others have said. Listen to others.
7. Toss out the question.
 - . Students have learned to be passive, and this activity can be risky for some students, so it may take time for some groups to catch on. The conversation is likely to have stops and starts, but *it is crucial that the teacher not step in and try to rescue the conversation*. If the conversation goes dead, wait. Students will find the silence unbearable before the teacher does. Your silence also indicates your level of commitment to the activity.
 - A. If students ask you a question, throw it out to the group or ask the questioner what his/her opinion is. Answer factual questions only *if there is no way around it*.
 - B. Teacher Behavior
 - Keep students from having side conversations.
 - Ask students to cite support from the text of the conversation begins to wander.
 - Invite students to participate.

- Keep conversations from becoming debate or debasement of others.
 - Ask students to question their assumptions.
 - Manipulate the amount of participation. For example, if only a few students are speaking, the teacher might say, "Everyone who has spoken so far, look at the clock, and don't jump in for five minutes." Or if one gender is dominating the conversation, ask for the other to speak for the next five minutes.
 - Use the *outer circle* to your advantage if the conversation is truly dying out prematurely. Ask the students sitting there to summarize or comment on what they have heard. Ask them to re-introduce the points they thought were especially good or prematurely dropped. This strategy can often reignite the conversation.
8. End the seminar when it feels done. With an experienced group, you might ask the students, or a student might suggest it. If things go really well, a student may suggest another poem, text, or section to discuss which correlates well with the original text.
 9. The Critique Go around the circle and ask each student about the experience. What was good about it? What was not so good? What could be improved for the next time? Let the *outer circle* discuss the group dynamics, but be careful that they focus their comments on group rather than individual behaviors.

Extension Activities

Socratic Seminars are good preparation for individual explication or a comparison/contrast essay. Students can journal about the texts discussed.

DIALOGUE AND DEBATE

Dialogue is collaborative. Multiple sides work towards shared understanding. Debate is appositional. Two opposing sides try to prove each other wrong.

In dialogue, one listens to understand, to make meaning, and to find common ground. In debate, one listens to find flaws, to spot differences, and to counter arguments.

Dialogue enlarges and possibly changes a participant's view. Debate affirms a participant's point of view.

Dialogue reveals assumptions for reevaluation. Debate defends assumptions as truth.

Dialogue creates an open-minded attitude, an openness to being wrong and an openness to change. Debate creates a close-minded attitude, a determination to be right.

In dialogue, one submits one's best thinking, expecting that the reflections of others will help improve it rather than threaten it. In debate, one submits one's best thinking and defends it against a challenge to show that it is right.

In dialogue, one searches for the strengths in all positions. In debate, one searches for the weaknesses in the other positions.

Dialogue respects all the other participants and seeks not to alienate or offend. Debate rebuts contrary positions and may belittle or deprecate other participants.

Dialogue assumes that many people have pieces of answers and that cooperation can lead to workable solutions. Debate assumes a single right answer that someone already has.

Dialogue remains open-ended. Debate demands a conclusion.

from: Peter Winchell, Consultant. Socratic Seminars West.

LISTENING AND SPEAKING IN A SEMINAR

One goal of 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 can use the following suggested ways of responding as a way of framing their thoughts before they speak. Speaking and responding in a calm, collaborative manner is essential to good discussion and dialogue.

1. I agree with _____ because, but I want to add another reason why I think _____ is true. (Give another reason.) _____
2. I disagree with _____ because _____
3. I'm not sure why _____ said _____. Can you reword your comments to help me understand?
4. I understand your point, _____, but I want to add/disagree/give another side: _____
5. This is what I think you are saying. _____ Is that correct?

SEMINAR PLANNING FORM

Title of Seminar _____ Date _____ Level _____			
<u>Main Concepts/Issues</u>	<u>Preliminary Activities</u>	<u>Seminar</u>	<u>Post Activities</u>
		Opening: Core: Closing:	

SAMPLE SOCRATIC SEMINAR EXAMINING A PAINTING

[ON BOARD: "I see . . .," "I observe . . .," "I notice . . ."]

30 Minutes: Pre-Seminar

1. Point out phrases on the board and explain how they are to be used.
2. Distribute copies of the painting.
3. 2-3 minutes for silent observations. Suggest to students that they may want to list observations.
4. "Round Robin" observing using phrases on the board.
5. List observations on chart paper.

10 Minutes: Biography of the Painter

30 Minutes: Seminar

Opening Question: What would be a good title for this painting?

30 Minutes: Post-Seminar

Give actual title.

1. Distribute paper.
2. Write opinion: Is this title appropriate? Support your answer.

10 Minutes: Sharing of Written Responses

SEMINAR RATING CHART

For _____

Date _____

Positive Behaviors

- ___ 1. I came prepared for the seminar.
- ___ 2. I was courteous to the other students.
- ___ 3. I paused and thought before speaking.
- ___ 4. I listened to others tell their opinions.
- ___ 5. I kept an open mind for opinions different from my own.
- ___ 6. I acted as a positive role model for other students.
- ___ 7. I built on what was said just before I gave my opinion.
- ___ 8. I used fixed examples from the text to support statements.
- ___ 9. I felt comfortable speaking in the seminar.
- ___ 10. I gave my opinions clearly.

Negative Behaviors

- ___ 11. I interrupted others.
- ___ 12. I acted silly.
- ___ 13. I did not look at the person who was speaking.
- ___ 14. I talked off the topic.
- ___ 15. I talked too much or not at all

SOCRATIC SEMINAR OBSERVATION FORM

Observer _____ Date _____

Reading Item _____

Opening Question _____

Persons	Uses	Listens	Responds	Paraphrases	Asks	Defers	Comments -
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Observed	Text	+/o/-	to Quest.		Quest.		Numbers or words

Comments - Use these numbers for comments.

1. Needs to speak more.
2. Playful
3. Calls out, interrupts.
4. Plays with name card and other things.
5. Needs to listen more carefully- asks for repeated comments.
6. Has an excellent idea.
7. Asks good questions.
8. Outstanding participation- includes responding, asking questions, paraphrasing, and deferring.

What is the best idea you heard in the seminar? _____

How would you rate the seminar? (Check One)

- Excellent (Everyone participated, listened, had good ideas, did not interrupt.)
- Good (Generally, everyone participated but the seminar could have better ideas and behavior.)
- Fair (Side talk, interruptions, students distracted.)
- Poor (Lots of side talk, interruptions, and rude behavior.)

How many times did the facilitator have to stop the seminar? _____

FACILITATOR'S EVALUATION SHEET

Date _____ Name Group Reading Item

	Yes	No	N/A
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1. Were the participants engaged early?			
2. Did you make sure the questions were understood?			
3. Did you ask questions that led to further questions?			
4. Did you use the answers as the basis of follow-up questions?			
5. Did you allow for discussion of disagreement?			
6. Did you listen carefully to participants' questions?			
7. Did you accept participants' answers without judgement?			
8. Did you keep attention on ideas in the text/item being discussed?			
9. Did you behave as a model of seminar participation?			
10. Did you correct mis-readings of the text?			
11. Did you allow time (pauses) for thinking?			
12. Did you draw out reasons and implications?			
13. Did you or did not reach closure?			

In the course of the seminar:

What was the most interesting question?

What was the most interesting idea to come from a participant?

What was the best thing you observed?

What was the most troubling thing you observed?

What do you think should be done differently in the next seminar?

SEMINAR PLANNING FORM

Title of Seminar _____ Date _____ Level _____

Main Concepts/Issues	Preliminary Activities	Seminar	Post Activities
		Opening:	

		Core:	
		Closing:	

SEMINAR RUBRIC

Oral Presentation

1. Addresses the question using evidence from the text. Cites examples, passages, characters from the text to support answers. Comments show that the student has read the text, understood it, and is making connections between the text and ideas generated by the seminar.
2. Makes relevant comments during the seminar which show response to the previous speaker's ideas. Helps to enlarge understanding of the text and ideas generated in the seminar.
3. Takes the initiative in participating, does not have to be prompted.
4. May ask questions to clarify and deepen the discussion of ideas.

Other Presentation

1. Is on time for the seminar.
2. Shows attentiveness through body language: sitting up straight, looking at the speaker, giving the speaker the floor.
3. Does not belittle or criticize others' comments.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR SOCRATIC SEMINARS

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Unsatisfactory
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<p><u>Conduct</u></p>	<p>Demonstrates respect for learning process, has patience with different opinions and complexity, shows initiative by asking others for clarification, brings others into the conversation, moves conversation forward, speaks to all participants, avoids talking too much.</p>	<p>Generally shows composure but may display impatience with contradictory or confusing ideas, comments but does not necessarily encourage others to participate, may tend to address only the teacher or get into debates.</p>	<p>Participates and expresses a belief that his ideas are important in understanding the text, may make insightful comments but is either too forceful or too shy and does not contribute to the progress of conversation, tends to debate not discuss.</p>	<p>Displays little respect for the learning process, argumentative, takes advantage of minor distractions, uses inappropriate language, speaks to individuals rather than ideas, arrives unprepared without notes, a pencil, and perhaps even the text.</p>
<p><u>Speaking/Reasoning</u></p>	<p>Understands question before answering, cites evidence from text, expresses thoughts in complete sentences, logical and insightful, moves conversation forward, makes connections between ideas, resolves apparent contradictory ideas, considers others' viewpoints not only his/her own, avoids bad logic.</p>	<p>Responds to questions voluntarily, comments show an appreciation for the text but not an appreciation for the subtler points within it, comments logical but not connected to other speakers, ideas interesting enough that others respond to them.</p>	<p>Responds to questions but may have to be called upon, has read the text but not put much effort into preparing questions and ideas for the seminar, comments take details into account but may not flow logically in conversation.</p>	<p>Extremely reluctant to participate even when called upon, comments illogical and meaningless, may mumble or express incomplete ideas, little or no account taken of previous comments or important ideas in the text.</p>
<p><u>Listening</u></p>	<p>Pays attention to details, writes down questions, responses take</p>	<p>Generally pays attention and responds thoughtfully to ideas and</p>	<p>Appears to find some ideas unimportant while responding to</p>	<p>Appears uninvolved in the seminar, comments display complete</p>

	into account all participants, demonstrates that s/he has kept up, points out bad logic, overcomes distractions.	questions of other participants and the teacher, absorption in own ideas may distract the participant from the ideas of others.	others, may have to have questions repeated while not having confusing comments restated, takes few notes during the seminar.	misinterpretation of questions or comments of other participants.
<u>Reading</u>	Thoroughly familiar with text, has notations and questions in the margins, key words, phrases, and ideas are underlined, possible contradictions identified, pronounces words correctly.	Has read the text and comes with some ideas from it but these may not be written out in advance, good understanding of the vocabulary but may mispronounce some new or foreign words.	Appears to have read or skimmed the text but has not marked the text or made meaningful notes or questions, shows difficulty with vocabulary, mispronounces important words, key concepts misunderstood, little evidence of serious reflection prior to the seminar.	Student is unprepared for the seminar, important words, phrases, ideas in the text are unfamiliar, no notes or questions marked in the text, no attempt made to get help with difficult material.