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ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Strengthen Knowledge with Socratic Seminars

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Strengthen Knowledge with

SOCRATIC SEMINARS

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STRENGTHEN KNOWLEDGE WITH SOCRATIC SEMINARS

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GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Your goal as a teacher is to help your students learn your content and to apply what they've learned in your classroom to real life situations whenever possible.

When using Socratic Seminars in the classroom, your objective is to help students expand what they know or think they know about a particular topic through independent thinking, analysis, evaluation, and discussion until they gain a deeper understanding of your curriculum.

When students participate in Socratic Seminars, they:

1. Take a deep dive into the topic at hand.
2. Come up with poignant questions.
3. Engage in discussions with their peers.
4. Evaluate the validity of claims.
5. Provide textual evidence.
6. Gain empathy for others.
7. Think critically.
8. Find connections between what they've learned and the world around them.
9. Listen with purpose.
10. Develop new perspectives.

FLORIDA STANDARDS

K-12 ELA EXPECTATIONS	ELA.K12.EE.1: Cite evidence to explain and justify reasoning.
	ELA.K12.EE.2: Read and comprehend grade-level complex texts proficiently.
	ELA.K12.EE.3: Make inferences to support comprehension.
	ELA.K12.EE.4: Use appropriate collaborative techniques and active listening skills when engaging in discussions in a variety of situations.
	ELA.K12.EE.5: Use the accepted rules governing a specific format to create quality work.
	ELA.K12.EE.6: Use appropriate voice and tone when speaking or writing.

ELA (B.E.S.T.) STANDARDS	COMMUNICATION	ELA.6.C.2.1: Present information orally, in a logical sequence, using nonverbal cues, appropriate volume, clear pronunciation, and appropriate pacing.
		ELA.7.C.2.1: Present information orally, in a logical sequence, emphasizing key points that support the central idea.
		ELA.8.C.2.1: Present information orally, in a logical sequence, supporting the central idea with credible evidence.
		ELA.9.C.2.1, ELA.10.C.2.1: Present information orally, with a logical organization and coherent focus, with credible evidence, creating a clear perspective.
		ELA.11.C.2., ELA.12.C.2.1: Present information orally, with logical organization, coherent focus, ad credible evidence, while employing effective rhetorical devices where appropriate.
	VOCABULARY	ELA.6.V.1.1, ELA.7.V.1.1, ELA.8.V.1.1, ELA.9.V.1.1, ELA.10.V.1.1, ELA.11.V.1.1, ELA.12.V.1.1: Integrate academic vocabulary appropriate to grade level in speaking and writing.
	READING	ELA.6.R.3.2, ELA.7.R.3.2, ELA.8.R.3.2, ELA.9.R.3.2, ELA.10.R.3.2, ELA.11.R.3.2, ELA.12.R.3.2: Paraphrase content from grade-level texts.

Social Studies	SS.6.W.1: Utilize historical inquiry skills and analytical processes.
	SS.8.A.1, SS.912.A.1: Use research and inquiry skills to analyze American History using primary and secondary sources.
	SS.912.W.1: Utilize historical inquiry skills and analytical processes.
	SS.912.H.2: Respond critically and aesthetically to various works in the arts.

SOCRATIC SEMINAR OVERVIEW

What is a Socratic Seminar? Named after the teaching style of ancient Greek philosopher, Socrates (470 BCE-399 BCE), a Socratic Seminar is a student-led, teacher facilitated discussion wherein the students read a text (or view media, conduct an experiment, complete a project, etc.), compose questions related about their experience, and evaluate and analyze their understanding with each other. A Socratic Seminar is NOT a lecture by an individual, nor is it a verbal battle or debate.

What do I have to do with my students to prepare for a Socratic Seminar? Select one or more texts or lessons that will be the focus of your students' discussion. Have students read the text or complete the lesson as normal, then inform them that they will be completing a discussion about the text or lesson where they will take a deep dive into what they've learned.

What do my students do immediately before a Socratic Seminar? Students will create questions about their texts or lessons that will be used for their discussion.

What can I do to prepare my classroom for a Socratic Seminar? Create signs to post the Socratic Seminar rules. Arrange your student desks in a discussion-friendly layout. Provide students with materials to help them have a fruitful discussion.

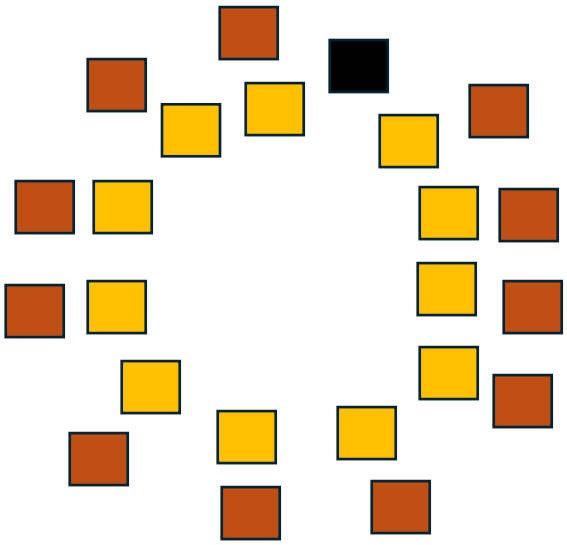
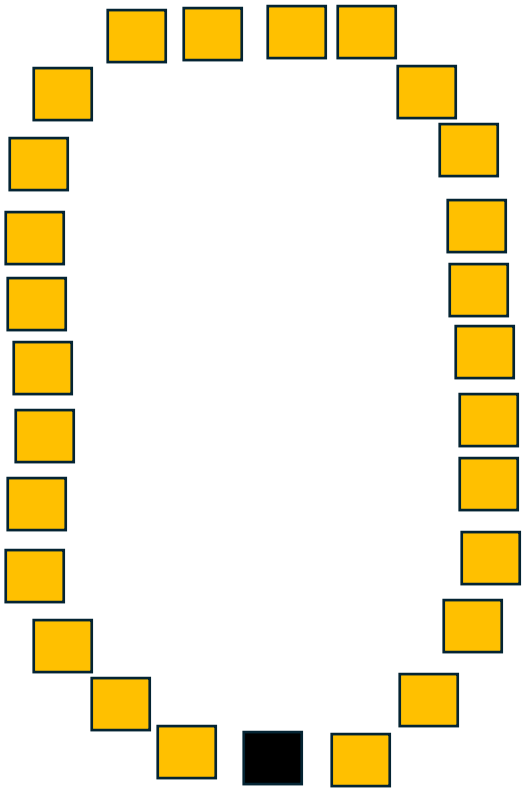
How can I give my students grades for a Socratic Seminar discussion? You can give your students grades for creating questions, participating in the discussion, and answering the follow-up questions. You may also decide to have students use what they learned during the discussion as part of a larger assignment, like an essay or oral presentation.

What do I do during the discussion? Teachers act as moderator/facilitator during the discussion. That entails ensuring that the agreed-upon rules are observed, that every student has an opportunity to speak up, that certain students aren't dominating the discussion, and that a variety of questions are asked and answered. You may ask follow-up questions for more clarification. You should not leave the room or let the students "do their own thing." You should refrain from giving your own answers to the student-posed questions or providing your opinion on students' responses.

PREPARING YOUR CLASSROOM

DESKS:

Prior to conducting a Socratic Seminar in your classroom, it would be ideal to rearrange the **student desks** for better discussion. There are several ways to do this; here are a couple of examples:

Inner Circle & Outer Circle	Large Circle
	
This layout requires that the inner circle students participate verbally in the discussion while the outer students participate non-verbally in the discussion by writing notes about the discussion and passing them to their inner circle partner to share with the group. Midway through the discussion, the inner circle and outer circle students switch positions and continue the discussion. The teacher (black desk) will sit in an area to see the inner and outer circle participants This can be useful in classes that are very large, or with students who may be more reluctant to speak up initially.	This layout requires that all student desks are arranged in a large circle or oval so that they can all see each other. The teacher (black desk) can be seated in the circle. This can be useful in classes that are new to discussions, or where engagement and participation are a concern for the teacher.

GRADE SHEET:

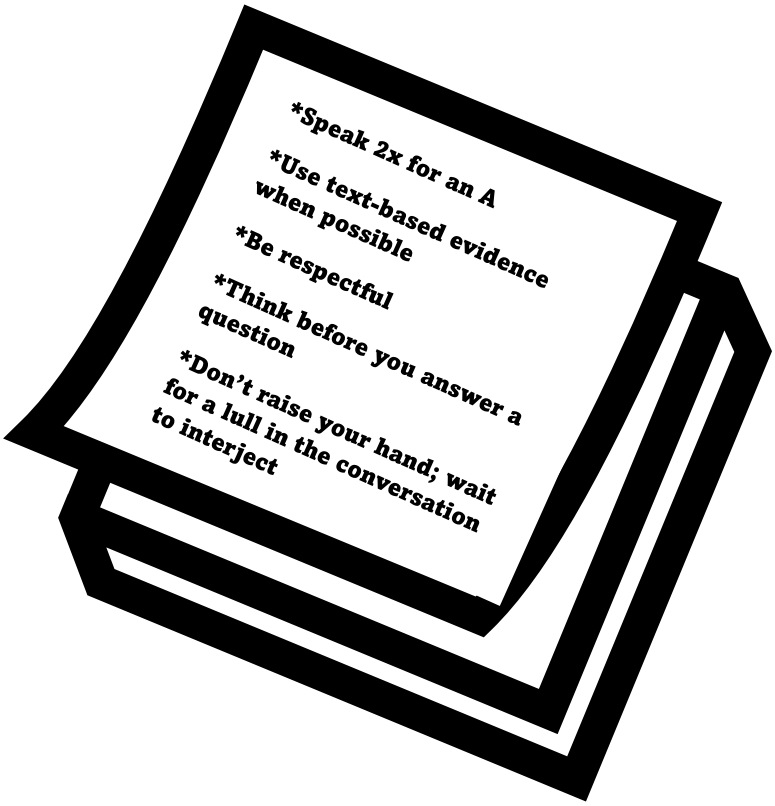
Print a blank grade sheet grid so that you can keep track of which students have participated in the discussion, by writing a check next to their name.

QUESTION BASKET:

Have a designated basket to hold all of your students' questions that will be asked. You may even write a few questions of your own and include them.

GENERAL INFORMATION/REMINDERS FOR STUDENTS:

Some general information for students that you may want to post (on chart paper or the interactive board) include the following:



Response Frames

I agree/disagree with [name], because...

[Name]'s answer makes me think of [different topic] because...

What we read about in [text] is just like what happened in [different text] because...

After reading [text], I would answer that question by saying...because...

NAME TENT:

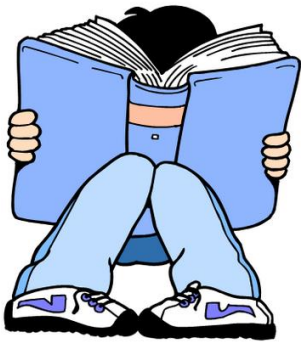
Have students create a name tent that they'll display on their desks during the discussion. You can have them answer their follow-up questions on the inside of this name tent to save on paper.

LESSON ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 1: Reading the text.

The teacher will assign a text for students to read as part of a normal lesson.

The length of the text may vary depending on the ability level of your students. A Socratic Seminar discussion can take place after students have read an article, a novel, or a series of texts.



ACTIVITY 2: Creating questions.

Students will create several questions that will be used during the discussion.

These questions can include:

CLOSE ENDED questions (questions with one correct answer),

OPEN ENDED questions (questions that students can answer with an opinion),

WORLD CONNECTION questions (questions that help students find a link between their lessons and the world around them),

TEXT TO TEXT questions (questions that require students to find a link between texts or lessons) and

UNIVERSAL THEME questions (questions that require students to determine the overall moral or lesson to be learned about life through the text).

ACTIVITY 3: Socratic Seminar Discussion.

Students will be seated in the pre-arranged discussion configured desks (either inner circle/outer circle or one big circle).

Students will display their name tent on their desks.

Teacher will review the general rules and post them for reference.

Teacher will share response frames (if necessary) and post them for reference.

Teacher will have the question basket and grade sheet on their own desk.

Teacher will begin the discussion by selecting a question from the basket. (This could be a random question, or a specially selected question. DO NOT read the name of the student who wrote the question. Disregard duplicate questions.)

After one or more students have answered the initial question, the teacher may decide to select another question, pass the question basket to a student to select and read a question, or students can pose their own questions to the group to continue the discussion. The teacher and/or students may pose follow up questions to questions or answers presented. The teacher can pose questions for anyone to answer, or they can pose questions for ALL students to answer.

Towards the end of class, the teacher will wrap up the discussion with a final question.

ACTIVITY 4: Seminar Wrap-Up Questions

After the discussion has ended, students will complete the post-discussion questions.

ACTIVITY 5: Optional Follow-up Assignment (Essay or Presentation summarizing what you've learned)

Socratic Seminar Student Handout

Name: _____ Period: _____ Date: _____

BEFORE THE DISCUSSION

This quarter, we've read a variety of texts. We will now have a Socratic Seminar discussion as a penultimate activity to make sense of what we've learned.

Texts we've read this quarter:

- _____ by _____
- _____ by _____
- _____ by _____
- _____ by _____
- _____ by _____

Socratic Seminar Question Creation:

PRE-SEMINAR QUESTION-WRITING: Before you come to a Socratic Seminar class, please be sure that you have read the assigned text and **write at least one question in each of the following categories:**

- **WORLD CONNECTION QUESTION (text to world):** Write a question connecting the text to the real world.
  Example: *If you could create the perfect world, what would it be like? What social problems would you attempt to eradicate? How would you do this? What form of government, if any, would your society use?*

- **TEXT TO TEXT CONNECTION QUESTION:** Write a question connecting the text to another text the class has read. **Example:** *How does the story of Ishmael relate to Liesel's story?*

- **CLOSE-ENDED QUESTION:** Write a question about the text that will help everyone in the class come to an agreement about events or characters in the text. This question usually has a "correct" answer.
  Example*: What happens that causes Jonas to leave the Community early?*

- **OPEN-ENDED QUESTION:** Write an insightful question about the text that will require proof and group discussion and "construction of logic" to discover or explore the answer to the question.
  Example: *Why did the Giver opt to remain in the Community rather than leave with Jonas?*

  OR

  Write a question dealing with HOW an author chose to compose a literary selection. How and why did the author manipulate point of view, characterization, poetic form, exposition, etc. for example?

  Example: *In The Giver, why is it important that the story is told through a limited omniscient narrator? Why is diction important to the meaning and theme of the novel?*

- **UNIVERSAL THEME: Core Question -** Write a question dealing with a theme(s) of the text that will encourage group discussion about the universality of the text. E**xample:** *Much of our reading this year will focus on the internal journey – or the individual quest for identity and meaning. How is this theme reflected in the world today?*

DURING THE DISCUSSION

PARTICIPATE IN THE CLASS DISCUSSION!!!

- Speak up and answer a question at least twice.
- Use text-based evidence to support your answers.
- Be respectful of others.
- (Be patient, be kind, be understanding of others' point of view.)

When you want to agree, say…	When you want to disagree, say…	When you want to change the subject, say…	When you want to go back to a prior topic, say…
I agree with ____, because…	I disagree with ____'s statement because…	Besides _____, I'd like to discuss _____.	Let's circle back to the topic of _____.
I like how _____ brought up the fact that_____, since…	I see things differently than ____ on the topic of ____.	Has anyone considered the idea that_____?	I'd like to revisit the idea that _____ discussed earlier.
I concur that ____, and here's why…	I don't see things the same way, instead, I think…	Speaking of _____, what about _____?	Going back to what we were saying about _____, I want to say that …

AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Socratic Seminar Discussion Rubric

	2 Point	1 Point	0 Points
Question Creation	Student created 5 text-based questions for the discussion	Student created between 2 and 4 questions for the discussion	Student created 1 question or NO questions for the discussion
Speaking	Student gave at least 2 independent verbal responses during the discussion	Student gave 1 independent verbal response during the discussion	Student did not respond verbally during the discussion
Listening	Student was respectful of others during the entire discussion	Student had to be reminded ONCE OR TWICE about being respectful of others' opinions during the discussion	Student had to be reminded MORE THAN TWICE about being respectful of other's opinions during the discussion
Text-Based Responses	Student gave at least two text-based responses during the discussion. Texts were referred to by title, author, character and/or topic	Student gave one text-based response during the discussion. Text was referred to by title, author, character and/or topic	Student did not provide a text-based response during the discussion
Wrap-Up Questions	Student completed all of the wrap-up questions based on the discussion	Student completed between 2 and 4 of the wrap-up questions OR the answers to the questions were NOT based on the discussion that occurred in class	Student completed one of the wrap-up questions or NONE of the wrap-up questions
Total Points			

Grades: 10-9=A 8=B 7=C 6=D 5-0=F

Socratic Seminar Wrap-Up Questions: When the seminar is complete, answer each of these questions in complete sentences.

1. What was the best question or answer of the discussion?

2. Who helped move the dialogue forward the most **besides the teacher**?

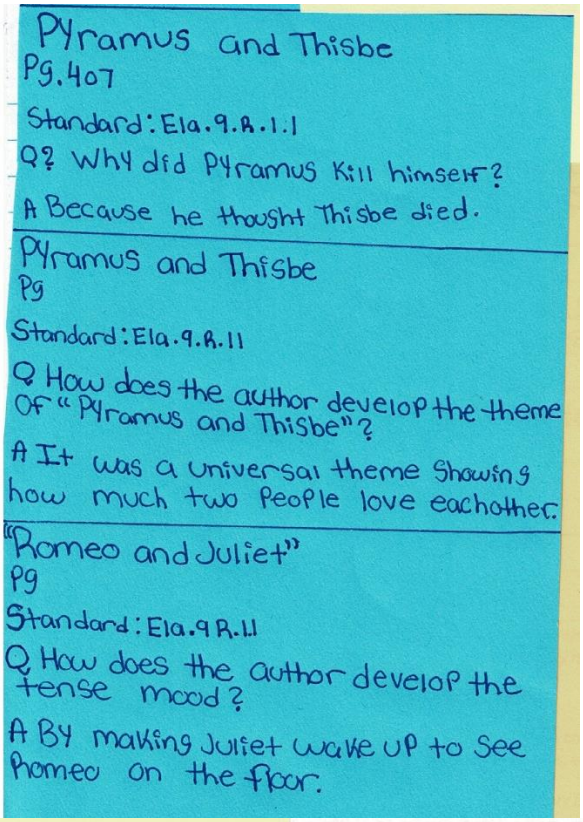
3. How has your understanding of the text(s) grown from the ideas explored in this seminar?

4. What was the best part of today's seminar?

5. What, if anything, would you change about today's seminar? Or is there a part you disagreed with? (You must answer this question and you must **qualify** your statement: "I wouldn't change anything because…" OR "I disagreed with _____ because _____."

****NOW THAT WE'VE HAD THIS DISCUSSION, WE WILL NOW COMPLETE OUR ULTIMATE ACTIVITY FOR THIS UNIT. YOU MAY USE WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED FROM THIS DISCUSSION AS PART OF YOUR ESSAY ON THIS TOPIC.****

STUDENT WORK SAMPLES

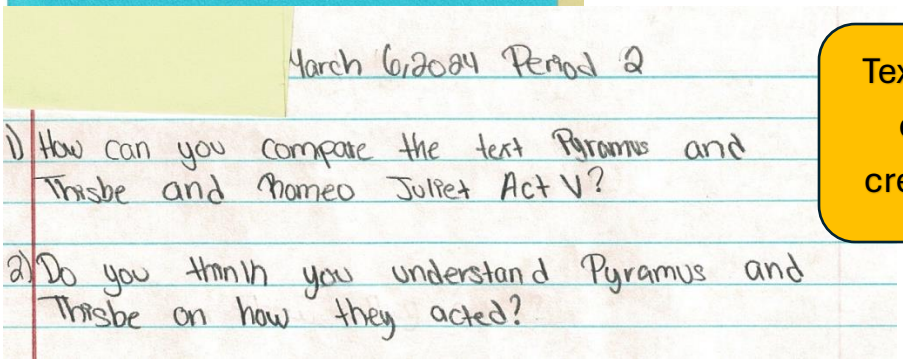


Pyramus and Thisbe
Pg.407
Standard: Ela.9.R.1.1
Q? Why did Pyramus Kill himself?
A Because he thought Thisbe died.

Pyramus and Thisbe
Pg
Standard: Ela.9.R.11
Q How does the author develop the theme Of "Pyramus and Thisbe"?
A It was a universal theme Showing how much two People love eachother.

"Romeo and Juliet"
Pg
Standard: Ela.9 R.1.1
Q How does the author develop the tense mood?
A By making Juliet wake up to See Romeo on the floor.

Text-based standards-aligned questions created by a student.

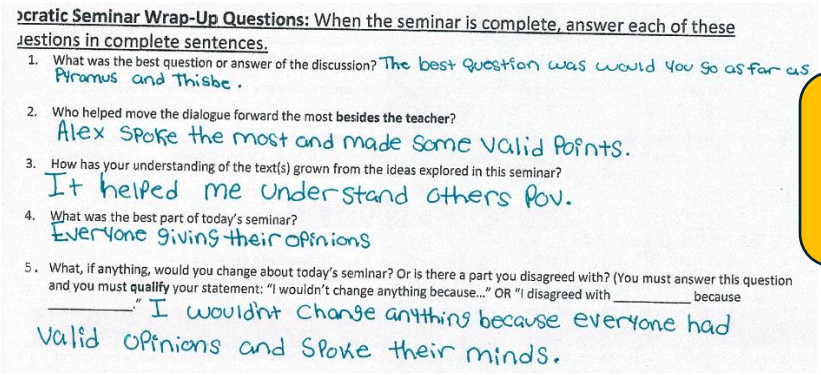


March 6,2024 Period 2

1) How can you compare the text Pyramus and Thisbe and Romeo Juliet Act V?

2) Do you think you understand Pyramus and Thisbe on how they acted?

Text to text and open-ended questions created by a student.



ocratic Seminar Wrap-Up Questions: When the seminar is complete, answer each of these uestions in complete sentences.

1. What was the best question or answer of the discussion? The best question was would You go as far as Pyramus and Thisbe.
2. Who helped move the dialogue forward the most **besides the teacher**?
   Alex Spoke the most and made some valid Points.
3. How has your understanding of the text(s) grown from the ideas explored in this seminar?
   It helped me understand others Pov.
4. What was the best part of today's seminar?
   Everyone giving their opinions
5. What, if anything, would you change about today's seminar? Or is there a part you disagreed with? (You must answer this question and you must **qualify** your statement: "I wouldn't change anything because..." OR "I disagreed with _____ because _____." I wouldn't change anything because everyone had valid opinions and Spoke their minds.

Wrap-up questions answered by a student.

Socratic Seminar Analysis

My understanding of the text in the crazy, stupid, love unit like before the Socratic Seminar discussion was that love make people do dumb things. In the story of "The tragedy of Romeo and Juliet ACT V" it reads "Come, cordinal and not poison, go with me To Juliet's grave; for there must I use thee." In the text of "Pyramus and Thisbe" it reads "Your own hand killed you, she said, and your love for me. I too can be brave. I too can love. Only death would have had the power to separate us. It shall not have that power now. She plunged into her heart the sword that was still wet with his life's blood. This was my understanding before the Socratic Seminar.

After the discussion my understanding of the texts changed because what the characters all did something dumb and killed themself but they should've wait a little longer. What they did affected there future and they couldn't have a future together. In the story of "Pyramus and Thisbe" it reads "The conclusion was inevitable. He never doubted that he knew all. Thisbe was dead. He had let his love, a tender maiden, come alone to a place full of danger, and not been here first to protect her. It is I who killed you, he said. He lifted up from the trampled dust what was left of the cloak and kissing it again and again carried it to the mulberry tree. Now, he said, you shall drink my blood too. He drew his sword and plunged it into his side." This was my understanding after the discussion.

I thought I understood there actions, but my perspective changed when we had the discussion.

Post-Seminar discussion analysis by a student.

POSSIBLE MATERIALS LIST

Printing Paper (white, various colors)

Lined Paper

Chart Paper

Sticky Notes

Highlighters

Pens

Pencils

Printer

Toner

Novels, Magazines, or other Reading Materials

Dry Erase Boards

Dry Erase Markers

Board Erasers

Sheet Protectors

Laminator

Lamination Sheets

Hole Puncher

Bean Bag Chairs (or other flexible seating items)

RESOURCE LIST

Socratic Seminars: Making Meaningful Dialogue
This newsletter article covers the benefits of a Socratic Seminar, types of questions that can be asked, and the difference between dialogue and debate.
Kwit, Heather Clayton. *Justaskpublications.Com*, https://justaskpublications.s3.amazonaws.com/II_4_Socratic_Seminars___Making_Meaningful_Dialogue.pdf. Accessed 2024.

What does a Socratic Seminar look like?

AVID Socratic Seminar (middle schoolers): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oG64GWpE9Jo

What is a Socratic Seminar: https://youtu.be/nMn3DnyiO0w

Socratic Seminar in Action: https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/bring-socratic-seminars-to-the-classroom

Circus Music: https://youtu.be/6HV1B2CpAaQ

The Socratic Seminar: https://youtu.be/QxZMGK6IdEs

12th Grade AP Psych Milgram Ethics Socratic Seminar (with inner and outer circle) https://youtu.be/I3PWB75YUmc

Socratic Seminar Sample: https://youtu.be/QgQiEiIgp2o

EHS English 2P 1st Socratic Seminar (using text-based evidence!): https://youtu.be/00v5waIh_LQ

The Socratic Seminar
This is a comprehensive PDF packet for students and teachers regarding Socratic Seminars.

LETTER FROM THE DISSEMINATOR

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for your interest in my project.

The tips and strategies contained within this packet have been curated and created over many years of teaching English Language Arts at the high school level.

I first got the idea about Socratic Seminar discussions after participating in several as a high school student myself, and I learned more about it from workshops with master teachers in Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

After researching several methods of discourse and putting them into practice in my classroom, I have arrived at a routine that works well for most of my students.

I hope that you find these resources to be useful in your teaching practice and that they inspire you to try new methods of discussion with your students.

Sincerely,

Jevona Cruz-Solomon, M.S.Ed.