Capital Metropolitan Area AVID and the Sacramento County Office of Education present:

Socratic Seminar

Lindsay Paoli

lpaoli@scoe.net

> *"The harder we question, the harder we hunt. The harder we hunt, the more we learn."*
>
> Patrick Rothfuss

Inquiry

Inquiry is about thinking: thinking that is revealed in questioning, analyzing, and constructing knowledge and understanding. Inquiry in a classroom is both teacher- and student-driven. Teachers pose questions and guide students into deeper levels of thought. Students use questioning processes to probe the meaning of texts, solve problems, or design investigations.

Inquiry puts students at the center of an active learning process in which the teacher is the facilitator of learning. Inquiry engages students with their own thinking processes (i.e., metacognition). It teaches them to think for themselves instead of chasing the "right answer." The result is student ownership of the learning process and a better understanding of concepts and values (Donohue & Gill, 2009). Derek Bok (2008), former president of Harvard University, says that "the ability to think critically—to ask pertinent questions, recognize and define problems, identify the arguments on all sides of an issue, search for and use relevant data and arrive in the end at carefully reasoned judgment—is the indispensable means of making effective use of information and knowledge."

One of the tenets of AVID's philosophy is that inquiry is fundamental to rigorous teaching and deep learning. AVID uses Costa's Levels of Thinking as a framework for inquiry. The three levels provide a concise approach to the levels of intellectual functioning represented in the framework. Students thinking at higher levels of cognition is at the heart of classroom rigor. Many AVID strategies—such as tutorials, Socratic Seminars, and Philosophical Chairs—are built around students asking higher level questions to clarify, analyze, and synthesize material and discuss with each other in a logical, reasoned manner. Conley (2007) emphasizes the necessity of inquiry and thinking processes for students' college readiness: "In order for students to be prepared for success in college classes, they must be able to engage in complex problem solving, understand and analyze research, and reason with precision and accuracy."

By the end of this chapter, the reader will be able to:

- Use effective questioning techniques in the classroom to promote students' critical thinking or higher order thinking skills.
- Create a classroom culture that nurtures thinking and inquiry.
- Engage students in using Costa's Levels of Thinking to think more deeply and broadly.
- Teach students to identify and employ the strategies and skills of successful learners.

Pre-Assessment for Teachers

This pre-assessment is intended to assist teachers in assessing their current level of supporting inquiry.

On a 1–5 scale—with 5 being the highest level—rate your current ability to complete the following:

Objective	Rating	Explanation and Evidence of Rating
Use effective questioning techniques in the classroom to promote students' critical thinking or higher order thinking skills. *Consider:* • *What activities do you use to teach inquiry/thinking skills?* • *How might you incorporate more thinking and questioning processes?*		
Create a classroom culture that nurtures thinking and inquiry. *Consider:* • *How do students view themselves as learners—as active or passive participants?* • *Do students feel safe asking questions and responding during thought-provoking discourse?*		
Engage students in using Costa's Levels of Thinking to think more deeply and broadly. *Consider:* • *What scaffolds are in place to teach higher level thinking skills to students?* • *Do students understand how thinking at higher levels promotes deep learning?*		
Teach students to identify and employ the strategies and skills of successful learners. *Consider:* • *Do students frequently participate in inquiry-based, structured debates and dialogues?* • *How are students taught academic skills, such as active listening, self-reflection, and structured discourse?*		

Inquiry and Levels of Thinking

A tenet of AVID's philosophy is that inquiry is fundamental to rigorous teaching, on par with such skills as reading and writing. Inquiry, simply put, is about effective questioning, and the product of regular inquiry is students who can think critically.

Aspects of Student-Driven Inquiry

One aspect of inquiry in the classroom is student-driven. Development of students' college-readiness capabilities must include learning how to ask thought-provoking questions about content. Making focused observations is a thinking skill that helps students make sense of content material, experiences, or their environment and leads to authentic questioning. This provides a natural transition into the thinking-level models proposed by Arthur Costa (2001) and Benjamin Bloom (1956).

AVID uses Costa's Levels of Thinking as the framework for inquiry. The three levels present a concise, direct approach, which aids accessibility for students over other expanded models. The gathering/recall (Level 1), processing (Level 2), and application (Level 3) levels involve intellectual functions of increasing complexity. The thinking skills and inquiry-based strategies can be taught to students at all grade levels and all subject areas, but they must be scaffolded so that students learn incrementally and with support.

Aspects of Teacher-Driven Inquiry

A second aspect of inquiry in the classroom is teacher-driven, as teachers pose interesting, open-ended questions to draw students into the content material and "kick-start" student-driven inquiry. Well-formed questions provide for diverse responses that incorporate content and thinking skills. Teachers can then use the student responses to frame their follow-up questions—"How?" "Why?" and "What if?"—and guide students to develop and refine their thinking competencies (Valdez, Carter, & Rodgers, 2013). The think-aloud process is another strategy that teachers can use to model the inquiry inherent in many thought processes, such as analyzing a text.

Students can learn how to pose, respond to, and identify higher level questions as teachers model these processes in the classroom. Writing higher level or critical thinking questions based on subject matter material must be deliberately and strategically taught to students so that they become aware of their own cognitive processing.

Socratic Seminar

Socratic Seminar is a structured activity designed to engage students in deep thinking. The Greek philosopher Socrates believed that encouraging students to think for themselves was more important than filling their heads with the "right" answers. The Socratic method of teaching is a form of inquiry-based discourse focused on questioning to spur critical thinking and drive ideation. It is through exploration, dialogue, considering new perspectives, and constant questioning that students develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Through Socratic Seminars, students develop confidence in articulating their ideas to others while providing supporting evidence with reasoned thinking.

Metacognitive Skills

Socratic Seminars offer more educational purpose than practicing academic dialogue alone. Socratic Seminars provide teachers with opportunities to explore the metacognitive skills that academically successful students employ. In addition to practicing their academic dialoguing abilities, students will become more effective communicators as they learn to differentiate between social and academic language, as well as hone their listening and non-verbal communication techniques. As students develop these abilities, they gain confidence in more advanced levels of inquiry and improve their ability to analyze complex problems.

Prerequisites

If students are to feel safe in expressing their thoughts and opinions without the fear of being judged or ridiculed, it is important to recognize that they need opportunities and guidance to rise to a certain comfort level with their classmates. It is recommended that Socratic Seminars—regardless of configuration—be attempted only after students have successfully built a positive sense of community, with at least Stage 2 relational capacity. Debriefing the Socratic Seminar, and varying the style, will provide opportunities for deepening and broadening the Socratic Seminar experience. With these points in mind, Socratic Seminars are powerful avenues for students' personal growth.

4.10: Socratic Seminar: Classic Style

Student Objective
Students will develop a deeper understanding of complex ideas through rigorous and thoughtful dialogue.

Overview
Socratic Seminar: Classic Style is a structured, collaborative dialogue, focusing on a common text or resource, which students have analyzed and toward which they have prepared questions to spur the discussion. This strategy provides a format for students to practice skills in critical thinking, reading, and inquiry, as they participate in the inquiry-based dialogue.

Materials/Set-Up
- Handouts:
  - 4.10a: Dialogue vs. Debate for Socratic Seminar
  - 4.10b: The Role and Responsibilities of the Socratic Seminar Participant
  - 4.10c: Rules of Engagement for Socratic Seminar
  - 4.10d: Academic Language Scripts for Socratic Seminar
- Teacher Resources:
  - 4.10e: The Elements of Socratic Seminar
  - 4.10f: Text Selection for Socratic Seminar
  - 4.10g: Sample Class Arrangements for Socratic Seminar
  - 4.10h: Tips for Socratic Seminars
- In advance of the activity, complete the following:
  - Provide students with a text to read and prepare for prior to the Socratic Seminar.
  - Refer to Text Selection for Socratic Seminar for a list of potential sources of seminar texts.

The critical reading process is to plan, build vocabulary, pre-read, interact with the text, and extend beyond the text. Strategies to support these steps include tracking vocabulary, numbering the paragraphs, marking the text, and writing in the margins.

Example: "Before we read this text, let's number the paragraphs. Now, I'd like you to read only the title, first paragraph, and last paragraph, and then write a one-paragraph prediction about what this text covers."

Instructional Steps
1. Discuss the purpose and format of the Socratic Seminar activity with students (see Teacher Resources noted in Materials/Set-Up, above).
2. Utilizing Sample Class Arrangements for Socratic Seminar, choose the class arrangement or seminar variation that you will use and review the arrangement with students.
3. Using Dialogue vs. Debate for Socratic Seminar, guide students to an understanding of the difference between these two discourse styles.
4. Review the "Before the Seminar" section of The Role and Responsibilities of the Socratic Seminar Participant.
5. Instruct students to read or study the subject or prompt, incorporating the appropriate **critical reading process strategies**, such as marking the text, pausing to connect ideas, writing in the margins, taking Cornell notes, or analyzing visuals.

6. Remind students to complete the following:
    - Understand the purpose for reading, following the reading prompt, if provided.
    - Preview the text or subject, thinking about any teacher- or student-provided background information, to determine the structure of the text and identify possible biases.
7. Have students generate at least two open-ended, higher level questions—Costa's Levels 2 or 3—that will help them probe deeper into the meaning of the text and the author's intention.
8. Remind students of the four essential elements of Socratic Seminar, which are described in Elements of Socratic Seminar.
9. Review the "During the Seminar" section of The Role and Responsibilities of the Socratic Seminar Participant and the Rules of Engagement for Socratic Seminar. Include your directions on what to do when the dialogue moves into debate.
10. Review the Rubric for Socratic Seminar (which follows in the Socratic Seminar: Debriefing activity) or another assessment tool of your choice, so students know how their participation will ultimately be assessed.
11. Instruct students to review the Academic Language Scripts for Socratic Seminar handout and have it available to use during the seminar.
12. Ask students to arrange their chairs into a circle. They should be able to see everyone without having to lean forward or backward. Students should also have all of their necessary materials for participating in the Seminar—marked text, questions, pen and paper for taking notes—with them.
13. Determine the opening question for the dialogue using one of the methods below:
    - The Seminar leader, who can also be seated in the circle, poses an opening question relating to the text in order to initiate the dialogue.
    - Each student in the circle reads one of his/her questions. After listening carefully, the Seminar leader or the students can select one as the starting question to open the conversation.
14. Begin the dialogue with participants responding to the opening question. The dialogue continues as group members ask clarifying questions or offer responses. Consistently require students to build upon the comments and analysis of others.
15. Continue the Socratic Seminar in this manner until all of the questions have been explored or time has drawn to a close.
16. Consider conducting a **Whip-Around** so that each student can provide a closing thought or rhetorical question that summarizes their thinking.
17. The final step of the Socratic Seminar is to debrief and reflect upon the process. Refer to Socratic Seminar: Debriefing for more information on this step.

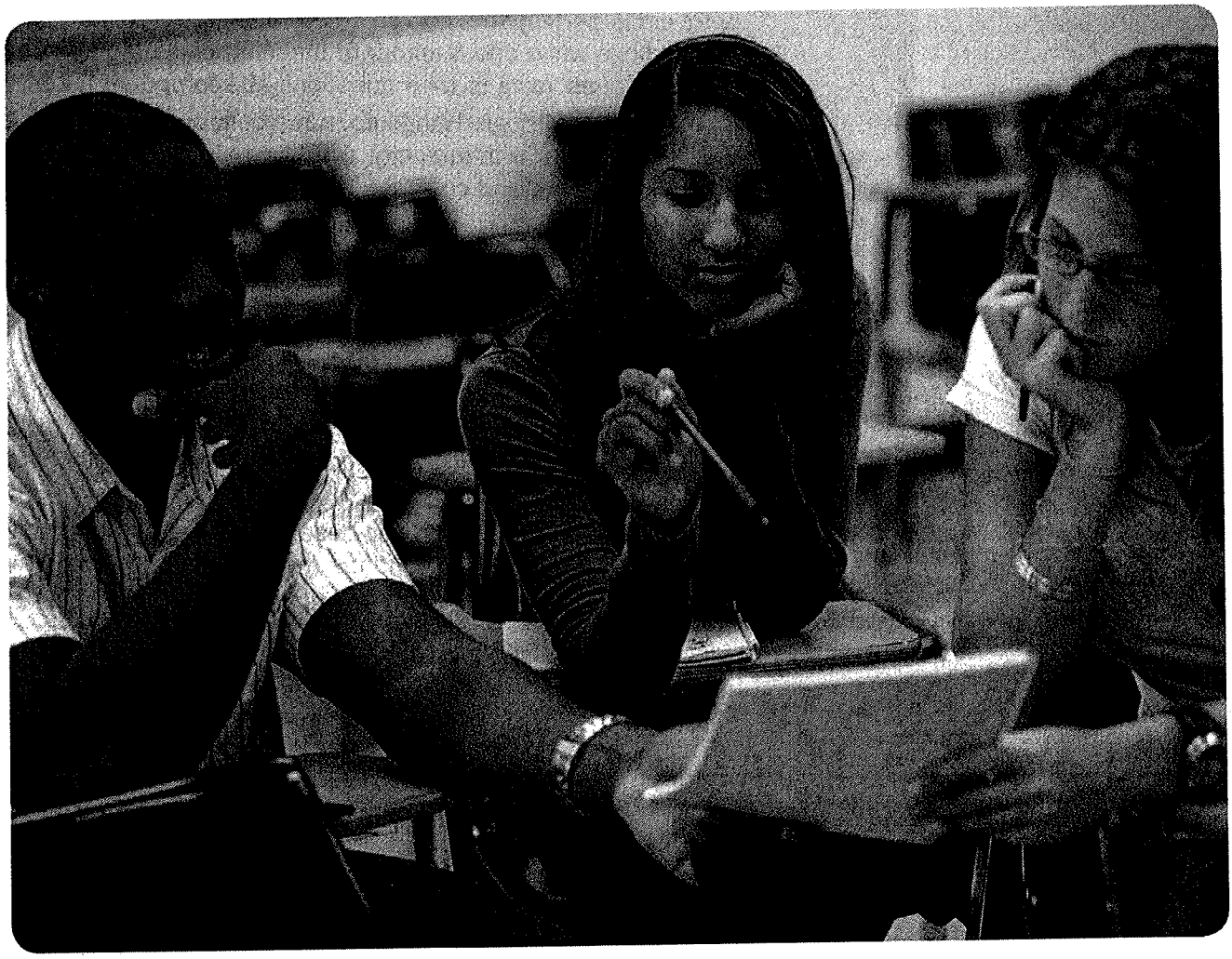
Whip-Around is a strategy used to activate prior knowledge and quickly process information. With students in small groups of four or five, present a question or discussion prompt. Going around the group sequentially, each student then comments on the question or discussion prompt.

Example: "In your groups, do a Whip-Around about the importance of making positive introductions and first impressions. You will have three minutes, and each student needs to contribute at least one response."

Extension

- To increase rigor:
  - Base the Seminar on a more complex text.
  - Use multiple text sources related to the content. Then, have students analyze how the authors shape their presentations of key information by emphasizing different evidence or advancing different interpretations of facts.
  - At natural breaks in the dialogue, direct students to connect the themes of the Socratic Seminar with deeper content ideas, cross-curricular areas, or personal experience.
  - Provide students with more autonomy for structuring and leading the Socratic Seminar.
  - Use student leaders to moderate smaller groups of Socratic Seminars, and then run several simultaneous Seminars, either on one text or on several differing texts, that have a common theme or subject.
- To increase scaffolding:
  - Read the text aloud together and lead the class through the marking the text or writing in the margins critical reading process strategies prior to the Seminar.
  - Reiterate, model, and encourage specific skills necessary for conducting effective dialogue.
  - Provide students with copies of Seminar handouts to read as homework assignments: Rules of Engagement for Socratic Seminar, The Role and Responsibilities of the Socratic Seminar Participant, and Academic Language Scripts for Socratic Seminar.
  - Select shorter texts or quotes in which students can closely observe key words or lines. Comparing and contrasting two shorter paragraphs works well.
  - Develop teacher questions to use as models, and then develop questions together as a class.
  - Conduct mini-Seminars, where small groups practice the skills for conducting effective dialogue. Consider having one student observe and take notes on each group's performance and help debrief when finished.
  - When time is limited for a Seminar, use the Whip-Around brainstorming strategy to allow all students to respond to a prompt.

- To integrate technology:
  - When using a text that is topical, have students post facets of their Seminar discussion in the comments section of news websites using a teacher-created identity.
  - Create a "backchannel chat" for the outside circle, using TodaysMeet or a similar website. With the backchannel, outer-circle participants can comment upon the Seminar proceedings while one member of the inner circle monitors the chat and gives voice to their questions at appropriate times.
  - Using Skype or Google Hangouts, run a collaborative, multi-site Socratic Seminar with inter-city, state, or national "flight crews," made up of pilots and co-pilots.
  - Capture the Seminar on video and post on a limited-access YouTube or Vimeo account to serve as a source of critical review for the class as a whole, absent students, or younger grades.
  - Have select students, acting as observers, use a class Twitter account to post tweets of the discussion. After the Seminar concludes, debrief how well the tweets capture the essence of the discussion.
  - Set up a videoconference Socratic Seminar with another class, from another school if possible.
  - Extend the discussion to a web-based medium, such as a blog or discussion forum, and continue the dialogue with deeper insights and links to a wider array of online sources.



Dialogue vs. Debate for Socratic Seminar

The best Socratic Seminars are those in which something new and unexpected is discovered. This happens when the Socratic Seminar is approached as a collective search for information or exploration of ideas through dialogue, rather than a defense of opinions through debate.

Dialogue	Debate
Dialogue is collaborative, with multiple sides working toward a shared understanding.	Debate is oppositional, with two opposing sides trying to prove each other wrong.
In dialogue, one listens to understand, to make meaning, and to find common ground.	In debate, one listens to find flaws, to spot differences, and to counter arguments.
Dialogue broadens, and possibly changes, a participant's point of view.	Debate affirms a participant's point of view.
Dialogue thrives on an open-minded attitude and openness to being wrong and to changing.	Debate fosters a close-minded attitude and a determination to be right and defends assumptions as truth.
In dialogue, one submits one's best thinking, expecting that other people's reflections will help improve it, rather than threaten it.	In debate, one submits one's best thinking and defends it against challenges to show that it is right.
Dialogue calls for temporarily suspending one's beliefs.	Debate calls for investing wholeheartedly in one's beliefs.
In dialogue, one searches for strengths in all positions.	In debate, one searches for weaknesses in opposing positions.
Dialogue respects all of the other participants and seeks not to alienate or offend.	Debate rebuts contrary positions and may belittle or deprecate other participants.
Dialogue assumes that many people have pieces of answers and that cooperation can lead to workable solutions.	Debate assumes that someone already has a single right answer.
Dialogue remains open-ended.	Debate demands a conclusion and a winner.

The Role and Responsibilities of the Socratic Seminar Participant

Before the Seminar

- Read the text or consider the artifact/prompt carefully.
- Use highlighters to mark crucial portions of the text.
- Make notes in the margins.
- Look for places where the author is stating his or her views, arguing for them, or raising questions.
- Write Level 2 or 3 questions (Costa's Levels of Thinking).
- Make connections between parts of the text by using your margin notes.
- Think about what you have read and how you understand it.
- Make connections between the ideas in the text and what you know from your life experiences.

During the Seminar

- Be prepared to participate; the quality of the seminar is diminished when participants speak without preparation, or do not participate at all.
- When appropriate, refer to the text; a seminar is not a test of memory.
- Ask for clarification when you are confused.
- Take turns speaking instead of raising hands.
- Listen carefully and actively to other participants.
- Speak clearly so all can hear you.
- Address other participants, not the seminar 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

- Reflect on your participation as an individual and the group as a whole.
- 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.
- Be prepared to help set goals for improvement in the next seminar.

Custer, H., Donohue, J., Hale, L., Hall, C., Hiatt, E., Kroesch, G., Krohn, B., Malik, S., Muhammad, F., Quijano, V., Shapiro, D., & Valdez, S. (2011). *AVID postsecondary strategies for success: A guide for faculty and student affairs professionals.* San Diego, CA: AVID Press.

Rules of Engagement for Socratic Seminar

- Be prepared to participate and ask good questions. The quality of the Socratic Seminar is diminished when participants speak without preparation.
- Show respect for differing ideas, thoughts, and values—no put-downs or sarcasm.
- Allow each speaker enough time to begin and finish his or her thoughts—don't interrupt.
- Involve others in the discussion, and ask them to elaborate on their responses.
- Build on what others say—ask questions to probe deeper, clarify, paraphrase, add to, and synthesize a variety of different views in your own summary.
- Use your best active listening skills—nod, make eye contact, lean forward, provide feedback, and listen carefully to others.
- Participate openly and keep your mind open to new ideas and possibilities.
- Refer to the text often, and give evidence and examples to support your response. Discuss the ideas of the text, not each other's opinions or personal experiences.
- Take notes about important points that you want to remember or new questions that you want to ask.

Boldway, S., Carter, M., Compton, R., Gutierrez, S., Mullen, M., & Valdez, S. (2012). *The write path English language arts: Exploring texts with strategic reading.* San Diego, CA: AVID Press.

Academic Language Scripts for Socratic Seminar

Clarifying

- Could you repeat that?
- Could you give us an example of that?
- I have a question about that: ...?
- Could you please explain what _____ means?
- Would you mind repeating that?
- I'm not sure I understood that. Could you please give us another example?
- Would you mind going over the instructions for us again?
- So, do you mean...?
- What did you mean when you said...?
- Are you sure that...?
- I think what _____ is trying to say is....
- Let me see if I understand you. Do you mean _____ or _____?
- Thank you for your comment. Can you cite for us where in the text you found your information?

Probing for Higher Level Thinking

- What examples do you have of...?
- Where in the text can we find...?
- I understand..., but I wonder about....
- How does this idea connect to...?
- If _____ is true, then...?
- What would happen if _____?
- Do you agree or disagree with his/her statement? Why?
- What is another way to look at it?
- How are ____ and _____ similar?
- Why is ____ important?

Building on What Others Say

- I agree with what _____ said because....
- You bring up an interesting point, and I also think....
- That's an interesting idea. I wonder...? I think... Do you think...?
- I thought about that also and I'm wondering why...?
- I hadn't thought of that before. You make me wonder if...? Do you think...?
- _____ said that... I agree and also think....
- Based on the ideas from _____, _____ and _____, it seems like we all think that....

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Academic Language Scripts for Socratic Seminar

Expressing an Opinion

- I think/believe/predict/imagine that... What do you think?
- In my opinion....
- It seems to me that....
- Not everyone will agree with me, but....

Interrupting

- Excuse me, but... (I don't understand.)
- Sorry for interrupting, but... (I missed what you said.)
- May I interrupt for a moment?
- May I add something here?

Disagreeing

- I don't really agree with you because....
- I see it another way. I think....
- My idea is slightly different from yours. I believe that... I think that....
- I have a different interpretation than you....

Inviting Others into the Dialogue

- Does anyone agree/disagree?
- What gaps do you see in my reasoning?
- What different conclusions do you have?
- _____ (name), what do you think?
- I wonder what _____ thinks?
- Who has another idea/question/interpretation?
- _____ (name), what did you understand about what _____ said?
- We haven't heard from many people in the group. Could someone new offer an idea or question?

Offering a Suggestion/Redirecting the Seminar

- We can't seem to find the connection to the text. Could you point out what and where that connection is?
- We all want to remember that our goal is a flow of questions and comments and ideas to be shared, rather than a debate to be won. How could your comment be rephrased to reflect our goal?
- Maybe you/we could....
- Here's something we/you might try: ....
- What if we... ?
- We seem to be having a debate instead of a dialogue, can we....
- Who has another perspective to offer that will help us re-focus the conversation?
- Let's look at page _____ and see what we think about....

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The Elements of Socratic Seminar

A productive, engaging Socratic Seminar consists of four interdependent elements: (1) the text, (2) the questions raised, (3) the Socratic Seminar leader, and (4) the participants. A closer look at each of these elements will help explain the unique characteristics of a Socratic Seminar.

The Text

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

The Questions

A Socratic Seminar opens with a question either posed by the leader or solicited from participants as they acquire more Seminar experience. A strong 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 often generate new questions from the leader and participants, inevitably inspiring more responses. In this way, the line of inquiry during a Socratic Seminar evolves on the spot, rather than being pre-determined by the leader.

The Leader

In a Socratic Seminar, the leader can play a dual role as facilitator and participant. The Seminar leader consciously demonstrates 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 the discussion becomes 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 various interpretations and recognize important possibilities in each. The leader must also exercise patience in allowing participants' understandings to evolve as the discussion develops. The leader must also be willing to help participants explore non-traditional insights and unexpected interpretations.

Determining the Seminar leader is a scaffolded process. When students are new to Socratic Seminar, the teacher serves as the leader, marshaling students through the dialogue process. Explicitly modeling the responsibilities of the leader, the teacher then moves toward selecting a student who has demonstrated a familiarity with and understanding of what it means to lead a Seminar, as well as having demonstrated the applicable skills necessary to manage his or her peers. When the majority of the class have been selected as leader at one time or another and have shown the capabilities of facilitating a productive Seminar, the position of leader is randomly chosen. This constitutes the pinnacle of Socratic Seminar leader selection.

The Participants

Socratic Seminar participants share the responsibility with the leader for the quality of the Seminar. Rewarding Seminars occur when participants process the text closely in advance, listen actively to the discussion, 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 or their peers' ideas. Participants acquire effective Seminar behaviors through participating in Seminars and reflecting on them afterward. After each Seminar, the lead and participants discuss the experience and identify ways of improving the Seminar process. Before each new Seminar, the leader also offers coaching and practice in specific habits of mind that improve reading, listening, thinking, and **discussing**. Eventually, when participants realize that the leader is not looking for the "right" answer, but is instead 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.

ELL Integration: The leader should also encourage all students to use tools, such as academic language scripts, in order to help students frame how they will verbally share information.

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Text Selection for Socratic Seminar

Socratic Seminar focuses on deep discussion around a central text, so it is important that rich texts, complex enough to invite multiple interpretations and require negotiation to arrive at meaning, are chosen. Consider the following list of sources to help you think about your text selection:

All Content Areas – Print Texts

- Philosophical treatises
- Song lyrics
- Essays
- Articles (e.g., journals, magazines, current events, AVID Weekly, etc.)
- Editorials
- Political cartoons
- Policies (e.g., government, business, health, public)
- Workplace documents (e.g., contracts, instructions, manuals, etc.)
- Communication/public relations documents (e.g., flyers, posters, propaganda, etc.)

All Content Areas – Non-Print Texts

- Photographs
- Art pieces
- Video clips

Mathematics

- Mathematical proofs
- Mathematical word problems
- Logic "arguments"
- Critical thinking puzzles
- Graphical information and/or data

Science

- Experimental designs or protocols
- Court/legal cases
- Professional organization bulletins (e.g., FDA, CDC, WHO, etc.)
- Medical practice guidelines
- Codes of ethics
- Environmental issues (e.g., policies, current event articles, journal articles, etc.)
- Primary source documents (e.g., Newton's laws, works of Galileo or Pythagoras, etc.)
- Articles from the web (e.g., sciencenews.org, nature.com, etc.)

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Text Selection for Socratic Seminar

Physical Education/Health

- Codes of ethics
- Professional organization bulletins (e.g., FDA, CDC, WHO, etc.)
- Medical practice guidelines
- Nutrition labels
- Fitness guidelines
- Dietary recommendations
- Weight-loss program descriptions
- "Playbook"—game strategies

Social Sciences

- Primary or secondary source documents
- Historical speeches (written or oral)
- Laws
- Edicts
- Treaties
- Historical Literature
- Legislative bills
- Court/legal cases

Language Arts

- Primary or secondary source documents
- Historical speeches (written or oral)
- Poems
- Short stories
- Excerpts from novels
- Plays
- Biographies/autobiographies

Visual and Performing Arts

- Performance (e.g., dance, play, monologue, musical, etc.)
- Art pieces
- Scripts
- Scores
- Art history texts
- Artist biographies/autobiographies
- Photographs
- Director, choreographer, conductor, animator notes (background information about the creative process)

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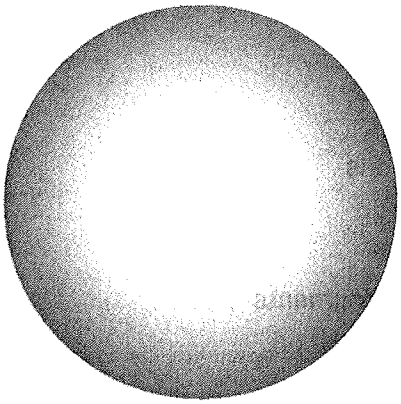
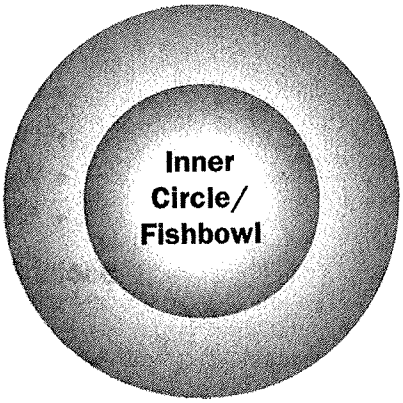
Sample Class Arrangements for Socratic Seminar

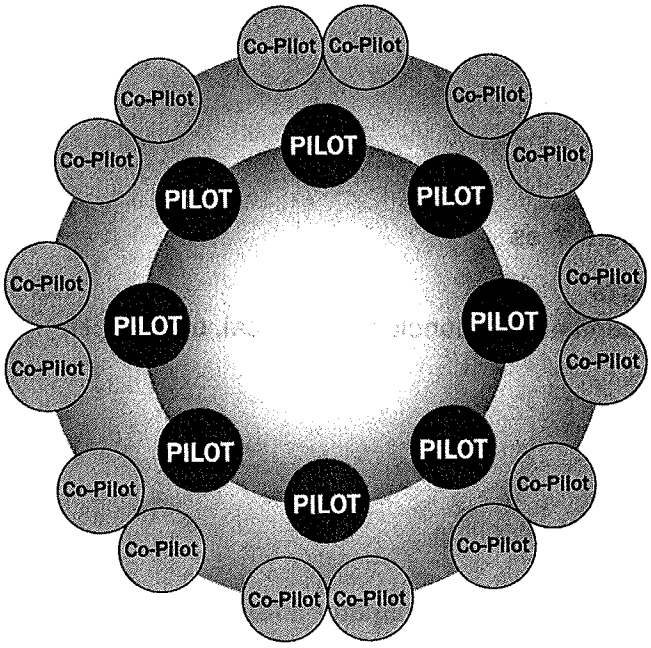
One Large Seminar



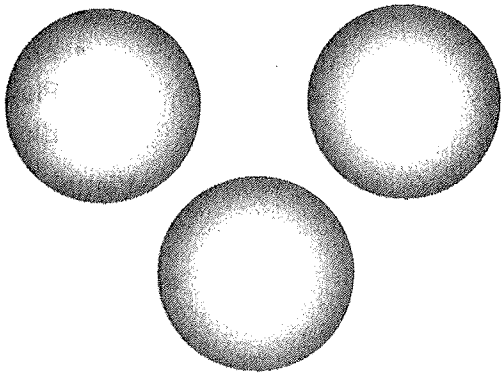
Inner/Outer Circle or Fishbowl



Triad Seminars



Simultaneous



Valdez, S., Carter, M., & Rodgers, J. (2013). *The write path English language arts: Informing ourselves and others through writing and speaking*. San Diego, CA: AVID Press.

Tips for Socratic Seminar

The points listed below are suggestions to enhance the Socratic Seminar process for both teachers and students, and to provide additional ideas to consider before, during, and after the discussion.

Teachers

- Be prepared with a higher level starter question in case the group questions do not meet the overall goal for the discussion.
- Don't try long texts or long Seminars at first; build gradually.
- Take notes during the Seminar (e.g., evaluate students, chronicle main ideas discussed) and use the notes during the debrief to help coach individual students and to help students set goals for the next Seminar.
- Note when one conversation thread has runs its course and introduce a new line of inquiry.
- Never neglect the debrief. Feedback is vital if the group is going to grow with each Seminar. Request specific, non-judgmental comments to help improve future Seminars.
- Over time, use a variety of print and non-print texts: arguments, proofs, fiction, essays, poetry, quotations, artwork, editorial cartoons, multimedia, etc.

Leaders (Student or Teacher Seminar Leaders)

- Your task is not to make participants "cover" the topic, but to help them use their minds well.
- Read the text in advance and take ample notes to have a deep understanding.
- Focus the group on the opening question as quickly as possible.
- Allow for "think time." Participants need time to think and process information and ideas.
- Model thoughtful behavior. Ask clarifying and probing questions if others seem stuck or are not asking for evidence, reasoning, or connections back to the text.
- Rephrase a question if participants seem confused by it—or ask another participant to rephrase it.
- Don't let sloppy thinking or gross misinterpretations go unexamined. Ask participants to offer textual support for their thinking, or to consider what _____ would say about their interpretation.
- Pay attention to what is *not* being discussed. If there is a perspective that is not being represented, introduce it.
- Guide participants to discuss their differences and work through conflicts respectfully.
- Involve reluctant participants while restraining more vocal members.
- Avoid making eye contact with participants if they continually talk to you rather than the group.
- Do not dominate the discussion or withdraw entirely; you are a participant, too.

Adapted from Boldway, S., Carter, M., Compton, R., Gutierrez, S., Mullen, M., & Valdez, S. (2012). *The write path English language arts: Exploring texts with strategic reading.* San Diego, CA: AVID Press.

4.11: Socratic Seminar: Fishbowl (Inner/Outer Circle)

Student Objective

Students will analyze what makes the discussion effective and what hinders its progress.

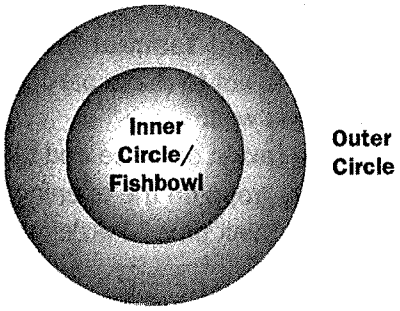
Overview

The Fishbowl variation of Socratic Seminar: Classic Style uses an inner and outer circle configuration and is a useful format for large classes, as it provides for easier classroom management than running multiple circles simultaneously.

Materials/Set-Up

- Handouts:
  - 4.11a: Observation Checklist for Socratic Seminar
  - Socratic Seminar: Classic Style Handouts
- In advance of the activity, complete the following:
  - Set up the classroom to accommodate the following configuration:

Inner/Outer Circle or Fishbowl

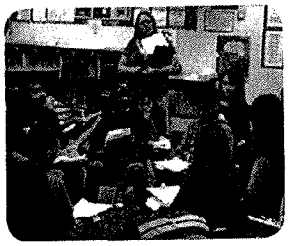


Instructional Steps

1. Follow the same text selection, norms, and pre-work steps as Socratic Seminar: Classic Style.
2. Using your preferred method (e.g., student choice, WICOR Partners, etc.), have students form partner groups, decide who is Student "A" and who is Student "B," and complete an **A/B Partner Share** to discuss the text and the notes that they created.
3. Arrange the classroom chairs into two circles with an equal number of seats. Select which group of students—"A" or "B," from the A/B Partner Share—will be in the inner circle and which will be in the outer circle.

A/B Partner Share is a quick, collaborative activity in which partners will choose to be "A" or "B." Partner "A" shares for one minute. Partner "B" may not ask any questions or interrupt in any way, but listens carefully and tries to remember everything that Partner "A" said. When one minute is up, Partner "B" repeats or lists back as many things as he or she can remember Partner "A" saying. Then, they switch roles. When both partners have listened and shared, they get two minutes to ask each other any questions about what they heard the other partner share.

Example: "Decide which Partner is A and which partner is B. Partner A, you have one minute to share your favorite or least favorite part of today's activity and what skills we built or reinforced in this activity. While they share, Partner B should be silent and carefully listening."



4. Instruct students in the outer circle to sit in a seat where they can see the face of their partner in the inner circle. Students cannot sit in the seats behind their partners.
    - With class sizes above 30, you may want to have students group into triads, with a third of the students in the inner circle and two-thirds in the outer circle. This allows for two partner observers for each inner-circle partner.
5. Review elements of the text and the prompt with the class.
6. Inform inner-circle participants that their engagement in Socratic dialogue will be the same as in Socratic Seminar: Classic Style.
7. Provide outer-circle students with the Observation Checklist for Socratic Seminar to use to observe and record notes on their partner's participation in the dialogue and the Socratic Seminar process.
8. Upon conclusion of the Seminar, have students in the outer circle share their observations, and with guidance from the teacher, offer constructive criticism or suggestions as to how to promote dialogue over debate. This can be done orally or in writing.

Extension

- To increase rigor, increase scaffolding, and integrate technology, see the "Extension" section of Socratic Seminar: Classic Style.
- To increase scaffolding:
    - Have students in the outer circle switch with students in the inner circle midway through the Seminar to afford all students access to the discussion.
    - Provide a "Hot Seat"—an empty chair in the inner circle—so that outer-circle students can "jump" into the conversation and add their perspective or ask a question before "jumping" back to their original seat.

Observation Checklist for Socratic Seminar

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

Your Name: _____ **Partner's Name:** _____

Speaks in the discussion	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Makes eye contact with other speakers or as she/he speaks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Refers to the text	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Asks a new or follow-up question	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Responds to another speaker	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Paraphrases and adds to another speaker's ideas	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Encourages another participant to speak	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Interrupts another speaker	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Engages in side conversation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dominates the conversation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

After Discussion:
What is the most interesting thing your partner said?

After Discussion:
What would you like to have said in the discussion?

Valdez, S., Carter, M., & Rodgers, J. (2013). *The write path English language arts: Informing ourselves and others through writing and speaking*. San Diego, CA: AVID Press.

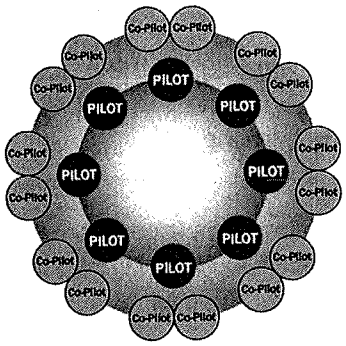
4.12: Socratic Seminar: Triad Formation (Pilot/Co-Pilot)

Student Objective
Students will incorporate thoughts from their peer support group and share those thoughts.

Overview
The Triad (Pilot/Co-Pilot) model of Socratic Seminar is one of the most advantageous formats to employ when the goal of the lesson is to maximize both inquiry and collaboration among all classroom students. Similar in structure to the Inner/Outer Circle variation, the Triad model allows for greater interaction and mobility between the outer circle of students and those in the inner circle.

Materials/Set-Up
- Handouts:
    - Socratic Seminar: Classic Style Handouts
- In advance of the activity, complete the following:
    - Set up the classroom to accommodate the following configuration:

Triad Seminars



Instructional Steps
1. Follow the same text selection, norms, and pre-work steps as Socratic Seminar: Classic Style, including having students write appropriately leveled questions about the text.
2. Divide students into thirds and arrange the seats so that one-third of the students sit in the inner circle (as the "pilots").
3. Set two chairs behind each pilot's chair (for the "co-pilots"). If the total number of students does not divide evenly into thirds, arrange the chairs accordingly so that a few pilots only have one co-pilot each, instead of two.

4. Review elements of the text and the prompt with the class.
5. Once students are seated, instruct the pilots to discuss the questions that they created about the text with their co-pilots. If Socratic Seminars are a new experience for the students, consider using a teacher-created prompt to bolster this initial discussion.
6. Allow about one minute for each "flight crew"—pilot and co-pilots working together—to share their thoughts about the questions.
7. Beginning with a volunteer, conduct a Whip-Around, having each pilot in the circle share a question that they had discussed with their flight crew.
8. Once each pilot has shared a question, determine the opening question and allow the Seminar to develop its initial dialogue. The outer ring of co-pilots does not openly contribute to the discussion occurring in the inner circle. However, encourage co-pilots to take notes or write down points that they wish to mention at the first available opportunity.
9. At appropriate times—about every five to seven minutes—announce a "stop-over," and pause the discussion.
10. **Allow the pilots to turn to their co-pilots once again to quickly gather input and reactions regarding the inner-circle discussion.** At this point, allow co-pilots the opportunity to relieve their pilots, if they so desire, and assume the inner-circle seat.
11. Continue the Socratic Seminar, allowing for connections so that co-pilots can continue to contribute to the discussion until the dialogue comes to a close.
12. For the final leg of their "journey," conduct a Whip-Around, allowing each pilot one final statement or rhetorical question that sums up their flight crew's thinking.

ELL Integration: Provide students with the opportunity to rehearse their responses before sharing with the entire class.

Extension

- To increase rigor, increase scaffolding, and integrate technology, see the "Extension" section of Socratic Seminar: Classic Style.
- To increase scaffolding:
  - Allow pilots and co-pilots to switch roles at their own determined times.
  - Allow co-pilots to contribute ideas to the inner circle during the dialogue by writing their ideas on sticky notes and passing them to their pilots.
  - Have the pilots rotate two spots during a stop-over, for a new flight crew and a different perspective.
- To integrate technology, allow co-pilots to text directly to their pilots, using cell phones.

4.13: Socratic Seminar: Debriefing

Student Objective

Students will reflect on the Socratic Seminar process, their experience participating in the Socratic Seminar, and the personal and group skills used in the activity.

Overview

Spending time after a Socratic Seminar to critique, debrief, and evaluate the process is critical. The reflections allow for growth of skills necessary to achieve quality Seminars and high levels of thinking. As students analyze their personal experience in the Seminar, they can identify areas of strength and areas for improvement for future Seminars. Moving beyond simple restatement of the concepts discussed during the Seminar, the debrief is an opportune time to encourage students to reflect verbally and in writing upon their overall participation, self-assessing not just how well they followed the rules of engagement, but thinking about their academic language, non-verbal communication, use of rhetoric, and recognition of the skills and qualities that their peers bring to the classroom.

Materials/Set-Up

- Handout:
  - 4.13a: Socratic Seminar Rubric

Instructional Steps

1. To conduct a verbal debrief:
   - Upon completion of the Socratic Seminar, facilitate a small-group or class discussion strictly over the content of the dialogue.
   - Continue to explore the other realms of the Seminar: metacognition, style, and process.
   - Tie everything together by discussing relationships and connections between the themes and concepts of the Seminar and deep content ideas, cross-curricular areas, and personal experience.
2. To conduct a rubric debrief:
   - Use the Socratic Seminar Rubric as an evaluation tool for student self-evaluation of participation or for observers to evaluate other participants.
3. To conduct a written debrief:
   - Have students compose a written debrief, summarizing their learning from the Seminar and making conceptual connections between the themes of the Seminar and deeper content ideas, cross-curricular areas, or personal experience.

Extension

- To increase rigor, refer to Analyzing the Flow of Dialogue in a Socratic Seminar for methods of processing the Seminar dynamic, such as mapping the patterns of dialogue and scripting the conversation. Analysis of the information from this activity can help students set participation and dialogue goals for the next Seminar.
- To integrate technology, use Poll Everywhere, Nearpod, or another feedback tool for audience voting.

Rubric for Socratic Seminar

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
Questioning	• Has prepared several higher level questions based on the text • Asks several higher level questions during the seminar	• Has prepared questions, mostly lower level • Asks some questions during seminar	• Has very few questions, if any • Asks very few questions, if any	• Has not prepared questions • Does not ask questions
Speaking	• Moves the conversation forward • Speaks to all participants • Thinks before answering • Refers directly to the text • Makes connections to other speakers • Considers all opinions • Offers insightful contributions	• Comments often, but does not lead others • Addresses only the teacher • Refers to text, but not to subtle points • Responds to questions • Considers some opinions • Offers interesting ideas, not necessarily connected	• Emphasizes only own ideas • Addresses only the teacher • Tends toward debate, not dialogue • Ideas do not always connect • Comments neglect details of text	• Disruptive, argumentative • Mumbles or is silent • Makes no connection to previous comments
Listening	• Demonstrates effective listening skills (making eye contact, nodding, taking notes) • Writes down thoughts and questions • Builds on others' comments • Asks for clarification when needed	• May have some eye contact with speaker • Takes some notes • Ignores others' comments	• Rarely demonstrates effective listening skills (making eye contact, nodding, taking notes) • Loses track of conversation • Judges others' ideas	• No effective listening skills demonstrated • Attempts to dominate • Interrupts speakers in middle of sentence • Repeats same ideas
Reading	• Identifies/highlights key words and phrases • Has notes of main ideas	• Identifies/highlights some key words and phrases • Has some notes	• No highlighting • Skims the text • Very few notes, if any	• Unprepared, unfamiliar with text

Solomon, B., Bugno, T., Kelly, M., Risi, R., Serret-Lopez, C., & Sundly, J. (2011). *The student success path*. San Diego, CA: AVID Press.

4.14: Analyzing the Flow of Dialogue in a Socratic Seminar

Student Objective
Students will receive and respond to quantitative and qualitative information for the Socratic Seminar dialogue.

Overview
Tracking the flow, sequence, and content of dialogue in a Socratic Seminar can provide information to both teachers and students on the quantity and quality of student involvement in a Seminar. This can also help individual students and the entire class set goals for future Seminars.

Materials/Set-Up
- Handout:
  - 4.14a: Tracking Form for Socratic Seminar

Instructional Steps
1. The following are guidelines for mapping the flow of dialogue:
   - Assign a student to keep track of the flow—or order—of dialogue, utilizing the Tracking Form for Socratic Seminar, which can then be displayed afterward on a document camera.
   - Instruct the student to draw small circles within the larger provided circle for each participating student.
   - As dialogue begins, have the student draw a line from the first speaker (who asks the opening question) to the second speaker, to the third speaker, and so on, continuing to draw lines throughout the whole Seminar. Different marks and letters can be placed next to each smaller circle, depending upon the student's contribution to the discussion: a question mark if a question was asked, an exclamation point for an ah-ha moment, the letter "S" for a statement, the letter "X" for an explanation, and the letter "R" if the text was referenced.
   - If the Seminar pauses or new speakers enter the speaking circle, have the student change pen colors so that lines will denote any influential difference, no matter how slight, due to the personnel change.

- At the end of the Seminar, display the dialogue map and allow the class to analyze the map and make observations. They should look for patterns and inferences in the flow of the discussion: Who had the most lines? Who had the least lines? Were there indications of multiple dialogues between the same two people?

2. The following are guidelines for scripting the dialogue:

- Appoint several students to track and record what is actually said during the Socratic Seminar discussion. These can be students in the outside circle (with the Fishbowl or Triad variations) or select students who aren't participating in a Socratic Seminar: Classic Style. Each scribe can script the dialogue of one or two students.
- At the Seminar's end, display the scripted dialogues or have the scribes read them to the class.
- Conduct a class discussion on quality of the dialogue.

Extension

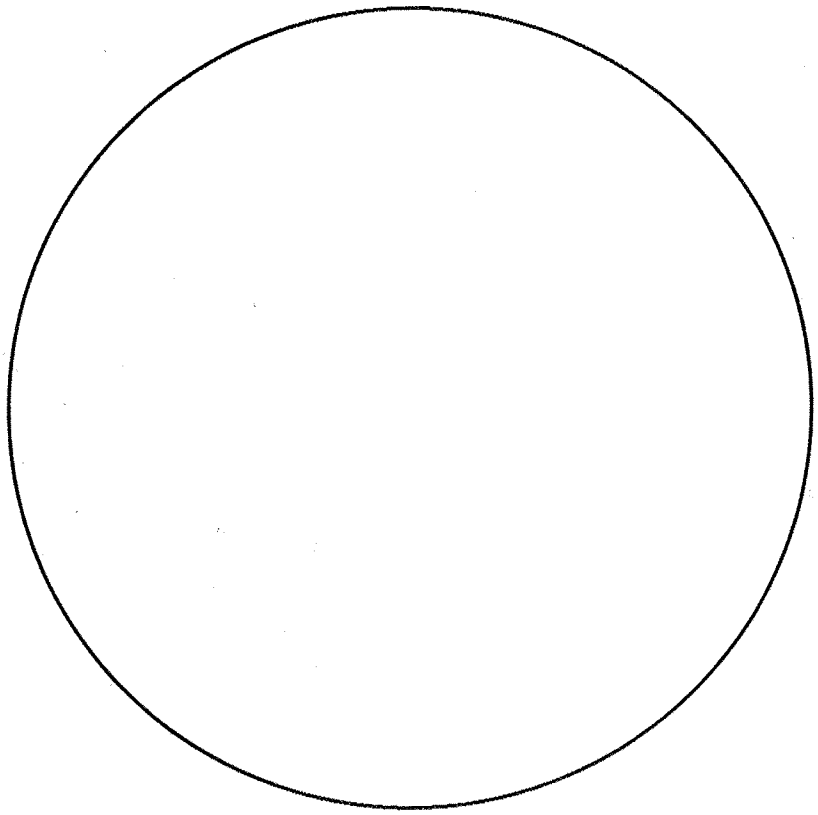
- To increase rigor, after the discussion, ask students to set whole-class goals and personal goals for the next Seminar, based on their analysis of the flow of the current Seminar.

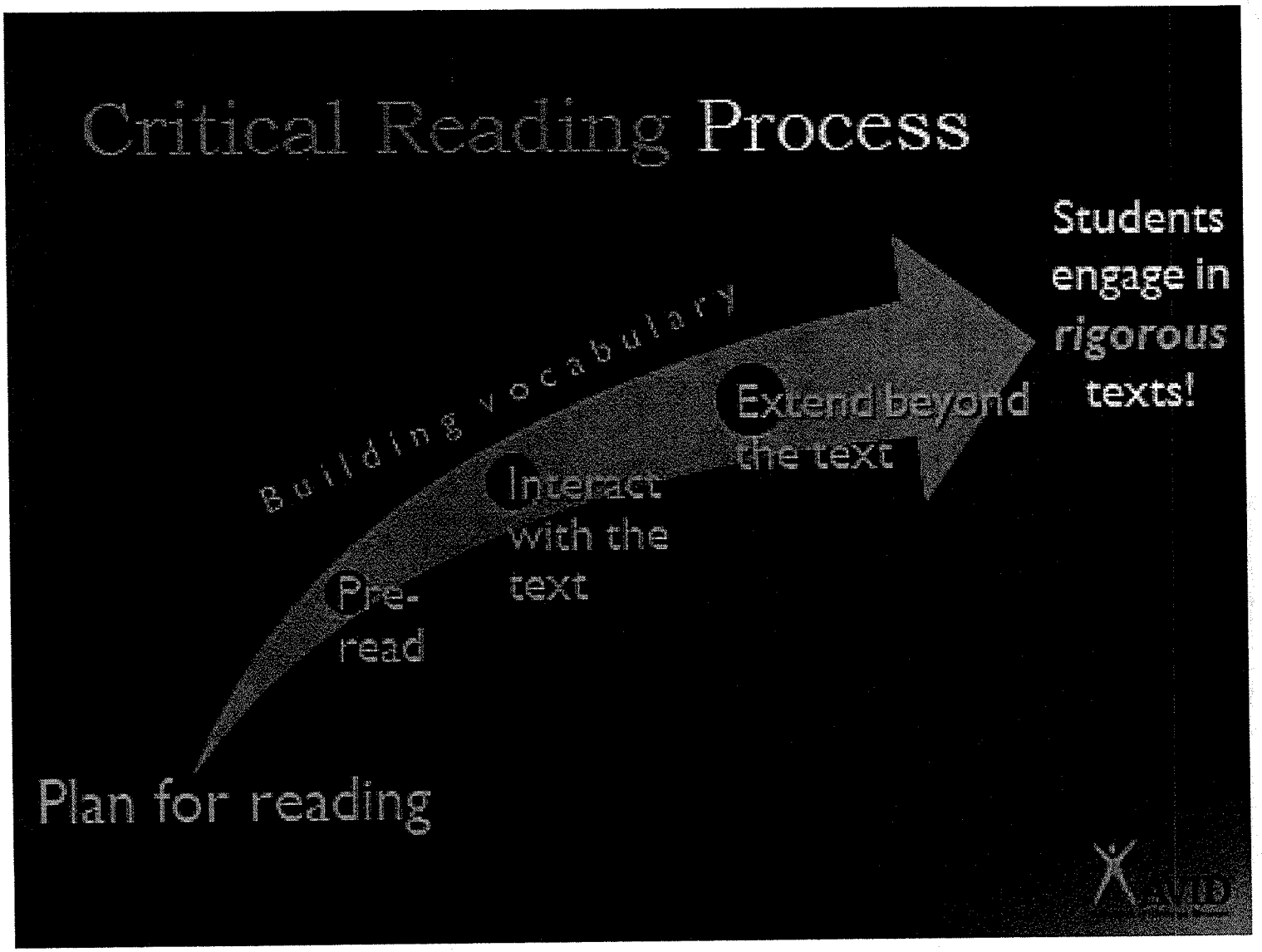
Tracking Form for Socratic Seminar

Teacher/Grade Level:		**Date:**	
Focus Area for Scripting:		**Leader:**	

Scripting Key:

?: asked a question **!**: ah-ha **S**: statement **X**: explanation **R**: referenced the text




Critical Reading Process
Students engage in rigorous texts!
Building vocabulary
Extend beyond the text
Interact with the text
Pre-read
Plan for reading

pilots one article
copilots other articles

AVID Weekly
Decades of College Dreams

Helping Students Find Their Place in the World

By Danielle Allen

Debates about the nature of higher education are often framed by the question of whether vocational elements or liberal arts elements should dominate in the curriculum. This is a mistake.

Human beings generally need to foster their development along four dimensions: They need to prepare themselves for bread-winning work; for civic and political engagement; for creative self-expression and world-making; and for rewarding relationships in spaces of intimacy and leisure. We can't do without the skills, knowledge and understanding that enable us to make a living. But neither can we do without a related set of competencies that help us understand who we are as human beings so that we can make reasonable choices about what, individually and collectively, we should do. How should we direct our creative capacities? What should be our shared political ideals and goals? What are the sources of satisfaction in private relationships?

When we consider education from the perspective of the collective, instead of the individual, and ask whether a citizenry generally is being educated as needed, there often seems to be a mismatch between what people choose to learn and the available jobs. The philosopher Plato seems to have been motivated by a similar frustration. He imagined a utopia ruled by a philosopher-king in which, from birth, everyone would be slotted into a particular occupational group and educated to excel to the highest degree within that occupation. Some would be farmers, some craftsmen and traders, some soldiers, and some political leaders. From a bird's-eye view, the state would know from an individual's birth who should be what.

Here and there we can see policy efforts that, in the name of efficiency, seek to apply to education the kinds of information that can be acquired from a bird's-eye view. For instance, Florida is reshaping its community college curriculum by setting up in particular areas degree programs in vocational specialties that labor demographers identify as undersupplied in that location. There is, of course, nothing wrong with putting real opportunities in front of people. But we don't want to craft an environment where people fail to come to their own understanding of what they should try to do because as a nation we are justifiably trying to increase the efficiency with which we match human capital to the labor market. For this reason, it is necessary to have a liberal arts element infused throughout the curriculum at all levels: in K-12 and community colleges as well as four-year colleges and universities.

Just as we should want to cultivate capacities for self-knowledge (to support vocational choices, among other reasons) we must also recognize that an element of self-knowledge includes being able to see how one's competencies connect to the diversity of methods available for self-support. One needs to understand oneself; one also needs to be able to see the vocational opportunities that are out there.

In our restructured world of work – which has a range of service jobs and knowledge jobs that are not captured by the traditional professions and trades; where people will change areas of specialization multiple times over their working lives – simply seeing the opportunities is hard. To this end, the Mellon Foundation, on whose board I serve, has been supporting the placement of students who have

Helping Students Find Their Place in the World

By Danielle Allen

(continued)

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earned Ph.D.s in the humanities – people who have, in other words, committed themselves most fully to an education in the liberal arts – into non-academic jobs. The goal is to help those whose education has tipped more toward the liberal arts acquire the observational attunement necessary to see the range of occupational possibilities.

Human beings are not born complete; we make ourselves over the course of our lives. Science confirms this. For all the power of genetics, from the moment of our birth culture has a huge impact on us, including even on which features of our genetic endowment come to the fore. We most fully realize our potential when we make ourselves – even if most commonly we can do this only with the help of others. Each of us is best positioned to be the expert on ourselves; this is why self-knowledge is so important. This is the reason we each have to find our own way in the world, rather than letting someone – for instance, a philosopher-king – place us once and for all in a particular position.

Our contemporary situation demands that we help our young people find their way by marrying the cultivation of self-knowledge to a worldly capacity to see practical opportunities. This requires a curriculum that unifies liberal arts and vocational elements at all levels.

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Danielle Allen is the UPS Foundation professor of social science at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, N.J. She serves on the boards of the Mellon Foundation, Princeton University and Amherst College.

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09-24-12

WASHINGTON POST-BLOOMBERG

AVID
Decades of College Dreams

Marking the Text: *Non-fiction* (Argument)

This Strategy has three distinct marks:

1. Number the paragraph: ◯ reading a word problem that is only one paragraph, number each sentence.

◯ nger word problems, start with 1 and count by fives (1, 5, 10).

2. ◯ ey terms, cited authors, and other essential words or numbers.

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 or unique way
- a central concept or idea
- relevant to one's reading purpose

3. Underline the author's claims and other information relevant to the reading purpose.

A claim is an arguable statement or assertion made by the author. Data, facts, or other backing should support an author's assertion.[1] 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.

Ultimately, what you underline and circle will depend on your reading purpose. In addition to marking key terms and claims, you might be asked to mark other essential information such as the author's evidence, descriptions, stylistic elements, or language in the text that provides some insight into the author's values and beliefs.

[1]Toulmin, S. The uses of argument. (2003). U.S.A.: Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1958)

QUICK REFERENCE 7.1

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Writing in the Margins: *Six Strategies at a Glance*

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

Visualize

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.

When visualizing, ask:

- What does this look like?
- How can I draw this concept/idea?
- What visual and/or symbol best represents this idea?

Summarize

Briefly summarize paragraphs or sections of a text. Summarizing is a good way to keep track of essential information while gaining control of lengthier passages.

Summaries will:

- state what the paragraph is about
- describe what the author is doing
- account for key terms and/or ideas

Clarify

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.

In order to clarify information, you might:

- define key terms
- reread sections of the text
- analyze or connect ideas in the text
- paraphrase or summarize ideas

Connect

Make connections within the reading to your own life and to the world. Making connections will improve your comprehension of the text.

While reading, you might ask:

- How does this relate to me?
- How does this idea relate to other ideas in the text?
- How does this relate to the world?

Respond

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.

Readers will often respond to:

- interesting ideas
- emotional arguments
- provocative statements
- author's claims
- facts, data, and other support

Question

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.

While reading, you might ask:

- What is the author saying here?
- What is the author doing?
- What do I understand so far?
- What is the purpose of this section?
- What do I agree/disagree with?