

Socratic Seminar Rules and Expectations

1. Come Prepared
2. One person speaks at a time
3. Respect everyone in the circle
4. There are no “wrong” answers
5. It is not a debate
6. Everyone must participate

Dialogue vs. Debate

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

Dialogue	Debate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● collaborative ● about Understanding ● listening for deeper meaning ● re-evaluating assumptions ● keeping an open mind ● about temporarily suspending beliefs ● searching for strength or validity in all ideas ● about respecting all participants ● exploring different possibilities ● open-ended 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● oppositional ● about proving others wrong ● listening for flaws ● defending assumptions ● close-minded ● about defending beliefs ● searching for weaknesses in ideas ● about belittling or demeaning others ● having one right answer ● demands a conclusion

Costa's Levels of Questioning

Level 1: *Input* - In the Lines

“I know this because it says...”

- The answer can be found in the text (either directly or indirectly)
- Very concrete and pertains only to the text
- Asks for facts about what has been heard or read
- Information is recalled in the exact manner/form it was heard

Level 2: *Process* - Between the Lines

“I think this because...”

- The answer can be inferred from the text
- Although more abstract than a Level One question, deals only with the text
- Information can be broken down into parts
- Involves examining in detail, analyzing motives or causes, making inferences, finding information to support generalizations or decision making
- Questions combine information in a new way

Level 3: *Output* - Beyond the Lines

“I have a new idea or solution...” “I disagree with... because...”

- The answer goes beyond the text
- Is abstract and may not pertain directly to the text
- Asks that judgments be made from information
- Requires one to give opinions about issues, judge the validity of ideas or other products, and justify opinions and ideas

<u>Level One</u> Information (Input)	<u>Level Two</u> Explanation/Analysis	<u>Level Three</u> Interpretation/Application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Naming ● Defining ● Counting ● Observing ● Describing ● Identifying ● Selecting ● Listing ● Matching ● Reciting ● Completing ● Recalling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Comparing ● Sequencing ● Grouping ● Experimenting ● Organizing ● Making Analogies ● Inferring ● Cause/Effect ● Distinguishing ● Contrasting ● Analyzing ● Explaining 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Forecasting ● Predicting ● Generalizing ● Evaluating ● Applying a Principle ● Hypothesizing ● Speculating ● Imagining ● Applying ● Judging

“There are one-story intellects, two-story intellects, and three-story intellects with skylights. All fact collectors who have no aim beyond their facts are one story people. Two-story people compare, reason, generalize, using the labor of fact collectors as their own. Three-story people idealize, imagine, predict -- Their best illumination comes from above - through the skylight.” - Oliver Wendell Holmes

Planning Questions

The quality of the learning in a Socratic seminar rests on the kinds of questions asked. Keep these guidelines in mind as you prepare your questions and as you think of additional questions while in the middle of the seminar.

- Be sure your questions are based on the text.
- Ask questions that are complex and require participants to think beyond what is directly
- Ask open-ended questions; don't ask yes/no questions.
- Ask questions to which there are no definite right answers.
- Regularly ask “Why?” “How do you know?” and “Why is this important?” to help participants expand their thoughts and responses.
- Ask questions that require participants to explain their reasoning, their assumptions, and to examine possible misunderstandings.

Developing Opening, Guiding, and Closing Questions

Opening Questions	
<p>Description</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stem from context ● Direct participants into the text ● Elicit more than one-word responses ● Are generally concrete questions 	<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What does this text ask us to do? ● What is the theme of the reading? ● What significance is this to _____? ● What are the assumptions of this text? ● Could the two main characters have switched places? Why or why not? ● What might be some other good titles? ● Is it better to be _____ or _____? ● In recent times, which well known people are like _____?
Guiding Questions	
<p>Description</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Move participants deeper into the text and to examine the content of the text ● Help participants examine their own thinking and encourage revision of ideas ● Help participants examine the seminar dynamics to keep it/get it on the right track ● May ask for the interpretation of a specific line or passage; often “how” or “why” questions ● May probe for assumptions, reasons, other interpretations, etc. ● Generally move the discussion into the abstract 	<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What other ideas have we learned about that might help us understand this text? ● Why does the main character think _____? ● How do you support that position from the text? ● If _____ is true, then _____? ● Can you define what you mean by _____? ● Why do you say that? ● What do we already know about _____? ● How can you verify or disprove that assumption? ● What would happen if _____? ● Do you agree or disagree with his/her statement? Why? ● What is another way to look at it? ● How are your thoughts now different from your initial ideas? ● What would you say to someone who said _____? ● How are _____ and _____ similar? ● Why is _____ important? ● How can we move from debate back to dialogue? ● Who has another perspective to offer that will help us re-energize the conversation?
Closing Questions	
<p>Description</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establish relevance ● Connect to the real world ● Relate to the lives of the participants ● Are generally abstract 	<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What can we do with our understanding of this text? ● If you were writing this work, what would the ending be? ● Explain the consequences of the ideas in the text. ● Predict/justify future developments