

SOCRATIC SEMINAR GUIDELINES

Before the Socratic Seminar

Read and prepare your text before the seminar using the critical reading process.

1. Make sure you understand your **purpose for reading**. Follow the teacher's reading prompt, if provided.
2. **Pre-read** by previewing the text and determining how it is structured, thinking about any background information you already know or you discussed in class, and noticing the questions you have before you read.
3. **Interact with the text** so you read it closely. This includes:
 - Marking the text:
 1. Number the paragraphs
 2. Circle key terms
 3. Underline important parts of the text that are connected to your purpose for reading
4. **Extend beyond the text** by writing several open-ended, higher-level questions that have no single right answer and will encourage discussion. Areas to consider for questions:

about a situation described in the text, etc.

Ask about viewpoint or perspectives (realist, pessimist, optimist, etc.)

Examine the title, or tone of the text, or connect to current issues, theme, etc.

Ask questions that explore your own interpretation of the reading.

does it mean

During the Seminar

Use all of your close reading to participate in a discussion that helps you understand the text at a deeper level. Be ready to discuss the text like the scholar you are!

1. Be prepared to participate and ask good questions. The quality of the seminar is diminished when participants speak without preparation.
2. Show respect for differing ideas, thoughts, and values--no put-downs or sarcasm.
3. Allow each speaker enough time to begin and finish his or her thoughts
4. Involve others in the discussion, and ask others to elaborate on their responses (use Academic Language Scripts).

5. Build on what others say: ask questions to probe deeper, clarify, paraphrase and add, synthesize a variety of different views in your own summary. Examples:
 - Ask questions to probe deeper:** Juan makes me think of another point: why would the author include .? or Sonya, what makes you think that the author meant ?
 - Clarify:** I think what Stephanie is trying to say is . or I m not sure I understand what you are saying, Jeff. What is
 - Paraphrase and add:** Lupe said that . I agree with her and also think .
 - Synthesize:** Based on the ideas from Tim, Shanequia, and Maya, it seems like we all think that the author is .
6. Use your best active listening skills: nod, make eye contact, lean forward, provide feedback, and listen carefully to others.
7. Participate openly and keep your mind open to new ideas and possibilities.
8. Refer to the text often, and give evidence and examples to support your response. Example:
9. Discuss the ideas of the text, not each other s opinions or personal experiences.
10. Take notes about important points you want to remember or new questions you want to ask.

After the Seminar

1. **Summarize:** Use writing to think about and **summarize the content** of the seminar, especially to capture new understandings of the text.
 - Examples of Summary Questions/Prompts:**
 - Based on this seminar, what are the most important points about this text?
 - How does my understanding of the text connect to other things I
 - What major ideas do I better understand about this text after the seminar?
2. **Reflect:** Use writing to think about and **reflect on the process** of the seminar--both your contribution and the group's process.
 - Examples of Reflection Questions/Prompts:**
 - How did I contribute to this discussion what did I add to it?
 - What questions do I now have as a result of this seminar?
 - Who helped move the dialogue forward? How?
 - At what point did the seminar lapse into debate/discussion rather than dialogue? How did the group handle this?
 - Did anyone dominate the conversation? How did the group handle this?
 - What would I like to do differently as a participant the next time I am in a seminar?
3. **Set Goals:** Be prepared to set goals for improvement in the next seminar.
 - Examples of Goal-setting Questions/Prompts:**
 - What will I do differently to make the next seminar better?
 - Two things I will do in the next seminar to be a
 - To be better prepared for the seminar, I will do _____ with the text.