

SOCRATIC SEMINAR

Definition: A Socratic Discussion is a text-based discussion (book, story, article, film, event, theatre, photo, painting,) “the distinctive contribution of which is to set alongside one interpretation the several interpretations of other participants, thereby challenging one’s own view of the matter with those of others” (Bridges, 1979). The aim is a mutual search for a clearer, wider, and deeper (“enlarged”) understanding of the ideas, issues, and values in the “text” at hand. It is shared inquiry, not debate; there is no opponent save the perplexity all persons face when we try to understand something that is both difficult and important (Walter Parker, Ph. D.).

Purpose: To achieve an enlarged understanding of the ideas, issues and values in the text.

Focus on the questions (Dropping Knowledge = Ask in order to understand, answer in order to share):

- A. Literal Questions: (factual) one correct answer available for all to see.
 1. What happened?
 2. Who...?
 3. When...?
- B. Analytical Questions: (genuine) participants make arguments supported by evidence in the text.
 1. What is the most important passage (word)?
 2. What does _____ mean?
 3. What would be a better title?
- C. Evaluative Questions: participants refer to their own experiences and values rather than the text.
 1. Do you agree with the author?
 2. Is it right (true; just; good) that...?
- D. Debrief:
 1. Was your understanding of the text enlarged?
 2. What is one thing you noticed about the seminar?

Directions: I will divide the class into three groups. You will each be responsible for completing your “Golden Ticket” on a particular chapter of the novel. You will prepare your answers for the discussion during block day this week.

On the block day this week, there will be an inner and outer circle. The first group will sit in the inner circle and have their discussion while the second group will sit on the outside grading someone on the inside. You must bring four questions for the discussion in order to participate, and you must speak more than once in order to receive credit during the discussion. At the end of the discussion, the first group will sit on the outside while the second group will sit on the inside. The following are expectations for you depending on where you sit:

INNER CIRCLE RESPONSIBILITIES

- Speak, but do not dominate
- Ask *and* answer questions
- Listen and stay silent when not speaking
- Be respectful
- Provide evidence from the text to support assertions
- Use each other’s names
- Address each other on the inside, not the teacher
- NO ARGUING!

OUTER CIRCLE RESPONSIBILITIES

- Stay silent
- Pay attention to the discussion occurring
- Take notes on the discussion
- Grade someone’s performance on the inside

Expectations for successful seminar:

- ✓ Ask thought-provoking and complex questions during the discussion that seek to explore issues in the text.
- ✓ Respond to other students’ questions and demonstrate complexity of thought.
- ✓ Examine issues thoughtfully, develop insightful discussion points, and add depth to the overall seminar.
- ✓ Speak multiple times but do not dominate the discussion.
- ✓ Have an attitude that is genuine, respectful, lively, positive, and engaging.
- ✓ Address peers by using their names and encourages others to participate.
- ✓ Demonstrate a thorough critical understanding of the novel by providing direct evidence from the text as support.