Socratic Seminar Explanation and Scoring Rubric

Relevance
The Socratic seminar is based on a 2,400-year-old philosophy that teaches students to raise probing questions, to think critically about their own ideas and the ideas of others, to support ideas with textual evidence, and to take greater responsibility for their own learning.

Instructions
We will be conducting a Socratic seminar for your reading of various pieces from various sources. You will prepare for all seminars in the following manner.

• Carefully read the text for both facts and ideas and rhetorical structures.
• Underline or highlight ideas that are especially intriguing or meaningful
• Make notes in the margin or on sticky notes for reference
• Prepare a total of two seminar questions and one answer. You will need to have one Analysis question, and one closing question. Answer the Analysis question in approximately 150 words. You DO NOT need to answer the Closing Question. We will do that during class discussion.
• Mark any passage in the text that you did not understand when you read the selection.
• Note connections between this selection and the other pieces we have discussed or you have read on your own. You may want to note those connections in the margins or on sticky notes.
• Reflect critically on what you have read.
• Be prepared to support your ideas with textual evidence. Your participation will not “count” if you do not have evidence to support a claim.

On each seminar day you will need to bring our text, your questions, and any preparatory notes you have made. By the end of the seminar, you should have made significant contributions (plural) to the discussion. Remember that part of your grade will depend on how well you listen and contribute to the seminar’s dynamic.

Important note: Any student absent on any Socratic seminar day will make it up by having a scheduled one-on-one discussion session with Mr. Logsdon.

The heart of the Socratic seminar lies in three categories of questions:

• Opening question (only one per seminar) – The Teacher will initiate this question.
  o Introduces a broad generalization or the purpose of the essay that looks directly into the text for a specific answer: the answer to the question should require analysis, interpretation, and synthesis of ideas.
  o Introduces and explores subjects, ideas, and themes
• Core questions (one per seminar) – you must respond to this question
  o Require content-specific information specifically as you examine the author’s use of rhetorical modes and techniques
  o Seek an examination and/or clarification of central (most salient) rhetorical points
  o Explore cause-effect relationships
  o Call for interpretation and exploration and analysis of the rhetorical choices.
• Closing question (one per seminar) – only prepare this question. We will answer your question during discussion.
  o Establishes universal relevance
  o Asks for a connection with the real world
  o Directs and application to self and community
Example

Opening question
- Why do people blame others, even inanimate objects, for their own flaws and mistakes?

Core questions
- How does Baker’s use of diction like “evolve,” “breed,” and “burrow to personify inanimate objects affect the essay’s purpose?
- Why does Baker classify inanimate objects into groups based on behavior?
- Why does Baker use litotes (understatement) when articulating the locomotion of inanimate objects as “not uncommon? (paragraph 8)

Closing question
- Why do humans anthropomorphize?
- At what point does a situation or practice reach futility
- How are we conditioned to accept undesirable circumstances or outcomes??

Grading Criteria per Socratic Seminar

One opening question and answer – Teacher provided
- Claim
- Data
- Support that explains how data validates the Claim

One core questions and answers (15 points)
- Claim that identifies an essential rhetorical decision,
- Evidence of that decision,
- Function of the rhetorical decision
- Development of the connection between the rhetorical decision and the purpose of the essay

One closing question – no response necessary (5 points)
- Claim
- Data
- Explanation of why or how the support validates the Claim

Each Socratic Seminar should contain:
- Significant contribution to the conversation though extension or elaboration
- New insight or perspective on the text being discussed
- References specific lines of words from the text as a source for the contribution
- Directed comments and responses to the seminar group
- Clearly and eloquent delivery when providing responses
- Demonstrated purposeful, critical, and appreciative listening

What does one hundred fifty words twelve point Times New Roman font actually look like on the page?
One hundred fifty words sounds like quite-a-bit of writing but I’m not actually sure that’s the case. Once you get on a roll thinking about an idea, I would imagine that limiting your ideas to only one hundred fifty words is actually a problem. At this point in I’ve reached sixty words so I’m anticipating that since I reached fifty words within the third line of text I should reach one hundred fifty by line nine. Now if I’ve asked a good question then responding to said question with strong and clear claims as well as providing textual evidence to support my ideas should facilitate the reaching of my goal. I should note that I’ve now reached one hundred thirty words – well on my way to one hundred fifty. I realize that by putting a word limit on your responses you will inevitably provide me with bovine excrement to reach the work limit. Indeed, in discussing the aforementioned bovine excrement, I exceeded the word requirement and am now at one hundred seventy-three words.