

Socratic Seminar

EXPECTATIONS

The Socratic Seminar is named after the Greek philosopher Socrates, who believed in the power of social learning and deliberate discussion. Socrates believed that humans learned best from questioning and discussion. He believed discussion helped individuals critically think through complex ideas and learn better than they could on their own. You can think of a Socratic Seminar as an “intellectual discussion,” but you can also see it as a conversation where you “think out loud” and “talk it out.” Essentially, it is a **student-led discussion over a text or big idea**. Instead of the teacher facilitating the discussion by asking questions, you will take charge of your own learning in this activity. It is a student-centered and social approach to learning, which means you have greater freedom, but also more responsibility. This means you and your peers must prepare for the seminar, or else the seminar will not work. Before the seminar, you will create questions, collect evidence, and prepare notes. The seminar will be as meaningful as you and your peers make it!

Focus Skills

Socratic Seminars require the use of many essential skills:

- Participating in collaborative discussions
- Analyzing multiple interpretations
- Analyzing themes
- Analyzing author's choices
- Analyzing literary structure
- Analyzing word choice
- Synthesizing texts and ideas
- Citing textual evidence

CHECKLIST

- ✓ Carefully read the text. Re-read parts, if necessary.
- ✓ THINK! Yes, this gets its own spot on the checklist. 😊
- ✓ Familiarize yourself with the question types/examples.
- ✓ Brainstorm questions.
- ✓ Find and select evidence.
- ✓ Prepare notes in response to your questions.
- ✓ Be ready to discuss!

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QUESTION TYPES

Real life QUESTION

A real life question connects the text to the real world. These questions ask for specific connections or pose an essential question to readers using a "What would you do" approach.

Big Ideas QUESTION

A big ideas questions address the "big ideas" of the text. Consider ideas, themes, and motifs. Then, ask a question that asks the author's message or purpose about those ideas. Usually, these questions begin with "What," but they could also ask "How" or "Why."

Open-Ended QUESTION

An open-ended question does not have a definitive answer. It requires insightful interpretation of the text. This is a question that different people would answer in different ways, with different pieces of evidence and different lenses of thinking. Usually, these questions start with "How" or "Why."

Literary Analysis QUESTION

A literary analysis question requires the examination of author's choices. Consider characters, plot, ideas, and structure. This question should ask why the author made a specific choice and what the impact/effect of the choice was. Usually, these questions start with "Why did [author] choose to..."

Quote Dissection QUESTION

A dissection question requires the analysis of an essential quote--but not one that is straightforward and easy to comprehend. The quote you choose should be "open to interpretation," with complex word choice. Usually, these questions start with "What does [author] mean by..."

Text to Text QUESTION

A text-to-text question encourages a comparison to a different text or idea studied in class. Think about a thematically relevant text. This could be a song, poem, article, etc. Whatever text you choose, you must select a key excerpt/quote that will serve as the basis for comparison, so that others can analyze the connections.



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QUESTION EXAMPLES

Real life QUESTION

Example: What would you do if you could change/ create a law?

Big Ideas QUESTION

Example: Why is this lesson meaningful and useful to your everyday life?

Open-Ended QUESTION

Example: How did going to school shape you as a person?

Literary Analysis QUESTION

Example: How do the characters in the story develop or enhance the theme?

Quote Dissection QUESTION

Example: What does Shakespeare mean by saying “Me, poor man, my library Was dukedom large enough?”

Text to Text QUESTION

Example: How does the quote “How features are abroad I am skillless of, but, by my modesty, The jewel in my dower, I would not wish Any companion in the world but you,

Real life QUESTION

- 1) What would you do if you were taken captive by a Native American tribe, like Mrs. Mary Rowlandson, or tattooed by a tribe, like Olive Oatman?
- 2) What would you do if you realized that you believed in the stereotypical single story?
- 3) What would you do if you were shipwrecked and stranded on an island like Ferdinand from *The Tempest*?

Big Ideas QUESTION

- 1) What does Shakespeare's theme of "The Difficulty of Distinguishing 'Men' from 'Monsters'" say about human behavior?
- 2) How does a person's beliefs and experiences influence their opinion on a topic?
- 3) Why is it important to consider the idea of a single story when reading and interpreting the accounts of Ms. Mary Rowlandson and Olive Oatman?

Open-Ended QUESTION

- 1) How does the idea of power play a role in *The Tempest*?
- 2) How does Prospero's treatment of Caliban (*The Tempest*) relate to the Native American's treatment of Ms. Mary Rowlandson and Olive Oatman?
- 3) Why is it important to learn about human behavior in different cultures and countries, such as those described in the Pulitzer Center Stories?

Literary Analysis QUESTION

- 1) Why did Shakespeare choose to incorporate the human desire for power into his play *The Tempest*?
- 2) Why did Ms. Mary Rowlandson and Olive Oatman repeatedly describe the Native Americans as brutal, inhumane, savages?
- 3) Why did Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie choose to incorporate personal experiences relating to her idea of "The Danger of a Single Story," such as her college professor believing that all Africans were starving and poor?

Quote Dissection QUESTION

- 1) What does Shakespeare mean by having Prospero say "The rarer action is In virtue than in vengeance? (Act 5 Scene 1 Page 2 Lines 27-28)"
- 2) What does Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie mean by "the danger of the single story?"
- 3) What does Chi Yin Sim infer by calling the Chinese people living underground the city of Beijing "The Beijing's Rat Tribe?"

Text to Text QUESTION

- 1) How does the quote "How features are abroad, I am skillless of, but, by my modesty, The jewel in my dower, I would not wish, Any companion in the world but you, Nor can imagination form a shape, Besides yourself to like of. (III.ii.)(From *The Tempest*)" and the love story of Miranda and Ferdinand from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* relate to other Shakespearean love stories?
- 2) How does the quotes "Oh the roaring, and singing and dancing, and yelling of those black creatures in the night, which made the place a lively resemblance of hell" and "the savageness and brutishness of this barbarous enemy" from Ms. Mary Rowlandson's narrative relate to Olive Oatman's narrative?

Additional QUESTIONS

- 1) How does the personality of each character from *The Tempest* affect the outcome of the story?
- 2) What is the conspiracy behind Olive Oatman's chin tattoo?

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SELF-EVALUATION

For each category, rate yourself on a scale of 1-10. Then, explain and reflect upon your rating.

Discussion

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Did you ask or respond to many questions, ask follow-up questions, and move the discussion forward?

Yes, I believe that I did a great job asking and responding to questions, asking follow-up questions, and moving the discussion forward both when I was a participant and leader. During the discussion, I asked at least one question, responded to four different people, and made sure to move the discussion forward by calling on others to break the silence.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Analysis

Did you offer meaningful analysis of the text?

Yes, I believe that I offered a meaningful analysis of the text, both in the preparation worksheet and socratic seminar. In the preparation worksheet, I analyzed multiple quotes from the texts to answer the literary analysis questions. In the socratic seminar, I analyzed the text to answer questions thoroughly, along with making follow-up answers to others.

What was the most meaningful, interesting question asked? Why?

In my opinion, the most meaningful, interesting question asked was "How does *The Tempest* shed light on the idea of colonialism?" Colonialism was a major event in history and theme of *The Tempest*, and it is important to acknowledge that when in power, a person (such as Prospero and the colonist) can lose their morals and focus on their own greed. This relates to the second theme of "the Difficulty of Distinguishing 'Men' from 'Monsters.'"

Considering the seminar as a whole, how well do you think it went? Explain.

As a whole, I think that this seminar was very useful. I learned a lot about the element of analysis, along with the perspectives of my classmates in the literature we read. I really liked having leaders for the seminar because it filled the silence and allowed the discussion to flow.

Take note...

What will you do differently for the next Socratic Seminar? Explain.

During next Socratic Seminar, I will try harder to ask and answer questions. Although it may be difficult to participate in a virtual Socratic Seminar, I will continue to do my best because I want to improve and become the best student I can be.



RUBRIC

	4	3	2	1
DISCUSSION	I ask or respond to many questions, ask follow-up questions, and move the discussion forward.	I ask or respond to questions, but may not ask follow-up questions and move the discussion forward.	I ask or respond to few questions.	I ask or respond to one question.
ANALYSIS	I offer meaningful analysis of the text.	I offer sufficient analysis of the text.	I offer limited analysis of the text.	I offer summary, rather than analysis.
HIGHER ORDER THINKING	I demonstrate higher-order thinking about the text and questions, going beyond what was taught.	I demonstrate higher-order thinking about the text and questions.	I demonstrate more lower-order thinking than higher-order thinking.	I demonstrate lower-order thinking.
TEXTUAL EVIDENCE	I refer directly to the text (quotes/page #s), meaningfully and purposefully.	I refer directly to the text (quotes/page #s). Evidence is not as strong as it could be.	I refer indirectly to the text (no quotes/page #s).	I rely more on my opinion than the text.
LISTENING	I show active listening throughout the entire seminar.	I show adequate listening.	I show some active listening but I am not consistent.	I show poor listening.

TOTAL: / 20 points

COMMENTS: