

# UNIT TWELVE: SOCRATIC SEMINAR

## Introduction

Socrates believed that enabling students to think for themselves was more important than filling their heads with “right answers.” In a Socratic Seminar, participants seek deeper understanding of complex ideas through rigorously thoughtful dialogue. A Socratic Seminar fosters active learning as participants explore and evaluate the ideas, issues, and values in a particular text. The skills that students develop through participation in Socratic Seminars are crucial for college success.

This unit includes step-by-step guidelines for implementing Socratic Seminars in your AVID classroom including several pages of information to help you prepare yourself and your students to engage in meaningful and productive Socratic Seminars. Successful Socratic Seminars are dependent upon *groups* of students developing skills together over time. Your first attempts may not be entirely satisfactory to you or your students, and it is important that you leave time at the end of each seminar to debrief and reflect on the process itself and the skills that the group is developing. The group may set goals for the next seminar. Activity sheets to support this process are included.

It is imperative that students understand several concepts before you attempt a Socratic Seminar. These include:

- the difference between dialogue and debate
- the four elements of Socratic Seminar
- the role of the seminar leader
- the role and responsibilities of the participants
- the guidelines for seminar behavior

Be sure that you use the information in this unit to adequately prepare your students for the Socratic Seminar before you begin. Many AVID teachers use Philosophical Chairs as a skill-building activity in preparation for Socratic Seminar. This is an excellent strategy, but it is also important to distinguish for students the differences between the two activities.

Socratic Seminar is a necessary element in every AVID program, and successful seminars have been implemented in AVID classrooms at every grade level. Your team of AVID elective teachers should decide when the implementation of this strategy fits best into your articulated curriculum. The following are suggestions for grade level expectations and differentiation.

### ***6th/7th/8th Grade***

- Use Philosophical Chairs to develop students’ skills before beginning Socratic Seminar.
- Select a text that is short, no more than one to two pages.

- Read aloud the text in class; then have students read it again silently.
- Use an overhead transparency to model how one marks or “prepares” the text for Socratic Seminar; allow time in class for students to develop this skill and collaborate with you and other students; this may include identifying words they do not know, underlining or highlighting phrases they believe are important, summarizing important ideas or arguments in the margins, and writing questions in the margins.
- After completing the reading and “preparing the text,” have students practice together writing opening questions for the Socratic Seminar. Provide modeling and share questions in class. Be sure that the questions are higher-level questions.
- If possible, have students observe a Socratic Seminar being conducted with older and/or experienced students.

### ***9th/10th Grade***

- Depending on the skill level and experience of your students, you may still use Philosophical Chairs to maintain or reinforce discussion skills and foster fluency in speaking.
- Begin to use longer texts of three to five pages.
- Continue to model the marking of the text in class, but only model one or two paragraphs as opposed to the entire text.
- Decrease the amount of time you allow in class to read the text together or silently. By the end of 10th grade, students should be expected to read and mark the text independently as homework.
- Continue to model and discuss as a class opening questions for seminars before you actually begin the seminar.

### ***11th/12th Grade***

- While the text selections may still include shorter pieces, begin to increase the length to texts up to 10 pages. You may ask students to select texts for the seminars.
- Introduce the concept of a Socratic Seminar based on a work of art such as a painting, sculpture, or piece of music.
- Students should always read and mark the text independently outside of class time.
- Begin to coach students to take on the role of the leader.
- By the last semester of the 12th grade year, Socratic Seminars should be completely independent of teacher support. Students should be able to select the texts, prepare independently outside of class, and run their seminars without your participation.



# Socratic Seminar Lesson Outline

**T**hese step-by-step guidelines are intended to help you implement your first few Socratic Seminars. Over time, these steps will become second nature and the skills involved will continue to develop and grow. The steps listed here may take two to three class periods to finish.

1. Introduce the concept of Socratic Seminar to students. If they are familiar with Philosophical Chairs, use that as a springboard to discuss what is the same and what is different. Use the page on Dialogue versus Debate to help them understand the purpose of Socratic Seminar.
2. Now use the page on The Elements of Socratic Seminar to further define this activity. Read and discuss each element together. Focus on the element of the text.
3. Give students a copy of a short text you have selected for their first seminar. If possible, provide a copy that has wide margins. It is imperative that they have a copy that they can write on. Socratic Seminars cannot be conducted effectively unless the students can mark the text (an acceptable alternative is to have students use post-it notes within their books).
4. Read the text aloud to the students as they follow along.
5. Have the students read the text again silently to themselves.
6. Now use an overhead transparency of the text to model marking the text. Read the text again one section at a time. Discuss with students which ideas seem important. Model how they might circle words they do not know, underline or highlight sentences or phrases that seem important, summarize ideas in the margins, and write questions in the margins. Be sure that the students follow your example and mark their own papers.
7. Next, review the element of questions in Socratic Seminars. Explain that getting a seminar off to a good start means having a good opening question. Review the concept that a good opening question will lead to discussion and more questions. Share one or two examples of opening questions that you have formulated (be sure they are higher-level questions). Have the students work in small groups to write two or three possible opening questions. Share and discuss these questions.
8. Now use the information about The Role of the Leader and The Role and Responsibilities of the Participants to deepen the understanding of the students. Be sure students understand how you will function as the leader to facilitate the dialogue and to push their thinking. Emphasize that they will be reminded constantly to refer to the text.
9. Depending on the size of your class, you will have to decide whether all students will participate in the seminar or you will use the inner circle/outer circle method. Socratic Seminars can usually remain effective with up to 20 participants. If your class is much larger than this, you may want to use the inner circle/outer circle method. Be sure to review and explain the differing roles as well as the use of the “hot seat” if you choose to include that component. Students in the outer circle can use one of the observation activity sheets included later in this unit.
10. Conduct the seminar. For the first few seminars, set a time limit for discussion of about 15–20 minutes. Be sure that as the leader you have developed plenty of questions to keep the dialogue going. You will need them!!
11. Debrief and evaluate the process. If students were in an outer circle, have them share their observations first, then discuss as a class which parts of the process were successful and which parts still need improvement. Use the activity sheets included in this unit to debrief and evaluate. Set specific goals for the group’s next seminar.

For example, a goal might be that every participant speaks without being asked by the leader or that participants speak to each other instead of the leader. Guide your students to set reasonable goals that will improve and develop their skills.

### **Inner Circle/Outer Circle Method**

When your AVID class is large (more than 25 students), consider using the inner circle/outer circle method of Socratic Seminar. With this method, about 15–20 students will take on the role of seminar participants, and the rest of the students will act as observers. It is important that the observers are given specific tasks and that they must provide feedback during the debriefing process. The observer role is crucial to the group's development of their skills and should not be seen as a way to get out of participating, but as serving a different purpose in the process.

Students should be seated as follows: Desks are arranged in two circles, one outside the other. Seminar participants sit in the inner circle. Observers sit in the outer circle, but should be positioned so that they can see and hear the student or students they are assigned to observe. Activity sheets are included in this unit for observers to use and make notes.

You may choose as the leader to include a “hot seat” in the inner circle. This is a chair that remains empty at the beginning of the seminar. If at some time during the seminar an observer in the outer circle feels a strong need to participate, that student may move to the hot seat, contribute to the dialogue, and then move back to the outer circle. The “hot seat” is not essential to the process, but can be used effectively to stimulate participation.

If your AVID class is small enough, you will probably have all students participate in the seminar. Having a few students function as observers can help immensely in the debriefing process as they are able to notice things that participants may not notice. It can also be helpful to have tutors or other teachers function as observers and give feedback after the seminar.



# Dialogue versus Debate

**C**rucial to successful Socratic Seminars is an understanding of the difference between dialogue and debate. Both the leader and the participants must be able to make this distinction. More importantly, students must understand why we value the dialogue that we seek through Socratic Seminars. The purpose of the seminar is to expand our ideas and deepen our thinking, not to come to a particular conclusion or any conclusion at all. Use the table below to lead a discussion of the difference between these two concepts.

## Dialogue is...

collaborative

about understanding

listening for deeper meaning

re-evaluating assumptions

keeping an open mind

about temporarily suspending beliefs

searching for strength or validity in all ideas

about respecting all participants

exploring different possibilities

open-ended

## Debate is...

oppositional

about proving others wrong

listening for flaws

defending assumptions

close-minded

about defending beliefs

searching for weaknesses in ideas

about belittling or demeaning others

having one right answer

demands a conclusion



# The Elements of Socratic Seminars

**A** good seminar consists of four interdependent elements: (1) the text, (2) the questions raised, (3) the seminar leader, and (4) the participants. A closer look at each of these elements helps explain the unique character of a Socratic Seminar.

## The Text

Socratic Seminar texts are chosen for their richness in ideas, issues, and values, and their ability to stimulate extended, thoughtful dialogue. A seminar text can be drawn from readings in literature, history, science, math, health, and philosophy or from works of art or music. A good text raises important questions in the participants' minds, questions for which there are no right or wrong answers. At the end of a successful Socratic Seminar participants often leave with more questions than they brought with them.

## The Question

A Socratic Seminar opens with a question either posed by the leader or solicited from participants as they acquire more experience in seminars. An opening question has no right answer; instead, it reflects a genuine curiosity on the part of the questioner. A good opening question leads participants back to the text as they speculate, evaluate, define, and clarify the issues involved. Responses to the opening question generate new questions from the leader and participants, leading to new responses. In this way, the line of inquiry in a Socratic Seminar evolves on the spot rather than being pre-determined by the leader.

## The Leader

In a Socratic Seminar, the leader plays a dual role as leader and participant. The seminar leader consciously demonstrates habits of mind that lead to a thoughtful exploration of the ideas in the text by keeping the discussion focused on the text, asking follow-up questions, helping participants clarify their positions when arguments become confused, and involving reluctant participants while restraining their more vocal peers.

As a seminar participant, the leader actively engages in the group's exploration of the text. To do this effectively, the leader must know the text well enough to anticipate varied interpretations and recognize important possibilities in each. The leader must also be patient enough to allow participants' understandings to evolve and be willing to help participants explore non-traditional insights and unexpected interpretations.

Assuming this dual role of leader and participant is easier if the opening question is one which truly interests the leader as well as the participants.

## The Participants

In Socratic Seminar, participants share with the leader the responsibility for the quality of the seminar. Good seminars occur when participants study the text closely in advance, listen actively, share their ideas and questions in response to the ideas and questions of others, and search for evidence in the text to support their ideas.

Participants acquire good seminar behaviors through participating in seminars and reflecting on them afterward. After each seminar, the leader and participants discuss the experience and identify ways of improving the next seminar. Before each new seminar, the leader also offers coaching and practice in specific habits of mind that improve reading, thinking, and discussing. Eventually, when participants realize that the leader is not looking for the "right" answers but instead is encouraging them to think out loud and to openly exchange ideas, they discover the excitement of exploring important issues through shared inquiry. This excitement creates willing participants, eager to examine ideas in a rigorous, thoughtful manner.



## The Role of the Leader

- Know the text well before you begin.
- Have a series of questions about the text ready to help define the discussion and give it direction (see templates and guidelines for opening, core, and closing questions)
- Have NO predetermined agenda to get the RIGHT answer; instead, think of the seminar as a joint search.
- Be an active listener.
- Have respect for each participant.
- Help participants work cooperatively, not competitively.
- Involve reluctant participants while restraining more vocal members.
- Facilitate discussion among participants rather than with you, the leader.
- Examine and query responses by participants, trying to draw out reasons and implications in the thinking.
- Help participants rephrase questions and answers for clarity if necessary.
- Encourage participants to USE THE TEXT to support their responses.
- Be patient enough to allow each participants' understanding to evolve.



# The Role and Responsibilities of the Seminar Participant

## **Before the Seminar**

- Read the text carefully and for understanding.
- Use highlighters to mark crucial text and make notes in margins.
- Look for places where the author is stating his views, arguing for them, or raising questions.
- Make connections between parts of the text by using your marginal notes.
- Think about what you have read and how you understand it.
- Make connections between the ideas in the text and what you know in your life and the lives of the others.

## **During the Seminar**

- Be prepared to participate; the quality of the seminar diminishes when participants speak without preparation.
- Refer to the text often and when needed; a seminar is not a test of memory.
- Ask good questions and ask for clarification when confused.
- Take turns speaking instead of raising hands.
- Listen carefully and actively to your fellow participants.
- Speak so that all can hear you.
- Address your fellow participants, not just the leader.
- Discuss the ideas of the text, not each other's opinions.
- Show respect for differing ideas, thoughts, and values.
- Give evidence and examples to support your responses.
- Help fellow participants clarify questions and responses.
- Keep your mind open to new ideas and possibilities.

## **After the Seminar**

- Be reflective about the process of the seminar.
- Discuss with your group parts of the seminar you think went well and which skills you and your fellow participants still need to improve.
- Use writing to think about both the process and the content of the seminar.
- Reflect on both yourself as an individual and the group as a whole.
- Be prepared to help set goals for improvement in the next seminar.





## Socratic Seminar Group Guidelines

### **Listen**

*No one can speak while someone else is speaking.*

### **Build**

*Speakers must try to build on what others say, not debate their views.*

### **Refer to the Text**

*Speakers must refer directly to the section of the text from which their ideas come rather than making general comments or observations.*

# Guidelines for Developing Questions

*The learning in Socratic Seminars occurs as a result of the questions asked. Keep these guidelines in mind as you develop seminar questions.*

- Be sure that your questions are void of judgment and derived from the text.
- Ask questions that raise questions.
- Avoid asking yes/no questions.
- Ask hypothetical and complex questions.
- Ask questions to which there are no right or wrong answers.
- Continue to ask “why” or to probe the responses of the participants with further questioning.
- Allow yourself to guide the discussion with your questioning but to go with the discussion as well.

*Listed below are examples of the types of questions you may want to develop and have ready as the leader of a Socratic Seminar. Use this page to assist you as you examine the text in preparation for the seminar.*

1. By what reasoning did you come to that conclusion?
2. What would change your mind?
3. What are the assumptions, explicit or underlying, of this text?
4. Can you identify ideas in the text that seem to contradict one another?
5. What if \_\_\_\_\_ happened (or were true) instead of \_\_\_\_\_?
6. What might be some other good titles for this text?
7. What does the text say about the human race (or love, beauty, progress, etc.)? What do you think about it? What might other people say about it?
8. Do the ideas stated in this text seem to agree with or contradict this statement: \_\_\_\_\_
9. If \_\_\_\_\_ were writing (composing, painting, etc.) today, what might be different about this work?
10. In recent times, what well-known people are (were) like \_\_\_\_\_ in the text?
11. What does the term \_\_\_\_\_ mean in this text?
12. In what way would \_\_\_\_\_ change, if \_\_\_\_\_ happened differently?
13. How do you think something from the text was (would be) viewed by \_\_\_\_\_?
14. In what ways are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ alike (or different)?
15. What part of this work provokes the most discussion? Least discussion? Why? What in the text supports that opinion?
16. What important conclusions can we draw from the text?
17. What does the writer/artist assume? What are you assuming?

# Developing Opening, Core, and Closing Questions

Use this page to guide you as you develop questions in the categories of opening, core, and closing. Opening questions should get the seminar off to a start, core questions should help participants examine deeper meanings in the text, and closing questions should help the group bring the seminar to a close, though not necessarily a conclusion. Use the template on the following page to record your questions as you prepare to lead the seminar.

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## Opening Questions

- Stem from context
- Direct participants into text
- Elicit more than one-word responses
- Are generally concrete questions

## Examples

- What is the theme of the reading?
  - What significance is this to \_\_\_\_\_?
  - What are the assumptions of this text?
  - Could the two main characters have switched places? Why or why not?
  - What might be some other good titles?
  - Is it better to be \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_?
  - In recent times, what well-known people are like \_\_\_\_\_?
- 

## Core Questions

- Are content-specific
- May ask for the interpretation of a specific line or passage; often “how” or “why” questions
- Generally move the discussion into the abstract

## Examples

- Why does the main character think \_\_\_\_\_?
  - How do you support that position from the text?
  - How does this idea connect to \_\_\_\_\_?
  - If \_\_\_\_\_ is true, then \_\_\_\_\_?
  - Can you define what you mean by \_\_\_\_\_?
- 

## Closing Questions

- Establish relevance
- Connect to the real world
- Relate to the lives of the participants
- Are generally abstract

## Examples

- If you were writing this work, what would the ending be?
  - How does this idea connect to \_\_\_\_\_?
  - Explain the consequences of the ideas in the text.
  - Predict/justify future developments.
-

## Questions Planning Template

Opening Questions	Core Questions	Closing Questions

# Critiquing or Debriefing the Seminar

**S**pending some time after the seminar to critique, debrief, and evaluate the process is critical. This reflection allows for the growth of the skills necessary to achieve quality seminars and high levels of thinking. The following questions may be asked of both participants and observers in the outer circle to help evaluate the seminar process.

*Did the participants...*

- speak loudly and clearly?
- cite reasons and evidence for their statements?
- use the text to find support?
- listen to others respectfully?
- stick to the subject?
- talk to each other, and not just the leader?
- paraphrase accurately?
- ask for help to clear up confusion?
- support each other?
- avoid hostile exchanges?
- question each other in a civil manner?
- seem prepared?

*Did the leader...*

- engage participants early? How?
- make sure that the questions were understood?
- ask questions that led to further questions?
- use answers as the basis for follow-up questions?
- allow for discussion of disagreements?
- listen carefully to participants' statements?
- accept participants' answers without judgment?
- keep attention on ideas in the text being discussed?
- correct misreadings of the text?
- allow time (pauses) for thinking?
- draw out reasons and implications?
- draw in all participants?

*In the course of the seminar...*

- what was the most interesting question?
- what was the most interesting idea to come from a participant?
- what was the best thing that you observed?
- what was the most troubling thing that you observed?
- what do you think should be done differently in the next seminar?

# Socratic Seminar Discussion Debrief

**T**he questions on the previous page focus more on the process. These questions are designed to help participants and observers reflect on the content of the seminar dialogue. They may be used in discussion only, or students may write their answers first and then engage in a discussion.

1. What was the best point made during the seminar?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What ideas did you agree with?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What ideas did you disagree with?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What questions were left unanswered?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What did you contribute to the discussion?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. What do you wish you had said in the discussion?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. Who were the top three contributors to the discussion?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. What is your overall evaluation of the seminar?

# Socratic Seminar Rubric

This rubric can be used by students to self-evaluate their participation in a seminar or by observers to evaluate a particular participant. This rubric breaks down the some of the skills involved in seminars. This may help participants to identify particular areas of strength and areas for improvement.

	4	3	2	1
Questioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has prepared several high level questions based on the text</li> <li>Asks several higher level questions during seminar</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has prepared questions, mostly lower level</li> <li>Asks some questions during seminar</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has very few questions, if any</li> <li>Asks very few questions, if any</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has not prepared questions</li> <li>Does not ask questions</li> </ul>
Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moves the conversation forward</li> <li>Speaks to all participants</li> <li>Thinks before answering</li> <li>Refers directly to the text</li> <li>Make connections to other speakers</li> <li>Considers all opinions</li> <li>Offers insightful contributions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comments often, but does not lead others</li> <li>Addresses only the teacher</li> <li>Refers to text, but not to subtle points</li> <li>Responds to questions</li> <li>Considers some opinions</li> <li>Offers interesting ideas, not necessarily connected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emphasizes only own ideas</li> <li>Addresses only the teacher</li> <li>Tends toward debate, not dialogue</li> <li>Ideas do not always connect</li> <li>Comments neglect details of text</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disruptive, argumentative</li> <li>Mumbles or is silent</li> <li>No connection to previous comment</li> </ul>
Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrates effective listening skills (eye contact, nods, takes notes)</li> <li>Writes down thoughts and questions</li> <li>Builds on others' comments</li> <li>Asks for clarification when needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May have some eye contact with speaker</li> <li>Takes some notes</li> <li>Ignores others' comments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rarely demonstrates effective listening skills (eye contact, nods, takes notes)</li> <li>Loses track of conversation</li> <li>Judges others' ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No effective listening skills demonstrated</li> <li>Attempts to dominate</li> <li>Interrupts speakers in middle of sentence</li> <li>Repeats same ideas</li> </ul>
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies/highlights key words and phrases</li> <li>Has notes of main ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies/highlights some key words and phrases</li> <li>Has some notes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No highlighting<sup>a</sup></li> <li>Skims the text</li> <li>Very few notes, if any.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unprepared, unfamiliar with text</li> </ul>



# Socratic Seminar Rubric

This rubric gives a holistic assessment of a participant's behavior in a seminar. It can be used by observers or a teacher to give individual feedback to students.

Exemplary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstrates patience with others' opinions</li><li>• Moves the conversation forward</li><li>• Speaks to all participants</li><li>• Thinks before answering</li><li>• Refers directly to the text</li><li>• Makes connections to other speakers</li><li>• Considers all opinions</li><li>• Builds on others' comments</li><li>• Asks for clarification when needed</li><li>• Identifies key words/phrases/details in the text</li></ul>
Commanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Comments often</li><li>• Responds to questions</li><li>• Refers to the text</li><li>• Offers interesting ideas</li><li>• Pays attention</li><li>• Asks a few questions</li></ul>
Competent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Emphasizes only own ideas</li><li>• Ideas not always connected</li><li>• Refers to text</li><li>• Loses track of the conversation</li><li>• Judges others' ideas</li><li>• May ask questions</li></ul>
Developing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Leans toward debate, not dialogue</li><li>• Disruptive or argumentative</li><li>• Mumbles or is silent</li><li>• Repeats some ideas</li><li>• Does not ask questions</li></ul>
Emerging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is not participating</li><li>• May be lost or overwhelmed with seminar</li></ul>



# Observation Form

## Inner-Outer Discussion Circle



**Directions:** Each time your partner does one of the following, put a check in the box.

Your name \_\_\_\_\_ Partner \_\_\_\_\_

SPEAKS IN THE DISCUSSION															
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LOOKS AT PERSON WHO IS SPEAKING															
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
REFERS TO THE TEXT															
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ASKS A QUESTION															
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
RESPONDS TO ANOTHER SPEAKER															
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
INTERRUPTS ANOTHER SPEAKER															
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ENGAGES IN SIDE CONVERSA NON															
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
AFTER DISCUSSION: What is the most interesting thing your partner said?															
AFTER DISCUSSION: What would you like to have said in the discussion?															

# *Socratic Seminar*

## Fish Bowl

**Directions:** Choose three participants in the inner circle to observe during the seminar. Take careful notes and pay close attention to dialogue, individual behaviors, and the group's dynamics. Your grade is based on this observation/note-taking sheet. (50 points)

Participant Name	New Idea	Asked ?	Referred to Text	Positive Comments	Negative Behavior	Other Notes/ Observations
1						
2						
3						

## Socratic Seminar Discussion Debrief

The questions on the previous page focus more on the process. These questions are designed to help participants and observers reflect on the content of the seminar dialogue. They may be used in discussion only, or students may write their answers first and then engage in a discussion.

1. What was the best point made during the seminar?
2. What ideas did you agree with?
3. What ideas did you disagree with?
4. What questions were left unanswered?
5. What did you contribute to the discussion?
6. What do you wish you had said in the discussion?
7. Who were the top three contributors to the discussion?
8. What is your overall evaluation of the seminar?

# *The Role and Responsibilities* of the **Seminar Participant**

## **Before the Seminar**

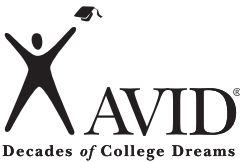
- Read the text carefully and for understanding.
- Use highlighters to mark crucial text, and make notes in margins.
- Look for places where the author is stating his views, arguing for them, or raising questions.
- Make connections between parts of the text by using your marginal notes.
- Think about what you have read and how you understand it.
- Make connections between the ideas in the text and what you know in your life and the lives of the others.

## **During the Seminar**

- Be prepared to participate; the quality of the seminar diminishes when participants speak without preparation.
- Refer to the text often and when needed; a seminar is not a test of memory.
- Ask good questions, and ask for clarification when confused.
- Take turns speaking instead of raising hands.
- Listen carefully and actively to your fellow participants.
- Speak so that all can hear you.
- Address your fellow participants, not just the leader.
- Discuss the ideas of the text, not each other's opinions.
- Show respect for differing ideas, thoughts, and values.
- Give evidence and examples to support your responses.
- Help fellow participants clarify questions and responses.
- Keep your mind open to new ideas and possibilities.

## **After the Seminar**

- Be reflective about the process of the seminar.
- Discuss with your group parts of the seminar you think went well and which skills you and your fellow participants still need to improve.
- Use writing to think about both the process and the content of the seminar.
- Reflect on both yourself as an individual and the group as a whole.
- Be prepared to help set goals for improvement in the next seminar.

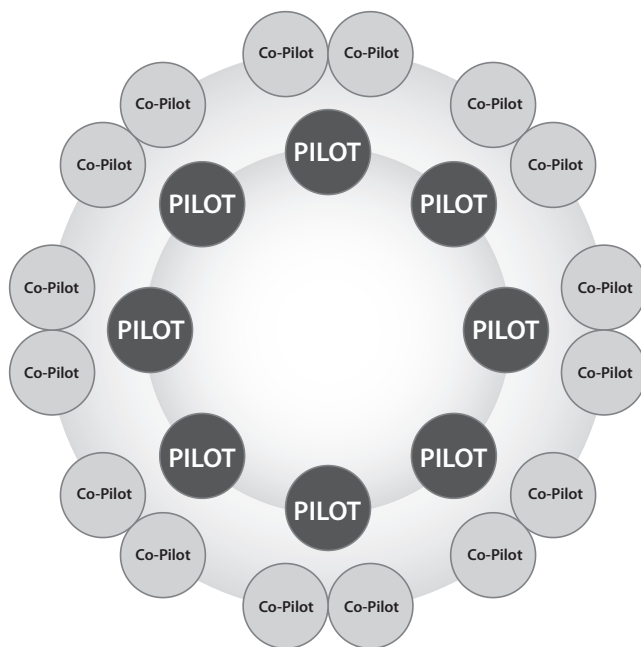


# Questions Planning Template

Opening Questions	Core Questions	Closing Questions

# Pilot/Co-Pilots (Wingmen) Socratic Seminar Model

This is a variation on the inner/outer circle model of Socratic Seminars. This model allows for more interaction with the outer circle by using the wingmen of the pilot in the inner circle. Below is a graphic description of how to set up the participants.



Start with a question that one of the “pilots” has written over the text being used for the Socratic Seminar. Run the seminar as usual, but stop at an appropriate time (about every 5 minutes) and have the pilots turn to their two co-pilots (wingmen) and gather input regarding the inner circle discussion. Allow about one minute for conversations between the pilot and wingmen, and then refocus everyone’s attention on the inner circle.

From this point, you have several options depending on how the discussion is going and the time allotted to the seminar:

1. Resume the Socratic Seminar and have the pilots share insights from the two co-pilots (wingmen).
2. Have one of the co-pilots take over for each pilot and resume the seminar.
3. Have one of the co-pilots ask a question to the original pilots, and the seminar resumes with this new question.

Continue to use contributions from the wingmen to keep the conversation moving and energetic. This allows the wingmen to still be able to contribute to the inner circle, and yet still work on their listening and evaluative skills as members of the outer circle.

**Suggestion: To debrief the Socratic Seminar**, have the inner circle rotate one position to the left so that each pilot now has at least one new wingman. Next, the new trio reflects on the discussion, the content, or personal insights as a product of the seminar.



# Observation Form

## Inner-Outer Discussion Circle

**Directions:** Each time your partner does one of the following, put a check in the box.

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_ Partner: \_\_\_\_\_

Speaks in the Discussion .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Looks at Person Who Is Speaking .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Refers to the Text .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asks a Question .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Engages in Side Conversation .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### After Discussion:

*What is the most interesting thing your partner said?*

### After Discussion:

*What would you like to have said in the discussion?*

# Developing Opening, Core, and Closing Questions

Use this page to guide you as you develop questions in the categories of opening, core, and closing. Opening questions should get the seminar off to a start, core questions should help participants examine deeper meanings in the text, and closing questions should help the group bring the seminar to a close, though not necessarily a conclusion. Use the template on the following page to record your questions as you prepare to lead the seminar.

## Opening Questions

- Stem from context
- Direct participants into text
- Elicit more than one-word responses
- Are generally concrete questions

## Examples

- What is the theme of the reading?
- What significance is this to \_\_\_\_\_?
- What are the assumptions of this text?
- Could the two main characters have switched places? Why or why not?
- What might be some other good titles?
- Is it better to be \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_?
- In recent times, what well-known people are like \_\_\_\_\_?

## Core Questions

- Are content specific
- May ask for the interpretation of a specific line or passage; often "how" or "why" questions
- Generally move the discussion into the abstract

## Examples

- Why does the main character think \_\_\_\_\_?
- How do you support that position from the text?
- How does this idea connect to \_\_\_\_\_?
- If \_\_\_\_\_ is true, then \_\_\_\_\_?
- Can you define what you mean by \_\_\_\_\_?

## Closing Questions

- Establish relevance
- Connect to the real world
- Relate to the lives of the participants
- Are generally abstract

## Examples

- If you were writing this work, what would the ending be?
- How does this idea connect to \_\_\_\_\_?
- Explain the consequences of the ideas in the text.
- Predict/justify future developments.

# Socratic Seminar Rubric

This rubric can be used by students to self-evaluate their participation in a seminar or by observers to evaluate a particular participant. This rubric breaks down some of the skills involved in seminars. They may help participants to identify particular areas of strength and areas for improvement.

	ADVANCED	SATISFACTORY	DEVELOPING	UNSATISFACTORY
<b>Questioning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has prepared several higher-level questions based on the text</li> <li>Asks several higher-level questions during the seminar</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has prepared questions, mostly lower level</li> <li>Asks some questions during seminar</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has very few questions, if any</li> <li>Asks very few questions, if any</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has not prepared questions</li> <li>Does not ask questions</li> </ul>
<b>Speaking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moves the conversation forward</li> <li>Speaks to all participants</li> <li>Thinks before answering</li> <li>Refers directly to the text</li> <li>Makes connections to other speakers</li> <li>Considers all opinions</li> <li>Offers insightful contributions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comments often, but does not lead others</li> <li>Addresses only the teacher</li> <li>Refers to text, but not to subtle points</li> <li>Responds to questions</li> <li>Considers some opinions</li> <li>Offers interesting ideas, not necessarily connected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emphasizes only own ideas</li> <li>Addresses only the teacher</li> <li>Tends toward debate, not dialogue</li> <li>Ideas do not always connect</li> <li>Comments neglect details of text</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disruptive, argumentative</li> <li>Mumbles or is silent</li> <li>Makes no connection to previous comments</li> </ul>
<b>Listening</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrates effective listening skills (making eye contact, nodding, taking notes)</li> <li>Writes down thoughts and questions</li> <li>Builds on others' comments</li> <li>Asks for clarification when needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May have some eye contact with speaker</li> <li>Takes some notes</li> <li>Ignores others' comments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rarely demonstrates effective listening skills (making eye contact, nodding, taking notes)</li> <li>Loses track of conversation</li> <li>Judges others' ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No effective listening skills demonstrated</li> <li>Attempts to dominate</li> <li>Interrupts speakers in middle of sentence</li> <li>Repeats same ideas</li> </ul>
<b>Reading</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies/highlights key words and phrases</li> <li>Has notes of main ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies/highlights some key words and phrases</li> <li>Has some notes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No highlighting</li> <li>Skims the text</li> <li>Very few notes, if any</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unprepared, unfamiliar with text</li> </ul>

# Socratic Seminar

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Period: \_\_\_\_\_

## Consider...

- ? When you are a part of the *Outer Circle* you should listen carefully to the discussion taking place 'on the inside' and jump on the Hot Seat when you would like to state your own views on a topic being discussed.
- ? As you listen to the discussion taking place write down your observations to the following questions.

### Question 1...

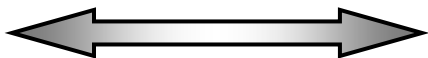
- ? List two questions that were discussed while you were in the outer circle. Explain why those questions were successful/not successful.

### Question 2...

- ? List the names of two students who you felt contributed in a positive way to the discussion. Next to their names, explain why you think each one did a good job in participating. Be specific

## Self Evaluation...

- ? Please rate yourself on the rubric below by placing a check in the appropriate box. Be honest and provide specific evidence.

	Exceeds	Meets	Approaching	Does Not Meet
I read the text thoroughly & felt prepared for the discussion				
I engaged in discussion & kept on task				
I supported my ideas with references to the text (provide specific examples)				
I encouraged thinking & participation in other by asking insightful questions & building on others' ideas (provide examples)				
I listened respectfully & presented ideas in a civil & proper manner; I accepted more than one point of view				

**Reflect & React:** Answer the following questions on the back of this sheet. Provide specific evidence for your answers.

- ? What did you like least about the seminar and what did you like most? Explain.
- ? Explain one thing you learned in the seminar from another student – be very specific.
- ? Discuss one topic you contributed to the seminar's discussion. Be sure to explain the topic and contribution.

## ***What is it?***

Marking the text is an active reading strategy that asks students to identify information in the text that is relevant to the reading purpose. This strategy has three distinct marks: numbering paragraphs, underlining, and circling.

## ***How do I use it?***

Based on the reading purpose, students will use marking the text to identify information as they read. They will begin by numbering the paragraphs they have been asked to read. Then, as they identify information that is relevant to the reading task, they will underline or circle this information, making it easier to locate for notes or discussion.

Even though the reading purpose will determine what students mark, the types of marks should not change. A student's ability to learn and apply a reading strategy relies heavily on the consistency of the strategy. If marking the text is understood to mean any pen or pencil mark on the paper, the student will never learn how this particular strategy aids his or her comprehension of the text.

## ***When should I use it?***

A fundamental strategy, marking the text ought to be used whenever students are asked to read academic texts. When students are asked to read arguments, students should underline the author's claims and circle key terms and names of people who are essential to the argument. While reading passages from a textbook, students should underline information that pertains to the reading purpose and circle names, places, and dates that are relevant to the topic being studied.

In the beginning, encourage students to read the text one time before they go back and mark the text while they read it a second time. Eventually, students will become comfortable with this strategy and begin marking the text during their first read.

## ***Why should I use it?***

When students mark texts purposefully, they are actively engaged in meaning making. To mark texts effectively, students must evaluate an entire passage and begin to recognize and isolate the key information. Once the text is marked, students will be able to quickly reference information that pertains to the reading purpose. Students might also use their markings to assist in summary writing, to connect ideas presented within the text, or to investigate claims, evidence, or rhetorical devices. Numbering paragraphs is also essential for class discussions. Once paragraphs are numbered, students can easily direct others to those places where they have found relevant information.

# Marking the Text<sup>1</sup>

AVID Teacher Reference

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## **Number the Paragraphs**

- ① Before you read, take a moment and number the paragraphs in the section you are planning to read. Start with the number one and continue numbering sequentially until you reach the end of the text or reading assignment. Write the number near the paragraph indentation and circle the number; write it small enough so that you have room to write in the margin.
- ② Like page numbers, paragraph numbers will act as a reference so you can easily refer to specific sections of the text.

## **Circle Key Terms, Names of People, Names of Places, and or Dates**

In order to identify a **key term**, consider if the word or phrase is...

- repeated
- defined by the author
- used to explain or represent an idea
- used in an original (unique) way
- a central concept or idea
- relevant to one's reading purpose

## **Underline an Author's Claims**

**A claim is an arguable statement or assertion made by the author.** Data, facts, or other backing should support an author's assertion.<sup>2</sup> Consider the following statements:

- A claim may appear anywhere in the text (beginning, middle, or end)

- A claim may not appear explicitly in the argument, so the reader must infer it from the evidence presented in the text
- Often, an author will make several claims throughout his or her argument
- An author may signal his or her claim, letting you know that this is his or her position

## **Underline Relevant Information**

While reading informational texts (i.e., textbooks, reference books, etc.) read carefully to identify information that is relevant to the reading task. Relevant information might include:

- A process
- Evidence
- Definitions
- Explanations
- Descriptions
- Data/Statistics

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<sup>1</sup> Marking the text is a strategy used by the Department of Rhetoric and Writing Studies at SDSU.

<sup>2</sup> For more on this definition see Stephen E. Toulmin's, *The Uses of Argument* (11-13).



*This table provides six strategies that help readers understand texts. While making connections, clarifying information or doing some other work defined on this page, write down your thoughts in the margins of the text, on sticky notes, or in your Cornell notes.*

<p><b><u>Visualize</u></b></p> <p>Visualize what the author is saying and draw an illustration in the margin. Visualizing what authors say will help you clarify complex concepts and ideas.</p> <p>When visualizing ask,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What does this look like?</li><li>• How can I draw this concept/ idea?</li><li>• What visual and/ or symbol best represents this idea?</li></ul>	<p><b><u>Summarize</u></b></p> <p>Briefly summarize paragraphs or sections of a text. Summarizing is a good way to keep track of essential information while condensing lengthier passages.</p> <p>Summaries will...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• state what the paragraph is about</li><li>• describe what the author is <i>doing</i></li><li>• account for key terms and/or ideas.</li></ul>
<p><b><u>Clarify</u></b></p> <p>Clarify complex ideas presented in the text. Readers clarify ideas through a process of analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Pausing to clarify ideas will increase your understanding of the ideas in the text.</p> <p>In order to clarify information you might...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• define key terms.</li><li>• reread sections of the text.</li><li>• analyze or connect ideas in the text.</li><li>• paraphrase or summarize ideas.</li></ul>	<p><b><u>Connect</u></b></p> <p>Make connections within the text, to your own life, and to the world. Making connections will improve your comprehension of the text.</p> <p>While reading you might ask,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How does this relate to me?</li><li>• How does this idea relate to other ideas in the text?</li><li>• How does this relate to the world?</li></ul>
<p><b><u>Respond</u></b></p> <p>Respond to ideas in the text as you read. Your responses can be personal or analytical in nature. Thoughtful responses will increase engagement and comprehension.</p> <p>Readers will often respond to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• interesting ideas.</li><li>• emotional arguments.</li><li>• provocative statements.</li><li>• author's claims.</li><li>• facts, data, and other support.</li></ul>	<p><b><u>Question</u></b></p> <p>Question both the ideas in the text and your own understanding of the text. Asking good questions while reading will help you become a more critical reader.</p> <p>While reading you might ask...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is the author saying here?</li><li>• What is the author doing?</li><li>• What do I understand so far?</li><li>• What is the purpose of this section?</li><li>• What do I agree/disagree with?</li></ul>



## ***Steps to writing a competent summary:***

- 1) Carefully read the selection.
  - 2) Re-read the text and mark information that is relevant to the reading purpose.
  - 3) Pause to connect ideas within the text.
  - 4) Make a list of the most important information in the paragraph or section. Be sure to leave out nonessential descriptions and other supporting details.
  - 5) Try to write one sentence that includes all of the relevant information in the paragraph. If the paragraph is long, you may need to write two sentences.
- 2) Read your paragraph. Check to be sure that you have included enough information so that someone who has not read the selection would understand the main points. Your summary should not be more than one-fourth to one-third the length of the original passage.

## ***Consider the following when writing a summary:***

- Use your own words, except for important content words.
- Do not include your own ideas or comments, such as "I think..."
- Do not repeat ideas or change the author's meaning.

## ***When summarizing the whole text...***

- 1) Copy your summary sentences into a paragraph and use transitional language in order to logically create relationships between ideas.

# Summarizing Sections of Expository Texts

*Independent Practice*

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Title of Work: \_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_ Type of Text: \_\_\_\_\_

Paragraph # \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is this paragraph or section about? What is it saying?

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2. On the lines below, record essential information from the reading passage that is relevant to your reading purpose.

- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Seamlessly combine ideas from above into one (or two) concise summary sentence(s).

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