

Scaffolding Socrates

SINGLE LESSON – Socratic Seminar, Step by Step with Templates and Example



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FEEDBACK
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ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This resource leads you through the process of planning and supporting student engagement in a Socratic seminar. Named after the technique that Socrates used with his pupils, a [Socratic seminar](#) is based on the belief that students learn deeply when they ask questions and engage in dialogue with one another. **At the heart of a Socratic seminar is student-driven inquiry, a collaborative exercise that prioritizes questioning as a method for pursuing truth and understanding.**

What does that look like? During a Socratic seminar, students ask questions and challenge one another, respectfully debate perspectives, and drive the discussion themselves (instead of the teacher).

Learning Skill Focus

- Students **investigate** and **interpret** one or more texts,
- develop **higher-order questions** to drive inquiry,
- **establish** deep **understanding** of the texts,
- **support** their **positions** with evidence, and
- **share** ideas as they effectively **collaborate** with their peers.

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

This project development guide leads you through the process of developing materials that prepare your students to successfully lead a Socratic seminar.

Part 1: Project Brainstorming:

Brainstorm and make choices for the seminar.

Part 2: Example Project:

Review the example [Student Prep Packet](#) and [Participation Guide](#) for inspiration.

Part 3: Student Facing Materials:

Develop student-facing materials using the templates provided.

PART 1: TEACHER BRAINSTORM AND PLANNING

Before you make materials to help students to prepare and lead a Socratic Seminar, use the prompts below to brainstorm and plan for the experience. (Do you need a deeper review of what a Socratic seminar is and how it works? [Look here.](#))

1. Choose your texts.

The best choices in texts for a Socratic seminar are those that invite multiple interpretations and allow for exploration and debate. Consider the following examples:

- Science: two or more articles on a single controversial issue
- History: differing perspectives on a single event via multiple primary sources
- English: a novel paired with a poem for students to compare and contrast

Which text(s) will you use? How do they invite inquiry?

2. Choose themes or sub-topics.



DIFFERENTIATE

If you believe students will need support when it comes time for them to develop questions for the seminar, consider choosing three or four themes or sub-topics as parameters for their questions. This is also a good option if you would like to create boundaries or parameters for the discussion.

3. Choose your groupings and structures. Reflect on your class size, room size, and students' readiness to engage.

In order to prepare for the seminar, students will need to read the texts, annotate or take notes, and create questions. Should students work independently, in pairs, or in small groups for each of these steps?

There are multiple variations of a traditional Socratic seminar. Which option best fits your class size and the readiness of your students to participate?



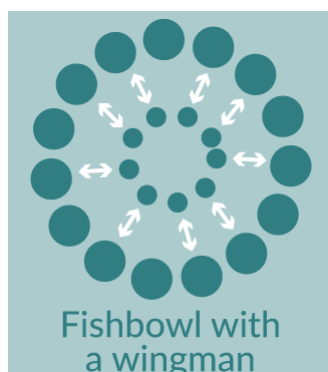
- **Large circle** - all students form one, giant circle. Desks are pushed back as far as necessary, to ensure that there are no barriers to conversation and that there is "front" or "back" to the circle.



- **Roundtable** - students gather at one large, round table, rather than forming a circle of desks. Depending on class size and table size, you may need to facilitate multiple sessions to accommodate a larger class.



- **Fishbowl** - students split into two groups, forming desks into an inner circle and an outer circle. This popular configuration works well with larger classes. Students in the inner circle conduct a seminar for a given time - 20 minutes - while the outer circle listens quietly and takes notes. After 20 minutes are up, the inner and outer circle switch, and the new inner circle conducts their seminar.



- **Fishbowl with a "wingman"** - Students form an inner and outer circle, but each inner circle student - a fish in the bowl - has a partner in the outer circle - a wingman. Either at designated times or spontaneously as needed, fish can turn around and check in with their wingman behind them for ideas, inspiration, or feedback. Alternatively, the wingman may write down ideas on sticky notes or little slips of paper to pass to their fish.

PART 2: PREVIEW THE EXAMPLE PREP PACKET AND PARTICIPATION GUIDE

Preview the sample student facing materials on the next pages. These Socratic seminar student-facing materials were designed for an introductory Film Studies course, after students completed a film unit focused on portrayals of the American teenager. As you review them, keep your students, as well as the texts and groupings you chose, in mind.

There are two packets in the student facing materials:

- The [Student Prep Packet](#) leads students through the process of...
 - collaborating in small groups to develop [four film reference sheets](#) (one for each film they viewed),
 - compiling a class list of higher-order questions,
 - brainstorming ideas in response to several questions before the seminar, and
 - reflecting on their progress using “Readiness Reflections” before receiving feedback from an instructor.
- The [Student Participation Guide](#) includes the following
 - a thorough overview of the purpose and process of a Socratic seminar for students,
 - an explanation of the roles of the students as well as the teacher, and
 - example feedback guides for both student preparation and student participation.

Implementation notes:

- Students participated in a fishbowl structure for the seminar, so the materials include an example “Outer Circle Thought Catcher” for students to take notes as they listen to the inner circle’s seminar.
- Each student received a paper copy of the packet, though you may wish to share the materials electronically.

EXAMPLE

SOCRATIC SEMINAR STUDENT PREP PACKET

OVERVIEW

You and your classmates will be leading a Socratic seminar on the four films we watched during our unit on portrayals of the American teenager: *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, *Pretty in Pink*, *Rebel Without a Cause*, and *Mean Girls*. A Socratic seminar puts you in the driver's seat for a discussion based on inquiry and questioning, all for the pursuit of deeper understanding of the films and cinematic themes we have been studying.

A successful Socratic seminar hinges on thorough preparation, higher-order questions, and everyone's participation. This Prep Packet will walk you through your preparation so you are ready and excited to dive into discussion when the time comes.

Below is an overview of each step you will complete to prepare:

Step 1: Investigate and Interpret. Complete these pages to make sure you have documented accurate notes on each film as well as your opinions about the films. You will be able to reference this sheet during the seminar to support your position and drive inquiry. You will complete a separate reference sheet for each film (four film sheets total).

Step 2: Ask Questions. Use this page to create thoughtful, higher-order questions (not yes or no questions) that you can bring to the seminar to drive discussion about the films.

Work through each step carefully with your small group. Make sure to honestly complete the "readiness reflection" prompts in each section. We will use these when we check in for feedback sessions before we have the seminar.

Step 3: Share. As a class, we will compile a list of the questions you create with your small group.

Step 4: Reflect and Take a Position. Before we have the seminar, you will work on your own to choose 2 to 3 questions for reflection and brainstorming. You will be able to add more notes or evidence to your reference sheets from Step 1 or even draft new, additional questions that occur to you as you reflect.

Armed with excellent documentation and good planning, **you will all be ready** to lead a Socratic seminar during class on **Friday, February 10th**.

STEP 1: INVESTIGATE AND INTERPRET

Film Reference Sheet #1 (Note: For purposes of length, only one blank reference sheet is included here as an example. For this seminar, students created four total - one for each film.)

Film name:

Directions: Review your notes from viewing the film and then answer the questions below to create a reference sheet that you can use during the seminar.

Who?

List and briefly describe the major characters.

-
-
-

What?

Compose a 3-5 sentence summary of the plot of the movie..

Where and When?

Describe the setting (location, time period, etc.)

Conflicts

Describe the conflict that drove the plot of the movie. In other words, what did the main characters desire? Who or what got in the way of that desire?

Big Ideas

How would you summarize the theme or message in this film in 1-2 sentences?

Key moments

Make a list of 3-5 key moments that are crucial for understanding the movie or that you want to bring up for discussion.

-
-
-
-

In conclusion...

Describe how the movie ends. Are conflicts resolved? What happens to the main characters?

Your commentary, reactions, and analysis

Choose a different scene from the movie in response to each question. Make sure to explain why you chose it, using specific details to support your opinion.

- Which scene do you remember first when you think of this movie? Why?

- Which scene was the most shocking or emotionally intense? Why?

- Which scene was the funniest? Why?

Movie tropes and archetypes

Identify and explain at least two teen movie tropes or character archetypes depicted in the film.

1.

2.



READINESS REFLECTION

Reflect on the preparation you've done for this movie. Rate how prepared you feel to practice each skill below. (Scale: 1=not at all prepared to 4=very prepared)

1. Establish Meaning: I will be able to speak confidently about the film's plot, characters, conflicts, and theme.

1 2 3 4

2. Take a Position: I will be able to demonstrate thorough understanding of the film by referencing specific details from the film.

1 2 3 4

3. Share: I will be able to clearly express my own opinions with supporting evidence.

1 2 3 4

What do you need to do to improve your preparation?



FEEDBACK FROM MRS. J

EXAMPLE

STEP 2: ASK QUESTIONS

Group Collaboration on Questions

Directions: Work with your group to develop questions about your assigned sub-topic that you will share with the whole class. Together you should make at least six questions: two analytical questions, two compare and contrast questions, two cause and effect questions. Your questions should be connected to your subtopic and specifically reference the films: *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, *Pretty in Pink*, *Rebel Without a Cause*, and *Mean Girls*.

Sub-topic options:

1. Portrayal of teenagers in film: messages about teens that are being sent, experiences and conflicts of teens, the relevance of those teens' experiences to your own lives
2. Portrayal of parents/adults in the films: messages about adults or parents that are being sent, the way adults/parents behave and treat the teens in the films, how realistic/accurate this portrayal is
3. Gender roles in the films: differences in conflicts, experiences, standards of behavior for male and female teens

Your group's subtopic:

ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

Analysis questions often begin with "Why..." or "How would you explain..." or "What is the importance of..." or "What is the meaning of" (Example: Why do you think Chaplin chose to include the moment with the feeding machine in *Modern Times*?)

1.

2.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Compare and contrast questions use “What is the difference between...” or “What is the similarity between...” or “Compare the way that...” or “Contrast the way that...” (Example: How do both *Modern Times* and *City Lights* make fun of the upper classes?)

1.

2.

CAUSE AND EFFECT

Cause and effect questions use “What are the causes/results of...” or “What connection is there between...” (Example: What is the connection between factory work and insanity according to Chaplin’s *Modern Times*? How do you know?)

1.

2.



READINESS REFLECTION

Ask Questions: On your own, reflect on the questions you just created.

1. Which of your questions is the strongest and most thought-provoking? Why?

2. Which of your questions are you least confident about sharing? Why?



FEEDBACK FROM MRS. J

EXAMPLE

STEP 3: SHARE

Directions: After you have created your questions, received feedback, and made any necessary revisions, add your six questions to the class jam board linked [here](#).

STEP 4: REFLECT AND TAKE A POSITION

Directions: Choose at least three questions from the class list. Brainstorm possible responses to the question, specific details you might use to support your answer, and any follow-up or clarification questions that you have.

1. Question:

Your ideas, responses, and follow-up questions:

2. Question:

Your ideas, responses, and follow-up questions:

3. Question:

Your ideas, responses, and follow-up questions:

EXAMPLE

SOCRATIC SEMINAR STUDENT PARTICIPATION GUIDE

OVERVIEW

You and your classmates will be leading a Socratic seminar on the four films we watched during our unit on portrayals of the American teenager: *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, *Pretty in Pink*, *Rebel Without a Cause*, and *Mean Girls*. A Socratic seminar puts you in the driver's seat for a discussion based on inquiry and questioning, all for the pursuit of deeper understanding of the films and cinematic themes we have been studying.

By this point you have thoroughly prepared, so you are almost ready to begin. Let's review a few tips and reminders.

I. How does a Socratic seminar work?

We will be using the fishbowl method, with an inner circle and an outer circle. The inner circle talks for 30 minutes, while the outer circle listens and takes notes. Then we switch and repeat.

You and your classmates lead, guide, and keep the conversation moving forward. As the teacher, I do not run the discussion or tell you what to say or discuss next.

You do NOT need to raise your hands or wait to be called on before speaking. However, let courtesy dictate when it is a good time to jump in.

You are encouraged to respectfully argue, question, disagree and/or state an opinion.

II. Do we all need to agree or come to a conclusion in the end?

No, the purpose of the seminar is to share questions and inspire discussion, which then provokes new questions, not for everyone to agree. You will express thoughts, ideas, and opinions, actively responding to one another and the films.

Your goal is inquiry, not deciding whether answers are right or wrong. The only wrong answer is one which wholly contradicts reason or is not based in the reality of the films.

III. What do students actually do during a Socratic seminar?

When you are in the inner circle, you should...

- Participate actively in seminar discussion
- Treat other students' responses with courtesy and respect
- Support statements with references to the film
- Make connections to what the previous person has said. (This is called flow.)
- Stick to the point currently under discussion, but make notes about ideas you want to come back to.
- Keep your mind open to different points of view. Be willing to change or revise your opinion with the addition of more information or for compelling reasons.
- Use the discussion sentences starters on page 14 of [Make Groups Work](#) if you need help questioning, responding, and transitioning during the seminar

When you are in the outer circle, you should...

- Listen closely to the inner circle's discussion.
- Take notes on critical ideas, interesting insights, or points that are up for debate.
- Take notes on any points or perspectives that did not get mentioned (but that you would like to discuss or use to weigh in on the conversation).
- Make connections between your ideas and the ideas being discussed in the inner circle. Take notes on those connections. What else would you add to this conversation?
- After the seminar, turn in your Outer Circle Thought Catcher along with your Prep Packet.

IV. What does a teacher do during the seminar?

My job is to establish and maintain a risk-taking atmosphere, where you feel comfortable sharing your ideas and connecting with one another. I will listen closely to student responses and ask follow-up questions (but only if absolutely necessary).

I will also take notes as needed on the frequency and quality of each person's contributions, as well as your willingness to listen to others (It will be noted if you continuously interrupt others or dominate without listening to others.)

EXAMPLE

OUTER CIRCLE THOUGHT CATCHER

DOCUMENT

Directions: Write down the names of your classmates in the inner circle you are observing in the space below. Then, make notes on this thought catcher while observing the inner circle. You may continue your observations on the back if needed.

Your outer circle participation depends on the commentary and critique that you include in this thought catcher; this is a listening exercise, so it is important that you accurately capture what went on in the inner-circle seminar you observe. You will receive feedback on the insights and conclusions you make.

I. Names of classmates in the inner circle:

II. Record your observations and insights below. Whenever possible, record the name of the person who shared the idea you found interesting.

Ideas/critical issues raised:	Ideas you have that they failed to mention:
What was the best idea shared or question raised in the seminar?	What conclusions can you draw after listening to your classmates' discussion?

III. Any further observations? What made this seminar successful? What are some areas for improvement? Be specific!

FEEDBACK GUIDE EXAMPLE

SOCRATIC SEMINAR FEEDBACK GUIDE

PREP PACKET

Criteria	Not Yet	On Your Way	Mission Accomplished	Above and Beyond!
Step 1: Investigate	Documentation is neither complete nor accurate.	Documentation is somewhat complete and/or accurate.	Documentation is complete and accurate.	Documentation is complete and accurate with excellent attention to detail.
Step 1: Interpret	Commentary, reactions, and analysis are not included.	Some commentary, reactions, and analysis are included, but elements are missing.	Commentary, reactions, and analysis are included.	Insightful or exemplary commentary, reactions, and analysis are included.
Step 2: Ask Questions	Questions are either missing, do not reference the films and/or do not demonstrate higher-order questioning skills.	All 6 questions are developed, but may not fully reference the films or demonstrate higher-order questioning skills.	All 6 questions are developed, specifically reference the films, and demonstrate higher-order questioning skills.	All 6 questions are developed, specifically reference the films, and demonstrate an exemplary level of higher-order questioning skills.
Step 3: Reflect and Take a Position	Responses are either missing, do not reference the films and/or do not demonstrate thoughtful consideration of the questions.	Three responses are included, but may not reference the films or demonstrate thoughtful consideration of the questions.	Three responses are included; responses are thorough and insightful, with specific references to films.	Three responses are included; responses demonstrate an exemplary level of insight and use of evidence from the films.

SEMINAR PARTICIPATION

Criteria	Not Yet	On Your Way	Mission Accomplished	Above and Beyond!
Establish Meaning	Student participated minimally or not at all during the seminar; contributions may have been inaccurate or inappropriate.	Student spoke minimally during the seminar; contributions were mostly accurate and appropriate.	Student spoke multiple times during the seminar and demonstrated appropriate understanding of the content	Student spoke several times during the seminar and demonstrated a thorough understanding of the content
Take a Position	Ideas and opinions were either of little value or a repeat of another student's comment; opinions were not supported with specific details from the films	A few insightful ideas and personal opinions were expressed, but not supported with specific details from the film	Multiple insightful comments and personal opinions were shared; opinions were supported with specific details from the films	Multiple insightful, original comments and personal opinions were shared; opinions were supported with well-chosen, specific references to the films
Identify Patterns	No questions were answered or generated from the discussion; no connections were made to ideas presented by others	A few connections were made to the others' contributions; one or two questions were answered or generated from the discussion	Some connections were made were made from others' contributions; multiple questions were answered or generated from the discussion	Several, meaningful connections were made from others' contributions; several questions were answered or generated from the discussion
Share and Collaborate	Opinions were not expressed; no collaboration or discussion demonstrated.	Opinions were expressed but may have lacked clarity; may have either dominated the conversation or may not have invited other students to participate.	Opinions were expressed clearly. Demonstrated open-mindedness; invited other students to contribute	Opinions were expressed clearly and articulately. Demonstrated open-mindedness; actively encouraged multiple students to share their perspectives and facilitated flow.
Document: Outer Circle Note Sheet	Responses are missing or show no indication of active listening during the seminar.	Responses are either brief or superficial, but demonstrate some evidence of active listening during the seminar.	Responses are thoughtful, thorough; responses demonstrate active listening during the seminar.	Responses are thoughtful, thorough, and insightful; responses demonstrate close attention and active listening

PART 3: CREATE STUDENT FACING MATERIALS

Once you have reviewed the example materials, use the templates that follow to develop the materials that *your students* will use to prepare for the seminar.

STUDENT PREP PACKET

- Review the instructions and prompts for each step, editing, adding, and removing as necessary. All highlighted, italicized text in brackets will need to be replaced with the choices you made in [Part 1: Seminar Brainstorm and Planning](#) (eg. text names, grouping choices, etc.)
- If you choose to have your students skip any steps from this highly scaffolded preparation process, be sure to remove those steps from the overview and the handouts.
- Personalize the [“Feedback from”](#) sections with your name; add and/or edit reflection questions as needed.
- Decide how you would like students to share and compile a list of their questions for the class, for [Step 3: Share](#). Link to that collaboration space or include directions for sharing with you.

STUDENT PARTICIPATION GUIDE

- Review the seminar [overview](#) and description, making sure to replace all italicized text in brackets with the choices you made while [brainstorming](#); structure/method, groupings, etc. Be sure to include a brief description or diagram of this method, especially if students are brand new to Socratic seminars.
- Review the [question and answer section](#) of the [overview](#) page, making edits as appropriate for your students.
- If you will be using the fishbowl method, review and edit the [Outer Circle Thought Catcher template](#). If you will not be using this method, consider creating a reflection prompt for after the seminar to replace this thought catcher.
- Review the [Feedback Guides](#); edit criteria and performance indicators as desired.

<< TEMPLATE >>

SOCRATIC SEMINAR PREP PACKET

OVERVIEW

You and your classmates will be leading a Socratic seminar on [insert name of text(s) chosen]. A Socratic seminar puts you in the driver's seat for a discussion based on inquiry and questioning, all for the pursuit of deeper understanding of the [text(s)] we have been studying.

A successful Socratic seminar hinges on thorough preparation, higher-order questions, and everyone's participation. This Prep Packet will walk you through your preparation so you are ready and excited to dive into discussion when the time comes.

Below is an overview of each step you will complete to prepare:

Step 1: Investigate and Interpret. Complete these pages to make sure you have documented accurate notes, as well as your opinions, on the text[s]. You will be able to reference this sheet during the seminar to support your position and keep conversation moving forward. [You will complete a separate reference sheet for each text.]

Step 2: Ask Questions. Use this page to create thoughtful, higher-order questions (not yes or no questions) that you can bring to the seminar to drive discussion about the [texts].

Step 3: Share. As a class, we will compile a list of the questions you create.

Step 4: Reflect and Take a Position. Before we have the seminar, you will choose 2 to 3 questions for reflection and brainstorming. You will be able to add more notes or evidence to your reference sheets from Step 1 or even draft new, additional questions that occur to you as you reflect.

Work through each step carefully [on your own, with a partner, in a small group]. Make sure to honestly complete the "readiness reflection" prompts in each section. We will use these when we check in for feedback sessions before we have the seminar.

Armed with excellent documentation and good planning, **you will all be ready** to lead a Socratic seminar during class on [date of seminar].

STEP 1: INVESTIGATE AND INTERPRET

I. [Name of Text]

Directions: Review [your notes, your annotations, and/or the text] and then answer the questions below to create a reference sheet that you can use during the seminar. [You will complete one reference sheet for each text we are studying.]

Who?

List and briefly describe the major [characters, historical figures, personas, speakers, subjects, interested parties etc.].

-
-
-
-
-

What?

Compose a 3-5 sentence summary of the [plot, topic, problem, event, issue, narrative, etc. of the text].

[Where and/or When?]

Describe the [setting, time period, location, or any other key contextual information].

[Conflicts or Controversies]

Describe the [conflict, controversy, point of debate, complicated issue, or difficult question in the text].

[Big Concepts, Main Ideas or Themes]

How would you summarize the [big concept, main idea, or theme] of this text in 1-2 sentences?

[Golden Lines, Crucial Details, Essential Facts, Key Moments]

Make a list of 4-5 [golden lines, crucial details, essential facts, key moments] that are crucial for understanding [the text] or that you want to bring up for discussion. Make sure you cite any textual evidence or direct quotations!

In Conclusion...

Describe [how the story ends, the author's conclusion, the resolution of the problem, the immediate consequences, etc.].

Your Commentary and Reactions

Choose a different [moment, passage, scene, chapter, event, fact, anecdote, etc.] in response to each question. Make sure to explain why you chose it, using specific details to support your opinion.

- Which [moment, passage, scene, chapter, event, fact, anecdote, etc.] do you remember or call to mind immediately when you think of this [type of text]? Why?
- Which [moment, passage, scene, chapter, event, fact, anecdote, etc.] was the most [choose a descriptor: shocking, provocative, funniest, saddest, inspiring, emotionally intense, etc.]? Why?

[Content Specific Interpretation Questions]

Identify and explain 2-3 examples of [content specific skills or terms].



READINESS REFLECTION

Reflect on the preparation you've done for this [insert text]. Rate how prepared you feel to practice each skill below. (Scale: 1=not at all prepared to 4=very prepared)

- 1. Establish Meaning: I will be able to speak confidently about the [insert text's notable components or features].

1 2 3 4

- 2. Establish Meaning: I will be able to demonstrate thorough understanding of the [insert text and features/details].

1 2 3 4

- 3. Take a Position: I will be able to clearly express my own opinions with supporting evidence.

1 2 3 4

What do you need to do to improve your preparation?



FEEDBACK FROM [TEACHER NAME]

STEP 2: ASK QUESTIONS

Directions: Work [on your own, with a partner, with your group] to develop questions about your assigned sub-topic that you will share with the whole class. You should make at least six questions: two analytical questions, two compare and contrast questions, two cause and effect questions. Your questions should [be connected to your sub-topics and] specifically reference the [text(s)]: name(s) of text(s).

[Sub-topic options:

1. *List a sub-topic, theme, or essential question*
2. *List a sub-topic, theme, or essential question*
3. *List a sub-topic, theme, or essential question*

Your subtopic: _____]

ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

Analysis questions often begin with “Why...” or “How would you explain...” or “What is the importance of...” or “What is the meaning of” (Example: [include example related to content area])

1.

2.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Compare and contrast questions use “What is the difference between...” or “What is the similarity between...” or “Compare the way that...” or “Contrast the way that...” (Example: [include example related to content area])

1.

2.

CAUSE AND EFFECT

Cause and effect questions use “What are the causes/results of...” or “What connection is there between...” (Example: [include example related to content area])

1.

2.



READINESS REFLECTION

Ask Questions: On your own, reflect on the questions you just created.

1. Which of your questions is the strongest and most thought-provoking? Why?

2. Which of your questions are you least confident about sharing? Why?



FEEDBACK FROM [TEACHER NAME]

STEP 3: SHARE

Directions: After you have created your questions, received feedback, and made any necessary revisions, add your six questions to [the class jam board linked here].

STEP 4: REFLECT AND TAKE A POSITION

Directions: Choose at least three questions from the class list. Brainstorm possible responses to the question, specific details you might use to support your answer, and any follow-up or clarification questions that you have.

1. Question:

Your ideas, responses, and follow-up questions:

2. Question:

Your ideas, responses, and follow-up questions:

3. Question:

Your ideas, responses, and follow-up questions:

<< TEMPLATE >>

SOCRATIC SEMINAR PARTICIPATION GUIDE

OVERVIEW

You and your classmates will be leading a Socratic seminar on the [name of text(s) and content area focus]. A Socratic seminar puts you in the driver's seat for a discussion based on inquiry and questioning, all for the pursuit of deeper understanding of the [insert text and topics/features you have been studying].

By this point you have thoroughly prepared, so you are almost ready to begin. Let's review a few tips and reminders.

I. How does a Socratic seminar work?

We will be using the [seminar method/structure and description].

You and your classmates lead, guide, and keep the conversation moving forward. As the teacher, I do not run the discussion or tell you what to say or discuss next.

You do NOT need to raise your hands or wait to be called on before speaking. However, let courtesy dictate when it is a good time to jump in.

You are encouraged to respectfully argue, question, disagree and/or state an opinion.

II. Do we all need to agree or come to a conclusion in the end?

No, the purpose of the seminar is to share questions and inspire discussion, which then provokes new questions, not for everyone to agree. You will express thoughts, ideas, and opinions, actively responding to one another and the films.

Your goal is inquiry, not deciding whether answers are right or wrong. The only wrong answer is one which wholly contradicts reason or is not based in the reality of the films.

III. What do students actually do during a Socratic seminar?

When you are in the inner circle, you should...

- Participate actively in seminar discussion
- Treat other students' responses with courtesy and respect
- Support statements with references to the [text]
- Make connections to what the previous person has said. (**This is called flow.**)
- Stick to the point currently under discussion, but make notes about ideas you want to come back to.
- Keep your mind open to different points of view. Be willing to change or revise your opinion with the addition of more information or for compelling reasons.
- Use the conversation sentences starters if you need help questioning, responding, and transitioning during the seminar

When you are in the outer circle, you should...

- Listen closely to the inner circle's discussion.
- Take notes on critical ideas, interesting insights, or points that are up for debate.
- Take notes on any points or perspectives that did not get mentioned (but that you would like to discuss or use to weigh in on the conversation).
- Make connections between your ideas and the ideas being discussed in the inner circle. Take notes on those connections. What else would you add to this conversation?
- After the seminar, turn in your [Outer Circle Thought Catcher along with your Prep Packet].

IV. What does a teacher do during the seminar?

My job is to establish and maintain a risk-taking atmosphere, where you feel comfortable sharing your ideas and connecting with one another. I will listen closely to student responses and ask follow-up questions (but only if absolutely necessary).

I will also take notes as needed on the frequency and quality of each person's contributions, as well as your willingness to listen to others (It will be noted if you continuously interrupt others or dominate without listening to others.)

<< TEMPLATE >>

OUTER CIRCLE THOUGHT CATCHER

DOCUMENT

Directions: Write down the names of your classmates in the inner circle you are observing in the space below. Then, make notes on this thought catcher while observing the inner circle. You may continue your observations on the back if needed.

Your outer circle participation depends on the commentary and critique that you include in this thought catcher; this is a listening exercise, so it is important that you accurately capture what went on in the inner-circle seminar you observe. You will receive feedback on the insights and conclusions you make.

I. Names of classmates in the inner circle:

II. Record your observations and insights below. Whenever possible, record the name of the person who shared the idea you found interesting.

Ideas/critical issues raised:	Ideas you have that they failed to mention:
What was the best idea shared or question raised in the seminar?	What conclusions can you draw after listening to your classmates' discussion?

III. Any further observations? What made this seminar successful? What are some areas for improvement? Be specific!

SOCRATIC SEMINAR FEEDBACK GUIDES

STUDENT PREP PACKET

Criteria	Not Yet	On Your Way	Mission Accomplished	Above and Beyond!
Step 1: Investigate	Documentation is neither complete nor accurate.	Documentation is somewhat complete and/or accurate.	Documentation is complete and accurate.	Documentation is complete and accurate with excellent attention to detail.
Step 1: Interpret	Commentary, reactions, and analysis are not included.	Some commentary, reactions, and analysis are included, but elements are missing.	Commentary, reactions, and analysis are included.	Insightful or exemplary commentary, reactions, and analysis are included.
Step 2: Ask Questions	Questions are either missing, do not reference the [text(s)] and/or do not demonstrate higher-order questioning skills.	All 6 questions are developed, but may not fully reference the [text(s)] or demonstrate higher-order questioning skills.	All 6 questions are developed, specifically reference the [text(s)], and demonstrate higher-order questioning skills.	All 6 questions are developed, specifically reference the [text(s)], and demonstrate an exemplary level of higher-order questioning skills.
Step 3: Reflect and Take a Position	Responses are either missing, do not reference the [text(s)] and/or do not demonstrate thoughtful consideration of the questions.	Three responses are included, but may not reference the [text(s)] or demonstrate thoughtful consideration of the questions.	Three responses are included; responses are thorough and insightful, with specific references to [text(s)].	Three responses are included; responses demonstrate an exemplary level of insight and use of evidence from the [text(s)].

SEMINAR PARTICIPATION

Criteria	Not Yet	On Your Way	Mission Accomplished	Above and Beyond!
Establish Meaning	Student participated minimally or not at all during the seminar; contributions may have been inaccurate or inappropriate.	Student spoke minimally during the seminar; contributions were mostly accurate and appropriate.	Student spoke multiple times during the seminar and demonstrated appropriate understanding of the content	Student spoke several times during the seminar and demonstrated a thorough understanding of the content
Take a Position	Ideas and opinions were either of little value or a repeat of another student's comment; opinions were not supported with specific details from [the text(s)]	A few insightful ideas and personal opinions were expressed, but not supported with specific details from [the text(s)]	Multiple insightful comments and personal opinions were shared; opinions were supported with specific details from [the text(s)]	Multiple insightful, original comments and personal opinions were shared; opinions were supported with well-chosen, specific references to [the text(s)]
Identify Patterns	No questions were answered or generated from the discussion; no connections were made to ideas presented by others	A few connections were made to the others' contributions; one or two questions were answered or generated from the discussion	Some connections were made were made from others' contributions; multiple questions were answered or generated from the discussion	Several, meaningful connections were made from others' contributions; several questions were answered or generated from the discussion
Share and Collaborate	Opinions were not expressed; no collaborative effort in the discussion evident.	Opinions were expressed but may have lacked clarity; may have either dominated the conversation or may not have invited other students to participate.	Opinions were expressed clearly. Demonstrated open-mindedness; invited other students to contribute	Opinions were expressed clearly and articulately. Demonstrated open-mindedness; actively encouraged multiple students to share their perspectives and facilitated flow.
Document: Outer Circle Thought Catcher	Responses are missing or show no indication of active listening during the seminar.	Responses are either brief or superficial, but demonstrate some evidence of active listening during the seminar.	Responses are thoughtful, thorough; responses demonstrate active listening during the seminar.	Responses are thoughtful, thorough, and insightful; responses demonstrate close attention and active listening during the seminar

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