

Let's Talk!

Using the Socratic Seminar Method to Develop 21st Century Skills

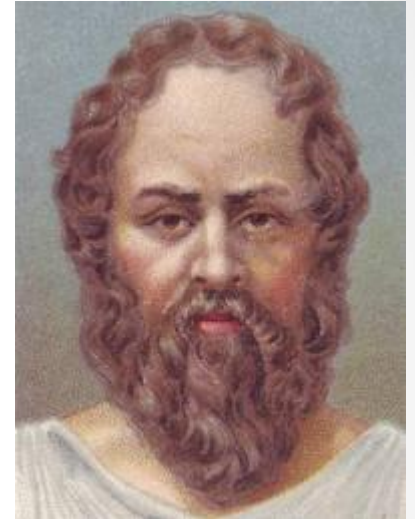


Valerie Carter, Advanced Academic Resource Teacher
Fairfax County Public Schools

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Wisdom begins in
wonder.

~Socrates



Socrates

- 469-399 BC
- “ I only know that I know nothing.”
- Classical, Greek Athenian philosopher
- Never wrote down any of his ideas!
- His ideas were shared by his student Plato
- Socrates questioned the world around him-
What is beauty? What is wisdom? What is the
right thing to do?

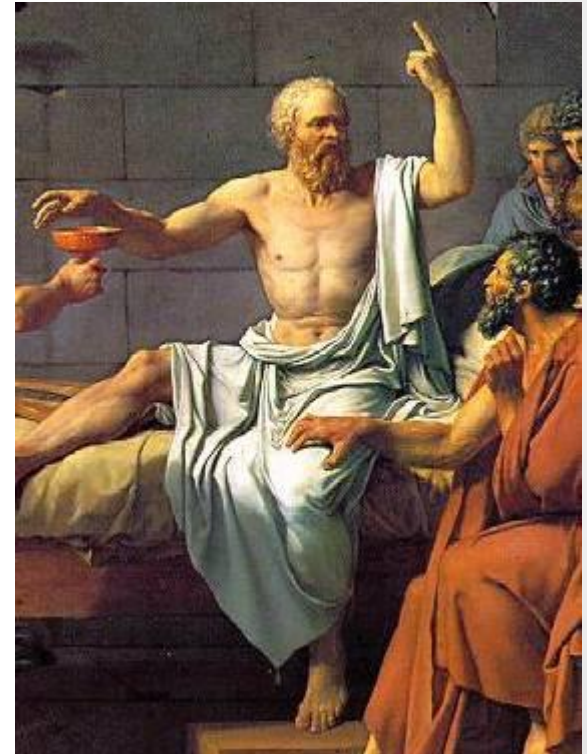
Paideia Philosophy

“All genuine learning is active, not passive. It involves the use of the mind, not just the memory. It is a process of discovery, in which the student is the main agent, not the teacher.” ~Mortimer Adler

- Philosopher Mortimer Adler wrote the Paideia Proposal in 1982. This Paideia Philosophy outlined principles that included that all children can learn, learning should be active, and three types of instruction.
- Three columns of instruction: didactic, coaching of intellectual skills, and Socratic questioning in seminar style.
- Didactic = 10-15%, Coaching = 60-70%, Seminar = 15-20%
- Defines a Socratic Seminar as a “collaborative, intellectual dialogue facilitated with open-ended questions about a text.”

What is a Socratic Seminar?

- Thoughtful and collaborative dialogue
- Open-ended discussion
- Respect for other participants
- An opportunity to share one's best thinking
- Multiple viewpoints working toward a shared understanding



Why Should You Use Socratic Seminar?

- Promotes critical thinking and academic conversation
- Creates an environment where all students feel “safe” to talk and share ideas – respectful communication
- Increases communication skills
- Students must *THINK* and be aware of their thinking – leads to metacognition
- An excellent strategy that helps to increase reading comprehension
- It’s engaging! Students are actively constructing BIG IDEAS!
- Students have a deeper understanding of others’ perspectives and can articulate different points of view.
- Encourages collaboration and the creation of new ideas.

<i>Seminars</i>	<i>Class Discussions</i>
97% student talk	97% teacher talk
Average student response=8-12 seconds	Average student response=2-3 seconds
No teacher approval or disapproval	Teacher judgment-emphasis on correctness; limited extended thinking
Thinking is paramount, backed up with textual evidence	Rightness is paramount; thinking ends as soon as one is right
Students listen to peers	Students listen primarily to teacher
Student ownership for “flow”	Teacher ownership for “flow”
Specific accountability as testing/documentated evidence for grading	A “frill”; nebulously, it counts as participation grade. If absent, didn’t really miss anything—just a class discussion

Sample Selections for Socratic Seminar

Poems

Speeches

Plays

Short stories

Novels (or an excerpt from)

Essays

Historical documents

Philosophical or scientific works

Mathematical problems

Songs

Paintings or sculptures

Films or movies



Getting Started with Socratic Seminar

- ❖ Select a text
- ❖ Read text together
- ❖ Students write an initial response, identify vocabulary words that are new or interesting and come up with three open-ended questions
- ❖ Students share some of their questions
- ❖ Conduct actual seminar discussion
- ❖ Follow-up activity

Guiding Questions for Seminar Response

- What seems important to you?
- What surprises you?
- What do you like or dislike and why?
- What puzzles you?
- What ideas or thoughts come to mind that connect to other readings or experiences that you have had?
- Did you recognize connections to “big ideas”?

Part Two: Vocabulary

Select three words from the text that you do not understand OR that you think are interesting or unusual. Using a dictionary, write the part of speech and a definition for the word *as it is used in the passage*. Next, write a synonym and antonym for the word. Finally, write an original sentence using the word correctly.

1. WORD: _____ Part of Speech: _____

DEFINITION: _____

SYNONYM: _____ ANTONYM: _____

SENTENCE: _____

2. WORD: _____ Part of Speech: _____

DEFINITION: _____

SYNONYM: _____ ANTONYM: _____

SENTENCE: _____

3. WORD: _____ Part of Speech: _____

DEFINITION: _____

SYNONYM: _____ ANTONYM: _____

SENTENCE: _____

Part Three: Open-ended Questions

Develop and write three open-ended questions that require and provoke discussion!

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Creating Questions for Seminars

- Opening Questions- are the most open-ended

Another (better) title for this piece would be _____?

The single most important word in this piece is _____?

The most important sentence or passage is _____?

- Core Questions-asks students to refer to the text

What is meant by (a specific quote)?

Why do you say that? Explain what you mean by _____?

Tell me more about (your last comment)...

What do you mean by that word (phrase or comment)?

Where do you find support for that in the text?

- Closing Questions-students summarize what they have learned

If you were (character) in this piece, what would you say or do?

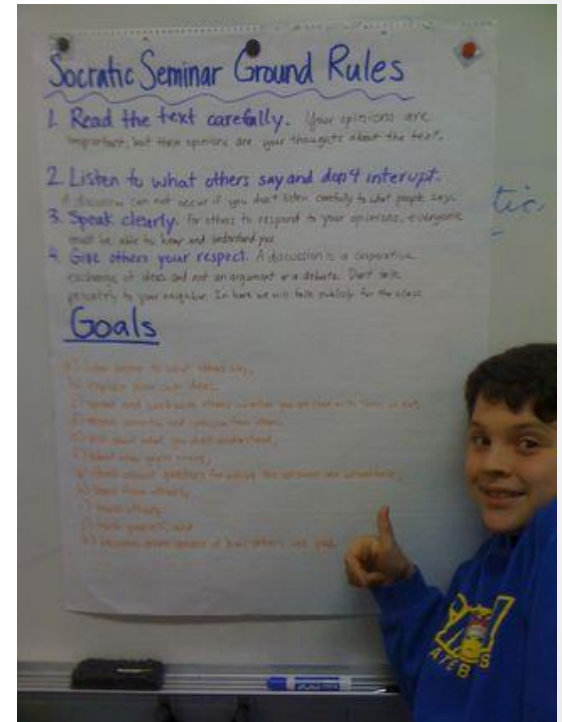
What does this text teach us about (issue of particular importance to the participants)?

Re-ask the opening question and examine why participants changed their minds.

Your Turn~Let's Have a Seminar!

Seminar Etiquette/Guidelines

- Group is seated and facing each other
 - Address each other as Mr. and Ms.
 - Be courteous and respectful
 - Be patient –speak one at a time
 - No sarcasms or put downs
 - Be responsible for your own participation
 - Use evidence from the text to support your opinion- refer to the text
 - Stick to the question
 - Pass if you are not ready to speak
- ❖ Look and listen to the person who is speaking – speak to the group



Step 1 Pre-seminar

Listen to the text as it is read aloud

Quick Write – Your initial response for today!

On your index card, share what you feel is the “big idea” of this story and briefly explain why.

Step 2 Pre-seminar

- Share responses
- Share and discuss vocabulary words
- Share one open-ended question
- Teacher may collect open-ended questions to use during seminar



Step 3 Seminar

Conduct/ participate in seminar

Assign post-seminar activity



Step 4 Post-seminar Your Follow-Up Activity

How could you use a seminar in your classroom?

Assessment for Seminar Work

SEMINAR TITLE: _____

Student Name _____

WRITTEN ELEMENT

RESPONSE	1	2	3	4
Connections are made to Prior Knowledge				
Evidence from the text is cited to support opinion.				
Relates to a personal life experience				
Examples are given to support student's opinion				
Student's viewpoint is expressed and he/she is able to explain thinking				
VOCABULARY				
Words are interesting, challenging, or unique				
Includes part of speech, antonym, and synonym				
Words are defined as used in context				
Includes original sentence that demonstrates understanding				
QUESTIONS				
Are open-ended and require discussion				
Lead to additional insights into the text				

PARTICIPATION ELEMENT

SPEAKING and REASONING	1	2	3	4
Listens with respect				
Invites Comment				
Waits to be recognized before speaking				
Cites text to support ideas				
Asks questions for clarification				
Explains and justifies reasoning				
LISTENING				
Looks at speaker				
Follows textual references				
Asks follow-up questions				
READING				
Takes notes on text				
Highlights critical passages				

Rubric Scoring Guideline

	Minimal (1)	Basic (2)	Proficient (3)	Advanced (4)
PREPARATION	Does not come to the seminar with necessary materials, and/or does not specifically refer to the text during the discussion.	Seminar preparation work is completed and text is referred to during the discussion, but is misquoted and/or used without specific purpose or explanation.	Seminar work is carefully and thoughtfully completed and text is cited appropriately to support comment and insights into the reading.	Seminar work is thoughtful and insightful and text is appropriately cited and interpreted with allusions to other readings which give additional support to comments and ideas.
PARTICIPATION	Has little to contribute during the discussion and/or makes comments that diverge from the question posed by the moderator.	Contributes to the discussion in a limited way and/or does not express ideas clearly and succinctly.	Shares valuable insights and ideas during the discussion, stays focused on question posed, and expresses ideas clearly and succinctly.	Extends and expands discussion by bringing in new information and unique insights relevant to the question posed by the moderator.
FOLLOW-UP	Little or no connection to the insights and ideas generated during the seminar discussion.	Extends and expands ideas and insights gained through the reading and discussion.	Reflects new insights gained during the discussion and extends and enriches comments and reactions to the reading.	Reflects a clarification and critical examination of the comments and ideas generated during the discussion and offers additional insights and applications.



Ideas for using Socratic Seminar across disciplines and with different grade levels

When? To introduce a unit of study, to expand a unit of study or to conclude a unit of study

Examples Primary (K-3)

Aesop's Fables - *The Crow and the Pitcher*

How were the pebbles able to help the crow get to the water?

Eric Carle's The Very Hungry Caterpillar

Big Idea: Change

Was the caterpillar's metamorphosis an ordinary or extraordinary event?

Shel Silverstein's The Giving Tree

Big Idea: Friendship

Are the boy and the tree true friends? How do you know?

Jon Scieszka's The True Story of the Three Little Pigs

Big Idea: Point of View

Do you feel that the third pig should have done more to help/support his siblings?

Upper Elementary (Grades 3-6 & beyond)

Primary Sources

Library of Congress - www.loc.gov/teachers <http://tpsnva.org/>

Patrick Henry's Speech to the Virginia Convention ("Give me liberty or give me death")

Big Idea: Liberty

What does Patrick Henry mean when saying, "Give me liberty or give me death"?

John Smith's Description of the Powhatans, 1612

Big Idea: Perspective

Why did John Smith refer to the Powhatans as barbarous?

Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address*

Big Idea: War

What was Lincoln's main point, the key idea that he wanted everyone to understand?

Poetry

Big Idea: Choice

Robert Frost's *A Road Not Taken*

How are life's choices like roads?

Robert Fulghum's *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*

Big Idea: Wisdom

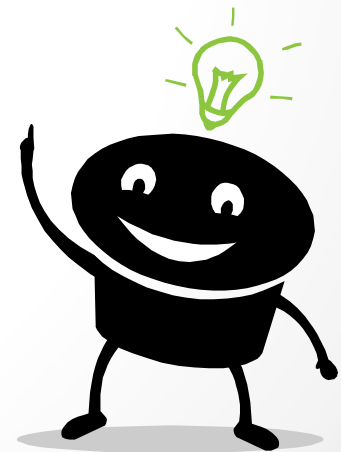
What rule stands out and why?

Short Stories

The Brother's Grimm's *The Fisherman and His Wife*

Big Idea: Greed

Why did the flounder take away everything in the end?



Helpful Tips!

- Inside/Outside Circles – Students in the inner circle are participating in the discussion while students in the outer circle are silent but engaged in a specific task, such as:
 - Identify the most convincing use of the text to support a point
 - The three most important or new insights they heard
 - Three ideas that they disagree with
- Talking Chips-Students must all use one color/chip before others can share
- Students must “qualify” for participation in a seminar- hold students accountable- have alternate assignment for students who are not prepared
- Differentiate pre and post seminar activities- journaling, self-assessment reflections, authentic follow-up projects
- Prepare students in advance who are hesitant to talk



Questions?

Valerie Carter

Advanced Academic Resource Teacher

Hunters Woods Elementary for the Arts & Sciences

Fairfax County Public Schools

vmcarter@fcps.edu

Thank you for participating today~
Enjoy the remainder of the conference!

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