

## AVID Socratic Seminar

Socrates, a Classical Greek philosopher, was convinced that the surest way to attain reliable knowledge was through the practice of disciplined conversation. He called this method *dialectic*, meaning the art or practice of examining opinions or ideas logically, often by the method of question and answer, so as to determine their validity.



The Socratic method of teaching is based on Socrates' theory that it is more important to enable students to think for themselves than to merely fill their heads with "right" answers. A Socratic Seminar is a method to try to understand information by creating a dialectic in class in regards to a specific text. In a Socratic Seminar, participants seek deeper understanding of complex ideas in the text through rigorously thoughtful dialogue. This process encourages divergent thinking rather than convergent.

Students are given opportunities to "examine" a common piece of text, whether it is in the form of a novel, poem, art print, or piece of music. After "reading" the common text "like a love letter", several questions are posed -- primarily open-ended, world connection, universal theme, and literary analysis questions. Such questions allow students to think critically, analyze multiple meanings in text, and express ideas with clarity and confidence. After all, a certain degree of emotional safety is felt by participants when they understand that this format is based on dialogue and not discussion/debate.

Dialogue is exploratory and involves the suspension of biases and prejudices. Discussion/debate is a transfer of information designed to win an argument and bring closure. Americans are great at discussion/debate. We do not dialogue well. However, once teachers and students learn to dialogue, they find that the ability to ask meaningful questions that stimulate thoughtful interchanges of ideas is more important than "the answer."

Participants in a Socratic Seminar respond to one another with respect by carefully listening instead of interrupting. Students are encouraged to "paraphrase" essential elements of another's ideas before responding, either in support of or in disagreement. Members of the dialogue look each other in the "eyes" and use each other names. This simple act of socialization reinforces appropriate behaviors and promotes team building.

### **BEFORE SOCRATIC SEMINAR**

1. Read the text and "Talk to the Text" (10 pts)
2. Fill out the Socratic Seminar Preparation Worksheet (10 pts)
3. Fill out the Socratic Seminar Questions Worksheet (10 pts)

### **DURING SOCRATIC SEMINAR**

1. Have Text, Socratic Seminar Preparation Worksheet, and Socratic Seminar Questions Worksheet out on your desk.
2. If in the inner circle, you will participate in a dialogue during the Socratic Seminar. (30 pts)
3. If in the outer circle, you will be assigned a partner that you will observe when they are in the inner circle. Fill out the observation form. You must turn in the form that you filled out for your partner. (20 pts)

### **AFTER SOCRATIC SEMINAR**

1. Socratic Seminar Debrief (10 pts)
2. Socratic Reflective Writing (10 pts)

Underlined papers must be stapled and turned in (in the order above). **(100 pts total)**

## Dialogue and Debate

| Dialogue  | Debate and/or Discussion  |
|---|---|
| Dialogue is collaborative; multiple sides work toward a shared understanding.   | Debate is competitive and/or oppositional; 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 point of view.   | Debate affirms a participant's point of view.   |
| Dialogue creates an open-minded attitude; an openness to being wrong and an openness to change.                                       | Debate defends assumptions as truths.   |
| In dialogue, one submits one's best thinking, expecting that other people's reflections will help improve it rather than threaten it. | In debate, one submits one's best thinking and defends it against challenge to show that it is right. |
| Dialogue calls for temporarily suspending of one's beliefs.   | Debate, calls for investing wholeheartedly in one's beliefs.  |
| In dialogue, one searches for strengths in all positions.   | In debate, one searches for weaknesses in the other positions.  |
| Dialogue respects all the other participants and seeks not to alienate or offend.   | Debate rebuts contrary positions and <i>may</i> 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 somebody already has.                                       |
| Dialogue remains open-ended.  | Debate demands a conclusion.  |
| Dialogue is mutual inquiry; collective knowledge.   | Discussion is individual opinions; individual knowledge.  |

# BEFORE SOCRATIC SEMINAR

## Reading the Text

1. Read through the entire selection without stopping to think about any particular section. Pay attention to your first impression as to what the reading is about. Look for the main points and then go back and reread it.
2. The second time you read it, talk to the text.
  - a. Underline major points or forceful statements.
  - b. Put vertical lines at the margins to emphasize a statement already underlined or a passage too long to be underlined.
  - c. Put an (\*) to emphasize major points.
  - d. Put numbers in margin to indicate sequence of points.
  - e. Put numbers of other pages where point is also mentioned.
  - f. Circle key words or phrases.
  - g. Write in the margin questions that come to mind.

**Fill out the Socratic Seminar Preparation Worksheet**

**Fill out the Socratic Seminar Questions Worksheet**

**Socratic Seminar Preparation**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_

Name of Article/Reading: \_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_

**I. Reading and Understanding**

A. Read the prompt/article individually.

B. Highlight or underline at least one main idea per paragraph. Summarize main points below:

Paragraph #1:

Paragraph #2:

Paragraph #3:

Paragraph #4:

Paragraph #5:

Paragraph #6:

Paragraph #7:

Paragraph #8:

Paragraph #9:

Paragraph #10:

C. Circle or Highlight any unfamiliar words or phrases. Write them down below with definitions:

D. Summarize below the main points of the reading.

E. Write down a minimum of 6 questions about what you have read. (Use 2 level 1, 2, and 3's)

1. L1:

2. L1:

3. L2:

4. L2:

5. L3:

6. L3:

### AVID Socratic Seminar Questions

| <b>Opening Questions</b>  | <b>Core Questions</b>   | <b>Closing</b>  |
|---|---|---|
| (Level 1)   | (Level 2)   | (Level 3)   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relates to text</li> <li>• Uses concrete examples</li> <li>• Open-ended</li> <li>• Is not a yes or no question</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops theme</li> <li>• Leads into the abstract</li> <li>• Leads to further questions</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relates to self</li> <li>• Relates to reality</li> </ul>   |
| <b>EXAMPLES</b>   | <b>EXAMPLES</b>   | <b>EXAMPLES</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does the author mean when he says... “with torn and bleeding hearts we smile?”</li> <li>• When do you wear a mask?</li> <li>• When do masks “grin and lie?”</li> <li>• What would make the author say “But let the world dream otherwise.”</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a time when we can see below the mask people wear?</li> <li>• What is the purpose of wearing a mask?</li> <li>• What is your response to people who wear masks?</li> <li>• Can masks belie the wearer?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think was the wisdom that the author was trying to impart to you?</li> <li>• What in your thinking has changed about the way you treat people who wear masks?</li> </ul> |

**AVID Socratic Seminar Questions**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title of Seminar: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

|   | Opening Questions<br>(Level 1) | Core Questions<br>(Level 2) | Closing Questions<br>(Level 3) |
|---|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 |                                |                             |                                |
| 2 |                                |                             |                                |
| 3 |                                |                             |                                |
| 4 |                                |                             |                                |
| 5 |                                |                             |                                |

Reflections: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# DURING SOCRATIC SEMINAR

## Socratic Seminar Rules

- Discuss, do not debate.
- Be courteous, NO PUTDOWNS.
- Goal is the pursuit of deeper understanding.
- Respect different thoughts and ideas.

## Socratic Seminar Tips

### Your Goal is to Understand...

- the ideas,
- issues,
- concepts,
- and values reflected in the text.

### Protocol:

- Refer to the text when needed during the discussion. This is not a test of memory.
- Do not stay confused; ask for clarification of both ideas and definitions.
- Discuss ideas, rather than other's opinions.
- It's OK to pass when your turn comes; participate at another time instead.
- Do not participate if you are not prepared.
- Stick to the point currently under discussion; write down inspirational ideas so you can bring them up at a more appropriate time in the conversation.
- Listen carefully, especially when you are waiting to speak, as they may be moving on to another point.
- Speak up so that all participants can hear you; don't speak while others are.
- Remember that this is a conversation between students, not between student and teacher.

### Basic steps to forming opinions:

1. What is it that I think I know? Or that the author thinks he/she knows? Can I restate his/her ideas in my own words? What needs clarification? Definition?
2. Is it true? Why do I think so? What else do I need to know or understand before deciding?
3. What inferences can be drawn from this? What are the implications of this? So what? How does this change things?
4. What are the underlying assumptions with this claim?
5. What are the reasons I believe this? How do I know what I think I know? Is the evidence credible?
6. How does this happen in other situations? In the world? How does this connect to other stuff?
7. Can I think of a counter example? When this doesn't happen? Why doesn't it happen? Are there internal contradictions?

## Seminar Questioning Cheat Sheet

### Clarification Questions:

- 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?
- Let me see if I understand you; do you mean \_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_?
- Jane, would you summarize in your own words what Juan has said?... Juan, is that what you meant?
- Could you give me an example?
- Would this be an example: \_\_\_\_\_?
- Could you explain that further?
- Could you expand upon that?

### Questions About the Initial Question or Issue:

- How can we find out?
- What does this question assume?
- Would \_\_\_\_\_ put the question differently?
- How could someone settle this question?
- Can we break this question down at all?
- Is the question clear? Do we understand it?
- Is this question easy or hard to answer? Why?
- Does this question ask us to evaluate something?
- Do we all agree that this is the question?
- To answer this question, what question 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 \_?
- How would \_\_\_\_\_ put this issue?
- Why is this question important?
- Does this question lead to other questions or issues?

### Assumption Probes:

- What are you assuming?
- What is Erika assuming?
- What could we assume instead?
- You seem to be assuming \_\_\_\_\_. Do I understand you correctly?
- All of your reasoning depends 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?
- Why would someone make this assumption?

### Reason and Evidence Probes:

- What would be an example?
- How do you know?
- Why do you think that is true?
- Do you have any evidence for that?
- What difference does that make?
- What are your reasons for saying that?
- What other information do we need?
- Could you explain your reason to use?



**Reason and Evidence Probes (continued):**

- Are these reasons adequate?
- Can you explain how you logically got from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_?
- Do you see any difficulties with their reasoning here?
- Why did you say that?
- What led you to that belief?
- How does that apply to this case?
- What would change your mind?
- But is that good evidence to believe that?
- Is there a reason to doubt that evidence?
- Who is in a position to know if that is so?
- 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 find out whether that is true?

**Origin or Source Questions:**

- Where did you get this idea?
- Do your friends or family feel the same way?
- Has the media influenced you?
- Have you always felt this way?
- What caused you to feel this way?
- Did you originate this idea or get it from someone else?

**Implication and Consequence Probes:**

- What are you implying by that?
- When you say \_\_\_\_\_, are you implying \_\_\_\_\_?
- But if that happened, what else would happen as a result? Why?
- What effect would that have?
- Would that necessarily happen or only probably happen?
- What is the probability of this result?
- What is an alternative?
- If this and this are the case, then what else must also be true?
- If we say that this is unethical, how about that?

**Viewpoint Questions:**

- 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?
- What might someone who believed \_\_\_\_\_ think?
- Can/did anyone see this another way?
- What would someone who disagrees say?
- What is an alternative?
- How are Hillary and Tom's ideas alike? Different?

**Observation Form  
Inner-Outer Discussion Circle**

|   |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|---|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Your Name:  | Partner: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>DIRECTIONS:</b> Each time your partner does one of the following, put a check in the box.  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>SPEAKS IN THE DISCUSSION:</b>  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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| <b>LOOKS AT THE PERSON WHO IS SPEAKING:</b>   |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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| <b>REFERS TO THE TEXT:</b>  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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| <b>ASKS A QUESTION:</b>   |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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| <b>RESPONDS TO ANOTHER SPEAKER:</b>   |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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| <b>INTERRUPTS ANOTHER SPEAKER:</b>  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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| <b>ENGAGES IN SIDE CONVERSATION:</b>  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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| <b>AFTER DISCUSSION:</b> What is the most interesting thing your partner said?  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|   |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>AFTER DISCUSSION:</b> What would you like to have said in the discussion?  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|   |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_

## AFTER SOCRATIC SEMINAR

**Directions:** Answer the following questions in the Socratic Seminar Debrief using complete sentences. After the debriefing discussion, answer the Socratic Reflective Writing Questions using complete sentences.

### Socratic Seminar Debrief

1. How did you feel about the seminar?
2. Reflect on your own experience.
3. If you changed your opinion during the discussion, what changed it?
4. Using your own knowledge on this topic or issue, create a question to start a seminar.
5. What was the best part of the seminar? The worst part?
6. What was your overall opinion of the Socratic Seminar?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_

### **Socratic Reflective Writing**

1. What is one thing you liked that you said?
2. What is one point someone else said that you agree with?
3. What was the most interesting question?
4. What was the most interesting idea to come from a participant?
5. What was the best thing that you observed?
6. What was the most troubling thing that you observed?
7. What do you think should be done differently in the next seminar?
8. As a Socratic Seminar participant, what area of the process will you work on for next time?
9. What new questions arose as a result of the discussion and debrief?

# QUESTIONING STRATEGIES

*Plan key questions to provide the structure and direction needed in your lesson.  
Spontaneous questions that emerge are fine, but the overall direction of the discussion  
should be for the most part planned.*

## **CHUNKING** questions

- How did you do that?
- Why did that happen?
- What happened about...?
- What, specifically,...
- Tell me more about...
- What does this mean?
- Let's look at the bigger picture...
- How does that relate to...?
- What are we trying to achieve here?
- Who is this for? What do they really want?
- What is the root cause of all this?

## **SOCRATIC** questions

- Why are you saying that?
- What exactly does this mean?
- How does this relate to what we have been talking about?
- What is the nature of ...?
- What do we already know about this?
- Can you give me an example?
- Are you saying ... or ... ?
- Can you rephrase that, please?
- What else could we assume?
- You seem to be assuming ... ?
- How did you choose those assumptions?
- Please explain why/how ... ?
- How can you verify or disprove that assumption?

- What would happen if ... ?
- Do you agree or disagree with?
- Why is that happening?
- How do you know this?
- Show me ... ?
- Can you give me an example?
- What do you think causes ... ?
- What is the nature of this?
- Are these reasons good enough?
- Why is ... happening?
- Why? (keep asking it -- you'll never get past a few times)
- What evidence is there to support what you are saying?
- On what authority are you basing your argument?
- Does this seem reasonable?
- What alternative ways of looking at this are there?
- Why is it ... necessary?
- Who benefits from this?
- What is the difference between... and...?
- Why is it better than ...?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of...?
- How are ... and ... similar?
- What would ... say about it?
- What if you compared .. and... ?
- Then what would happen?
- What are the consequences of that assumption?
- How could ... be used to ... ?

# QUESTIONING STRATEGIES

*As teachers we tend to ask many of our questions in the "knowledge" category. Almost 80% to 90% of the time. These questions are not bad, but using them all the time is. Try to utilize higher order level of questions. These questions require much more "brain power" and a more extensive and elaborate answer. Remember Bloom's Taxonomy*

## KNOWLEDGE

- remembering
- memorizing
- recognizing
- recalling identification
- recalling information
- who, what, when, where, how
- describe

## COMPREHENSION

- interpreting
- translating from one medium to another
- describing in one's own words
- organization and selection of facts and ideas
- retell in your own words

## APPLICATION

- problem solving
- applying information to produce some result
- use of facts, rules and principles
- how is ... an example of ...?
- how is ... related to ...?
- why is ... significant?

## ANALYSIS

- subdividing something to show how it is put together
- finding the underlying structure of a communication
- identifying motives

- separation of a whole into component parts
- what are the parts or features of?
- classify ... according to ...
- outline/diagram
- compare/contrast with
- what evidence can you list for ...?

## SYNTHESIS

- creating a unique, original product that may be in verbal form or may be a physical object
- combination of ideas to form a new what would you predict/infer from
- what ideas can you add to
- how would you create/design a new
- what might happen if you combined
- what solutions would you suggest for ?

## EVALUATION

- making value decisions about issues
- resolving controversies or differences of opinion
- development of opinions, judgments or decisions
- do you agree that ...?
- what do you think about ...?
- what is the most important ...?
- place the following in order of
- how would you decide about ...?
- what criteria would you use to assess?