

Socratic Seminar

WHAT

- Student-led scholarly, formal discussion based on information read and/or viewed in which student opinions are shared, proven, refuted, and refined through dialogue with other students
- Collaborative, intellectual dialogue
- Closely listening to the comments of others
- Questioning and examining issues and principals and articulating different points of view intelligently and civilly

WHY

- Provides opportunities for critical readings of texts
- Teaches respect for diverse ideas, people, and practices
- Creates a community of inquiry
- Facilitates a deeper understanding of the ideas and values in the text through shared dialogue
- Develops critical thinking, problem solving, speaking, and listening skills
- Clarifies one's ideas, ethics, and values
- Encourages divergent thinking

HOW

- Prepare ahead of time by annotating the texts (or take notes on a media source viewed). Do not participate if you are not prepared—making this live event one you cannot do late nor redo. (*Snacks/drinks to share with the class are optional. It's more fun to dialogue while snacking!*)
- Refer to the text when needed during the dialogue (if a text is used). A seminar is not a test of memory. You are not “learning a subject”; your goal is to understand the ideas, issues, and values reflected in the text and/or to critically consider an idea presented to you.
- It is okay to “pass” when asked to contribute, but you must participate at some point during the dialogue if you want credit. (Ideally you contribute intelligently at least twice.)
- Do not stay confused; ask for clarification.
- Stick to the dialogue’s current point; make notes about ideas you want to revisit later in the dialogue.
- Take turns speaking, and monitor your “air time,” so you don’t monopolize the dialogue.
- Listen actively, carefully, and respectfully; be sensitive to other people’s thoughts by not interrupting them.
- No sidebar conversations; speak to the whole group.
- Speak up so everyone can hear you.
- Be courageous in sharing your own thoughts/views, but also be open to changing your views based on new evidence. This is not a debate; think aloud and exchange ideas openly.
- Talk to each other—not just to the teacher/leader.
- Discuss the ideas rather than each other’s opinions.

