***Socratic Seminar Planning***

Objectives of the Socratic Seminar method:

* Foster independent thought in students
* Engage students actively in discourse surrounding content
* Encourage deep dives into text
* Promote deep understanding by providing students with open-ended questions
* Promote social awareness and norms of a civilized discussion

What Socratic Seminar is NOT:

* a debate or argument-no one attempts to persuade others but rather speaks openly about the topic
* Teacher centered-this is a student centered activity facilitated by the teacher
* A way to deliver a “right” answer-students are not receptacles for information but rather active participants in intense discussion
* Just for English classes-any content area can incorporate Socratic Seminar into the classroom

***CCSS Standards Covered during a Socratic Seminar:***

**Reading**

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

**Writing**

9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

**Speaking and Listening**

1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

3. Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

6. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

**Background of the Socratic Method (**[**StudyGuide.org**](http://www.studyguide.org/socratic_seminar.htm)**)**

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. Therefore, he regularly engaged his pupils in dialogues by responding to their questions with questions, instead of answers. 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", open-ended questions are posed.  
  
Open-ended 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.

***How to Plan for a Socratic Seminar:***

1. Locate a complex text that is worth spending a few days on. Consider choosing a slightly higher lexile level than what the students are accustomed to reading.

2. Divide the class into small group teams (optimally 4 students per team). The students will discuss in small groups before engaging in the whole-class Socratic seminar.

3. Prepare a list of text-dependent questions to be used during small group collaboration time. Students will have a general sense of what types of evidence they are to locate in the text. Consider presenting each group with a different set of questions to increase the number of contributions to the seminar.

4. Create a set of norms (ground rules) for the seminar and small group discussions. Focus on reading the text carefully before discussions, listening to others without interrupting, speaking clearly and loudly, and being considerate and respectful of the ideas presented by others. It is also a good idea to limit the amount of time each student spends talking (approximately 2 minutes per speaker).

***Planning Outline***

Title of Text: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Lexile \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Content Standards (GLE’s) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

I. Reading the text

Time allocated for independent reading: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Minutes

Focus Areas: Check all those that apply

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Purpose | * Imagery |
| * Theme | * Irony |
| * Symbolism | * Metaphors |
| * Characterization | * Plot |
| * Conflict | * Tone |
| * Figurative language | * Research |
| * Purpose | * Data |
| * Theme | * Implications |
| * Other\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | * Other \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

Instruction (How are you going to assign this reading? What are you going to say to the students?)

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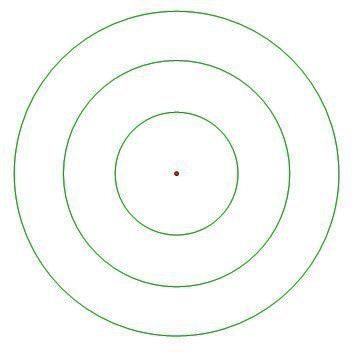
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II. Text-dependent questions: Create questions that force students to analyze the text and dive deeply into it. Consider the following:

* Think about what you think is the most important learning to be drawn from the text. Note this as raw material for the culminating assignment and the focus point for other activities to build toward.
* Determine the key ideas of the text.  Create a series of questions structured to bring the reader to an understanding of these.
* Locate the most powerful academic words in the text and integrate questions and discussions that explore their role into the set of questions above.
* Take stock of what standards are being addressed in the series of questions above. Then decide if any other standards are suited to being a focus for this text. If so, form questions that exercise those standards.
* Consider if there are any other academic words that students would profit from focusing on. Build discussion planning or additional questions to focus attention on them.
* Find the sections of the text that will present the greatest difficulty and craft questions that support students in mastering these sections. These could be sections with difficult syntax, particularly dense information, and tricky transitions or places that offer a variety of possible inferences.

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3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
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6. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
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10. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
11. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
12. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
13. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
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IV. Preparing for the Whole Class Discussion

a. Arrange the desks/chairs in concentric circles. 

b. Place the designee from each group in the middle. They will begin the discussion.

c. Place the remaining students in the subsequent outer circles.

d. Each student should have a copy of the text. It is a good idea to number the paragraphs (or the lines) so that when a reference to the text is made, the other students can follow in their text.

III. Small Groups

Responding to the Text-Dependent Questions

Divide students into groups of 4. Assign each group to answer the text-dependent questions as a team. Suggestion: use Kagan© Round Table. Each group has one sheet containing the questions. One student answers the first question and writes his or her response on the paper and then discusses the question and answer with the other teammates. When the first question is completed, the paper is passed to the next student who continues the process. Continue until all questions are answered and discussed.

Preparing for the whole class Socratic Seminar

Each group will write talking points centered in evidence from the text to be discussed in the seminar. They should include enough information to speak for at least 2 minutes. Each group will designate one member to initiate the seminar.

V. Engaging in the Seminar

* The teacher will act as a facilitator. The teacher can clarify concepts or questions, but the majority of the talking needs to come from the students.
* Set a time limit for each speaker. Recommended: 2 minutes max
* The designees in the middle will kick-off the seminar by presenting their talking points.
* After each designee has presented, the discussion is now open to the remaining students who address the points made in the opening. The order of the point elaborations do not matter.

VI. Post Seminar Reflective Writing

After the seminar, each individual student writes a reflection about the text and the seminar. Encourage students to use specific examples using other students’ names and evidence from the text. The length of the reflection is at the discretion of the teacher.

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