SOCRATIC SEMINAR: A TEACHER RESOURCE PACKET

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Compiled by Renee Balch
ELEMENTS OF A SOCRATIC SEMINAR

Socrates believed that enabling students to think for themselves was more important than filling their heads with "right" answers. In a Socratic Seminar, participants seek deeper understanding of complex ideas through rigorously thoughtful dialogue, rather than by memorizing bits of information or meeting arbitrary demands for 'coverage.'

A Socratic Seminar fosters active learning as participants explore and evaluate the ideas, issues, and values in a particular text. A good seminar consists of four interdependent elements: (1) the text being considered, (2) the questions raised, (3) the seminar leader, and (4) the participants. A closer look at each of these elements helps explain the unique character of a Socratic Seminar.

THE TEXT  Socratic Seminar texts are chosen for their richness in ideas, issues, and values and their ability to stimulate extended, thoughtful dialogue. A seminar text can be drawn from readings in literature, history, science, math, health, and philosophy or from works of art or music. A good text raises important questions in the participants' minds, questions for which there are no right or wrong answers. At the end of a successful Socratic Seminar, participants often leave with more questions than they brought with them.

THE QUESTION  A Socratic Seminar opens with a question either posed by the leader or solicited from participants as they acquire more experience in seminars. An opening question has no right answer; instead it reflects a genuine curiosity on the part of the questioner. A good 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 in a Socratic Seminar 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 by keeping the discussion focused on the text, asking follow-up questions, helping participants clarify their positions when arguments become confused, and involving reluctant participants while restraining their more vocal peers.

As a seminar participant, the leader actively engages in the group's exploration of the text. To do this effectively, the leader must know the text well enough to anticipate varied interpretations and recognize important possibilities in each. The leader must also be patient enough to allow participants' understandings to evolve and be willing to help participants explore non-traditional insights and unexpected interpretations.

Assuming this dual role of leader and participant is easier if the opening question is one which truly interests the leader as well as the participants.

THE PARTICIPANTS  In a Socratic Seminar, participants share with the leader the responsibility for the quality of the seminar. Good 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.

Participants acquire good seminar behaviors through participating in seminars and reflecting on them afterward. After each seminar, the leader and participants discuss the experience and identify ways of improving the next seminar. Before each new seminar, the leader also offers coaching and practice in specific habits of mind that improve reading, thinking, and discussing. Eventually, when participants realize that the leader is not looking for right answers, but is encouraging them to think out loud and to exchange ideas openly, they discover the excitement of exploring important issues through shared inquiry. This excitement creates willing participants, eager to examine ideas in a rigorous, thoughtful manner.

Preparing Students for Socratic Seminar

The following suggested instructional strategies should be explicitly taught to students and modeled for them before they try it on their own. They can be taught as “mini-lessons” before trying a Socratic Seminar. The strategies will give students practice in thinking, active listening, and making connections.

1. Wait Time (These steps can be posted in your room for reference.)
   Wait Time 1: What To Do After the Teacher Asks a Question
   1. Listen carefully to the question.
   2. Think of the answer yourself.
   3. Remember there will be silent time for thinking.
   4. Instead of raising your hand, wait to be called on.
   5. Be ready to answer in a public speaking voice.
   6. If you’re not called on, listen carefully to your classmate’s answer and think about it.

   Wait Time II: What To Do After a Student Talks
   1. Remember that silent time gives us all time to think.
   2. If it wasn’t your turn to talk, think about what your classmate said.
   3. Decide if you agree or disagree and the reasons why.
   4. Be ready to “piggyback” or add comments to what you heard.
   5. Be prepared to speak audibly when it is your turn to talk.
   6. Be respectful of your classmates.

2. Think/Pair/Share
   1. THINK: The teacher provokes students’ thinking with a question or prompt or observation. The students should take a few moments (not minutes) just to THINK about the question.
   2. PAIR: Using designated partners, nearby neighbors, or elbow partner, students PAIR up to talk about the answer each came up with. They compare their mental or written notes and identify the answers they think are best, most convincing, or most unique.
   3. SHARE: After students talk in pairs for a few moments, the teacher calls for pairs to SHARE their thinking with the rest of the class. This can be done by going around in round-robin fashion, calling on each pair; or answers can be taken as they are called out (or as hands are raised). Often, the teacher or a designated helper will record these responses on the board or on the Bright Link Board. (taken from readingquest.org)

3. 2-Column Notes: Use this strategy to model how to make connections when reading text. (See next page for student handout.)
4. Say Something (Sheet included on page after 2-column notes.) Use the Say Something sheet to tell students they must choose one sentence stem from the sheet to be able to say something after a reading, video, etc. This not only gives a purpose for reading but also enables the student to have something to share afterwards. It can also be used as preparation for a Socratic Seminar.

5. A Taxonomy of Socratic Questions (Included after the Say Something Sheet). Give each student the handout. During class discussion, have students choose relevant questions or stems to keep the discussion going. The teacher can also use these stems to keep discussion moving.

6. Dialogue vs. Debate: (Sheet included after Socratic Questions). Have students pair up or get in groups of 3 (for larger classes) to take turns reading and explaining/discussing each description of dialogue vs. debate.

7. Socratic Questioning Strategies: (sheet included after Dialogue vs. Debate). Model each of these strategies for your students, then practice them whole-class, and then have students practice in pairs. Students should then be ready to use these strategies in a Socratic Seminar.

8. See the next sheet entitled, “Open-Ended Questions for Socratic Seminar” for a handout for students to develop text-related questions for the seminar.

9. See the last sheet in this section entitled, “How to Conduct a Seminar”, compiled by Ann-Marie Seely as a list of Ground Rules/Norms for students to follow during the seminar.

10. See the Habits of Mind sheet for habits to teach students and to focus on during the seminar.
## 2 Column Notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In this column, write a statement, quote, or fact from the text and number it.</th>
<th>In this column, <em>directly</em> to the right of your fact or statement, write your connection to the fact. The connection can be a comment, an observation, a question, or a personal connection to your own life, a friend’s life, family member’s life, a book, TV show, movie, or current events.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## “Say Something”
### Active Reading Strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Make a Prediction</th>
<th>Ask a Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• I predict that...</td>
<td>• Why did...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I bet that...</td>
<td>• What’s this part about...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I think that...</td>
<td>• How is this (fill in detail) like this (fill in detail...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Since this happened (fill in detail), then I bet the next this that is going to happen is...</td>
<td>• What would happen if...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reading this part makes me think that this (fill in detail) is about to happen...</td>
<td>• Why...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I wonder if...</td>
<td>• Who is...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What does this section (fill in detail) mean...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Do you think that...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I don’t get this part here...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clarify Something</th>
<th>Make a Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Oh, I get...</td>
<td>• This is good because...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Now I understand...</td>
<td>• This is hard because...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• This makes sense now...</td>
<td>• This is confusing because...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No, I think it means...</td>
<td>• I like the part where...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I agree with you. This means...</td>
<td>• I don’t like this part because...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• At first I thought (fill in detail) but now I think... (fill in detail) This part is really saying...</td>
<td>• My favorite part so far is...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I think that...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Make a Connection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• This reminds me of...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• This part is like...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• This character (fill in name) is like (fill in name) because...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• This is similar to...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The differences are...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| • I also (name something in the text that has also happened to you)...
| • I never (name something in the text that has never happened to you)...
| • This character makes me think of...
| • This setting reminds me of... |
A Taxonomy of Socratic Questions

Questions of Clarification
- What do you mean by ___?
- What is your main point?
- How does ___ relate to ___?
- Could you put that another way?
- What do you think is the main issue here?
- Is your basic point ___ or ___?
- Let me see if I understand you. Do you mean ___?
- How does this relate to our discussion/problem/issue?
- Would you summarize in your own words what John has said? John, is that what you mean?
- Could you give me an example?
- Would this be an example: ___?
- Could you explain this further?
- Would you say more about that?
- Why do you say that?
- Do you have any evidence for that?
- How does that apply to this case?
- What difference does that make?
- What would convince you otherwise?

Questions About Viewpoints or Perspectives
- You seem to be approaching this issue from ___ perspective. Why have you chosen this rather than that perspective?
- How would other groups/types of people respond? Why?
- What would influence them?
- How could you answer the objection that ___ would make?
- Can/did anyone see this another way?
- What would someone who disagrees say?
- What is an alternative?
- How are Tim's and Mary's ideas alike? Different?

Questions That Probe Assumptions
- What are you assuming?
- What is Susan assuming?
- What could we assume instead?
- You seem to be assuming ___ Do I understand you correctly?
- All of your reasoning is dependent on the idea that ___ Why have you based your reasoning on ___ rather than ___?
- You seem to be assuming ___ How would you justify taking this for granted?
- Is it always the case? Why do you think the assumption holds here?

Questions That Probe Implications and Consequences
- What are you implying by that?
- When you say ___ are you implying ___?
- But if that happened, what else would also happen as a result? Why?
- What effect would that have?
- Would that necessarily happen or only probably happen?
- What is an alternative?
- If this and this are the case, then what else must also be true?

Questions That Probe Reason and Evidence
- What would be an example?
- What are your reasons for saying that?
- What other information do we need to know?
- Could you explain your reasons?
- Are those reasons adequate?
- Is there reason to doubt that evidence?
- But is that good evidence to believe that?
- Who is in a position to know if that is the case?
- What would you say to someone who said ___?
- Can someone else give evidence to support that response?
- By what reasoning did you come to that conclusion?
- How could we go about finding out whether that is true?
- How do you know?
- Why did you say that?
- Why do you think that is true?
- What led you to that belief?
- Questions About the Question
- How can we find out?
- How could someone settle this question?
- Is the question clear? Do we understand it?
- Is this question easy or hard to answer? Why?
- Would ___ put the question differently?
- Does this question ask us to evaluate something?
- Do we all agree that this is the question?
- To answer this question, what questions would we have to answer first?
- I'm not sure I understand how you are interpreting the main question at issue.
- Is this the same issue as ___?
- Can we break this question down at all?
- How would ___ put the issue?
- What does this question assume?
- Why is this question important?
## Socratic Seminar
### Dialogue, not Debate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dialogue</th>
<th>Debate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaborative</strong>: multiple sides work toward shared understanding.</td>
<td><strong>Oppositional</strong>: two opposing sides try to prove each other wrong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants listen to <strong>understand</strong>, to make meaning, and to find common ground.</td>
<td>Participants listen to <strong>find flaws</strong>, to spot differences, and to counter arguments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enlarges</strong> and possibly changes a participant’s point of view.</td>
<td><strong>Affirms</strong> a participant’s point of view.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creates an <strong>open-minded attitude</strong>: an openness to being wrong and an openness to change.</td>
<td>Creates a <strong>close-minded attitude</strong>, a determination to be right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One submits one’s best thinking, expecting the other people’s reflections will help thinking rather than threaten it.</td>
<td>One submits one’s best thinking and <strong>defends</strong> it against challenge to show that it is right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Temporarily suspending</strong> one’s beliefs.</td>
<td><strong>Investing wholeheartedly</strong> in one’s beliefs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search for <strong>strengths in all positions</strong>.</td>
<td>Search for <strong>weaknesses in the other position</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Respects all</strong> the other participants and seeks not to alienate or offend.</td>
<td><strong>Rebuts contrary positions</strong> and may belittle or deprecate other participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumes that <strong>many people have pieces of answers</strong> and that cooperation can <strong>lead</strong> to a greater understanding.</td>
<td>Assumes a <strong>single right answer</strong> that somebody already has.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Socratic Questioning Strategies

- **Pausing-Wait Time-Silence**. Pausing and waiting *slows the conversation down*. Waiting 3-5 seconds gives everyone time to think while also providing space for hesitant speakers to respond or join the conversation.

- **Paraphrasing**. Saying back to students what they have said, using different words and phrases, requires students to think deeply about their ideas, what they have said, and what they mean. Paraphrasing enlarges ideas for the speaker and for all the other students.

- **Serializing**. Asking a series of questions based on the previous response of a student shows that student and others that they are being heard, understood, and valued. Serialized questions engage students into meaningful conversations that enlarge their understanding of the big ideas of a discipline.

- **Clarifying**. While clarifying questions are simple questions of fact, clarifying questions ask students to focus on clarity of expression and thought. Simple questions like, “Do you mean thousands of people or do you mean hundreds of people?” or “Are you suggesting that we start with step 3 to solve the problem?” can move understanding and learning forward for everyone.

- **Probing**. Since probing questions encourage multiple responses, avoid yes/no responses, elicit slow and thoughtful responses, and move thinking from reaction to reflection, asking probing questions requires that students stop, pause, and think closely about the sources of their thoughts and ideas resulting in deep learning and new understanding.

- **Expanding**. Questions of elaboration like ‘Why do you say that? Tell us more about that... What are some examples of what you mean? How is what you are suggesting different from or similar to what you just heard from Sue?’ Expanding questions ask students to go deeper in expressing their thoughts and ideas as they provide clarity and new understanding. Asking questions that expand and enlarge the ideas being offered by students shows students higher levels of understanding.

Open-Ended Questions for a Socratic Seminar

When preparing for a Socratic Seminar, write questions using these sentence frames to stimulate your thinking about the article(s) you read. Choose and complete 5 of the following:

- What puzzles me is...

- I'd like to talk with people about...

- I'm confused about...

- Don't you think this is similar to...

- Do you agree that the big ideas seem to be...
• I have questions about...

• Another point of view is...

• I think it means...

• Do you think...

• What does it mean when the author says...

• Do you agree that...
How to Conduct a Seminar:

"Teachers should guide without dictating, participate without dominating."
– C.B. Neblette

Pre-Seminar:
Teach students the “rules of engagement.” The seminar is not a debate, but a discussion. *These rules have been compiled from experience and from a variety of common knowledge sources found on the World Wide Web.

- Listen carefully.
- Don’t raise hands; take turns speaking.
- Don’t monopolize the discussion.
- Don’t participate if you are not prepared. This should not be a “chat” session or a “bull” session.
- Speak clearly and loudly so that everyone in the circle can hear you.
- Do make notes on what others are saying. If you want to comment on something a classmate has said, write it down before you lose your thought.
- Do refer to the text. This is not a show of memorization. All comments should be grounded in the text.
- Ask for further clarification of a classmate’s idea if you do not understand.
- Do not try to take the group on a tangent. Focus on the discussion at hand.
- Talk to one another, not the teacher/leader.
- Understand that a seminar is a discussion of ideas. Participants are responsible for the discussion. And while it is okay to disagree with someone, the goal of a seminar is to think together versus arguing a position.
Habits of Mind

The habits of mind below are the keys to critical thinking, perceptive reading, honest discussion, and powerful writing. Rather than getting the "right answer" the goal of a Socratic dialogue is to practice these habits of mind.

**Evidence**
How do you know what you know? Can you provide specific evidence from the reading passage to justify your conclusions or general statements?

**Definitions**
How is the author using key terms? Does he use them consistently?

**Viewpoint**
Who is the speaker? What is the author's line of argument or bias?

**Connections**
How is the reading related to other things? Which things are causes and which are effects? Can they be both at once? What is the relationship between the past and the present? Is there an underlying pattern?

**Conjecture**
What if? If this, then what?

**Relevance**
So what? Who cares? Is there a valid or compelling reason to adopt a different point of view or make a new connection? Is this argument valid in one context but not appropriate in another?

Teacher Preparation

1. When first trying Socratic Seminar in your classroom, start small. It was suggested in the Socratic Seminars International workshop to use one picture, or one page, or two to three paragraphs from longer text.

2. Choose text that has ideas, issues, and values worth talking about. Ambiguity is also a plus; more than one possible position will enhance discussion and expand thinking. In short, the text should be rich and complex.

3. After carefully examining the text, you could write on the board 3 of the big ideas that, in your opinion, are the underlying issues, values, and ideas in the text. Have students rank these from most relevant to least relevant, or least to most, related to the topic. Then have a show of hands as to who ranked which first, second, and third. Write these numbers on the board. This could be the springboard for the seminar. It could start with someone telling why they ranked it as they did. Next, create an opening question for the seminar. This question should have no right answer. It should generate new questions and responses.

4. You are both a leader and a participant in the seminar. Do not give individuals feedback when they respond. You can clarify and give an example from the text. See “Guidelines for Socratic Seminar Leaders”.

5. One approach to Socratic Seminar is using an inner circle and outer circle. The inner circle is practicing dialogue, and the outer circle is listening closely and taking notes. The outer circle should be ready to add to the inner circle’s conversation when they become the inner circle. So, each gets a turn at talking. Sheets are included in this packet for use with students in the outer circle. One is an overall observation sheet (“Outer Circle Observer Role”), and the other is to use if you assign one student in the inner circle for one student in the outer circle to observe (“Socratic Seminar Discussion Partner Evaluation” sheet), which is a viable option.

6. The “Writing Into and Out Of a Socratic Seminar” was written by Ann-Marie Seely and gives multiple suggestions for having your students write before, during, and after the seminar, including reflection ideas.

7. Have your students reflect on the process of the seminar. They could write what they individually and as a whole did the best and worst on. Have them reflect on an improvement that can be made on the next seminar. Have students set goals for the next seminar.
Guidelines for Socratic Seminar Leaders

1. Give enough of an introduction to set the stage—but no more. Get the group focused on its purpose.

2. Don't try two-hour seminars at first; build gradually.


4. The 'subject matter' of seminars is understanding of issues and ideas, not the acquisition of organized knowledge. You are not 'covering a topic' in the usual sense. You are a co-learner, not an authority on right answers. There are experienced leaders but no expert leaders.

5. Use the chalkboard for
   - Opening questions
   - Taking a survey of opinion
   - Main characters’ names
   - List of key words, etc.

6. Stay with the text.

7. Follow every answer with another question, building upon the answer just given.

8. Rephrase questions, if necessary, until they are understood.

9. Wait 3 - 5 seconds, or even longer, for students to reply to questions; thinking is OK.

10. Draw out the reasons for and the implications of students’ answers.

11. Insist that answers be clear and adequately explained.

12. Do not insist on agreement in matters of opinion; encourage discussion of differences.

13. Take stands to provoke genuine disagreement, but not merely to start arguments. Stay open. Remember what was said of Senator Robert Taft: "He had the best mind in the Senate, until he made it up."

14. There is no need to reach resolution/compromise/synthesis/closure.

15. Recognize listening as a form of participation.

16. It's OK to be didactic when supplying needed information.

17. It's OK to coach students on seminar behaviors: speaking, reading, listening, observing, note-taking, taking turns, citing passages, defending positions, etc.

18. Correct all misreading and some mis-speaking on the spot.

19. Handle silent students outside the seminar.

Outer Circle Observer Role

How well does the opening question engage discussion?

How often do participants refer to the text?

What questioning strategies are used?
  Wait time    Paraphrasing    Serializing
  Expanding    Clarifying    Probing

What Seminar leader behaviors are observed?

Does everyone in the seminar participate?
Socratic Seminar
Discussion Partner Evaluation

Name of person you are observing

Your name

Seminar Topic

Date

1) Record a check for each time your partner contributed in a meaningful way: 

2) On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the highest, how well did your partner do at the following?

_____ Analysis and Reasoning
Did your partner...
Cite reasons and evidence for his/her statements with support from the text?
Demonstrate that they had given thoughtful consideration to the topic?
Provide relevant and insightful comments?
Demonstrate organized thinking?
Move the discussion to a deeper level?

Notes/Comments:

_____ Discussion Skills
Did your partner...
Speak loudly and clearly?
Stay on topic?
Talk directly to other students rather than the teacher?
Stay focused on the discussion?
Invite other people into the discussion?
Share air time equally with others (didn’t talk more than was fair to others)?

Notes/Comments:

_____ Civility
Did your partner...
Listen to others respectfully?
Enter the discussion in a polite manner?
Avoid inappropriate language (slang, swearing)?
Avoid hostile exchanges?
Question others in a civil manner?

Notes/Comments:
Writing Into and Out of a Socratic Seminar

The Socratic Seminar format is rich with learning and writing possibilities.

Pre-seminar activities:

- Before we begin seminar today, take five minutes and write down the main points you would like to make in response to this question...Base your comments in the text.
- Write a short summary of your reading last night. Outline what you think were the key points of the author.
- Make a short list of the points of the author’s argument that you did not agree with. Make notes as to your positions on these points.
- Which character did you identify the most with in your reading last night?
- Based on your performance in seminar last time, write a short paragraph outlining your goals for participation this time.
- What is the one thing you really want to say about the text in our seminar today? Explain why.
- What is the one thing you hope no one will bring up from the reading last night? Why?
- Based on the material we are about to discuss in seminar, craft three possible opening questions that you would use if you were the leader.
- Before I give you today’s seminar material, respond in writing to this short “interest inventory” I’ve provided. Make notes as to why you have responded the way that you have.

All of the above can be answered in a journal, on a sheet of paper, used as a think-pair-share activity, etc. The opportunities for writing pre-seminar are limited only by your imagination.

During Socratic Seminar:

- Practice taking notes on the key ideas that your classmates are bringing up. Use these notes to help you reflect upon and extend the thinking behind your own comments in the dialogue.
- If you are in the outer circle, record the behaviors and comments of ______. Write an assessment of his/her performance based on the rubric provided.
- Continue to make notes in the margins of your text as we discuss the points. You will use these ideas in a later writing assignment.

During Socratic Seminar, the focus should not be on writing ideas as much as articulating and developing ideas. But certainly, there is still some call for writing during a dialogue.

Post-Seminar Activities:

This is the time when you can really see/assess the success of the seminar. You can read student writing that has been grounded not in what happens, but in why it happens. As students discuss, they focus on author’s purpose and choice, tone, symbols, theme, characterization, etc. Their extension of their thinking in both their reading and the ensuing seminar will be reflected in their writing. And you will never have given them the answer or told them what to “write”!

In most of the research I’ve read, most suggest a journaling activity following a seminar. I think that is too limiting. Please consider:

- Brainstorming/prewriting for an essay that will come of our discussion
- Write out the points you weren’t able to make (for whatever reasons). Why didn’t you make these point? How would they have strengthened or weakened the discussion!
Write the “Oh Yea! I should have said THAT” in response to an idea in the discussion. Perhaps this is an idea you’ve just had as you reflect on the seminar.

Write the “Why did I say that?” response. How has your thinking about a particular idea changed from your initial reading to the end of the discussion?

Self-evaluation of seminar

Peer-evaluation of seminar

Write a poem about a particular point from seminar.

Write a poem about a participant from seminar.

Write a letter to the author whose work has been discussed. In that letter, students could summarize the discussion, ask questions about author’s purpose, pose statements about their opinion of author’s purpose, etc.

Write a character study based on the “new” ideas we’ve made through seminar.

Write your nominations for the “best” idea award. Why does he/she/you deserve this honor?

Chart the changes in your thinking about the topic.

So you don’t agree? Force yourself to write about the OTHER side of the argument/idea…the one you don’t espouse. Do you see their points now? Why or why not?

Design a comic strip – reducing the ideas into a short writing piece

Design a want ad – reducing ideas from seminar into a short want ad for someone who might agree with your point...

Write a further study plan...where I will go from here with this author/piece?

Journaling

Free writing

Write a critique of the questions asked by the leader. Were they good questions or did they stifle discussion? Why? Why not?

Socratic seminar- the parody. If we were to have a little fun with ourselves and with our discussion today, what points would you exaggerate? Write a creative piece...

The Final Question:

How could you use the Socratic Seminar as an effective technique for critical thinking and writing in your classroom?
## Socratic Seminar Grading Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Period:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>Total Points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Uses text:** Examples/evidence from videos, notes, and textbook. Use them during the Socratic Seminar. Refer to them for evidence. Evidence and examples are essential to your grade and are a habit of mind you should have. Use the texts for your evidence.
- **Number of Comments:** How often did you speak? Did you interrupt people? Don't talk to the teacher, talk to the class. You will lose points if you are talking while others are trying to score points.
- **Use habits of mind:** Repeat the question in the answer, give evidence, state connections to other topics, state the significance of what you are saying, “what if”, and state the other side. Be obvious in the use.
- **Quality of Comments:** A quality comment offers a new idea, not yet expressed, or the comment takes a new approach to previously stated ideas and the comment applies the habits of mind.

**Evaluation Rubric** - 80 points possible, teacher may give points in between divisions (ex. 11/15)

### A. Number of comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>no comments</th>
<th>1 comment</th>
<th>2 comments</th>
<th>3 comments</th>
<th>4+ comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 points</td>
<td>5 points</td>
<td>8 pts</td>
<td>12 pts</td>
<td>15 pts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### B. Quality of comments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does not comment</th>
<th>repeats others comments</th>
<th>original ideas expressed</th>
<th>original, deep comments, new ideas, reasons, uses the habits of mind</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 points</td>
<td>5 pts</td>
<td>10 pts</td>
<td>15 pts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### C. Text Reference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>no reference to texts</th>
<th>2 references to text</th>
<th>3 references to text</th>
<th>4+ references to text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 points</td>
<td>8 pts</td>
<td>12 pts</td>
<td>15 pts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### D. Clearly demonstrates "Habits of Mind."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>no habits of mind demonstrated</th>
<th>2 habits demonstrated</th>
<th>3 habits demonstrated</th>
<th>4+ habits demonstrated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 points</td>
<td>8 pts</td>
<td>12 pts</td>
<td>15 pts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### E. Connection to the Constitution, historical documents or economic principles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>no connection</th>
<th>2 references connections</th>
<th>3 connections</th>
<th>4+ connections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 points</td>
<td>10 pts</td>
<td>15 pts</td>
<td>20 pts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$$A + B + C + D = \text{Total} / 80$$

Used with permission from Ann Marie Seely
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Process and/or observing:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes divergent others speak, attention when rarely pays</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remains uninvolved, uninvolved, pays attention when others speak</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explains others in discussion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Includes others to attention when</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expects clear, new ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liable to one idea (1 idea)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typically (2 ideas)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives full attention to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Includes others to attention when</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explains others in discussion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explains others to clear, new ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building on others’ ideas/references others’ ideas/references others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak, inappropriate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General, appropriate, specific</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific, appropriate, general</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References to text or prompt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions to discussion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Socratic Seminar Rubric
Blank Socratic Seminar Template for a lesson plan. Use this form to plan a lesson in your discipline that would lend itself to this teaching strategy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Concepts/Issues</th>
<th>Preliminary Activities</th>
<th>Seminar Questions</th>
<th>Post-Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Opening Questions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Core Questions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Closing Questions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SOCRATIC SEMINAR: A TEACHER RESOURCE PACKET

USEFUL LINKS
A short description is provided above each link...

See Seminar Lesson Plans under “For Teacher”
www.paideia.org

Includes a list of the benefits of a Socratic Seminar, key elements, sample opening questions, guiding question stems, closing question stems, and multiple links of Socratic Seminar resources.

Socratic Seminar step-by-step instructions for teachers. Includes a student handout of open-ended questions, a graphic organizer prep sheet, a partner evaluation sheet, and a participant rubric.
Socratic Seminar-Step-by-Step

“This strategy guide explains Socratic seminars and offers practical methods for applying the approach in your classroom to help students investigate multiple perspectives in a text.”
http://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/socratic-seminars-30600.html#strategy-practice

A detailed outline of the benefits and uses of Socratic Seminar, including multiple related pages to use in your classroom.
http://www.greece.k12.ny.us/academics.cfm?subpage=1260

Socratic Seminars International
Oscar Graybill, Director

Oscar Graybill and the Socratic Seminar International team are leaders in providing professional development in Socratic Seminar leadership. Throughout each school year, Open Enrollment Workshops are offered in major cities across the nation. Additionally, Socratic Seminars International contracts with individual schools and districts to provide On-Site Trainings. Visit www.SocraticSeminars.com for more information.

Compiled by Renee Balch