Socratic Seminar

Socratic Seminar Norms/Rules

1. One person speaks at a time.
2. Everyone contributes ideas. No one dominates or withdraws.
3. Use transitions to connect comments.
4. Invite others into the discussion artfully.
5. Agree/disagree with ideas, not people.
6. Ask clarifying questions.
7. Support a point with evidence from the text.
8. Use body language and eye contact to communicate active listening.
9. Stay in a posture of humility, intellectual flexibility, and curiosity.

Roles

Each student in a Socratic Seminar plays a role.

Inner/Outer Circle

- **Speaker** participates in the discussion and sits in the inner circle.
- **Coach** is assigned to a specific student in the inner circle, and they are listening for the comments that students are making, the examples that they're using. Their goal is to help the student at halftime to become an even more effective speaker.

General Evaluators

- **Comment** counter counts how many times students are speaking.
- **Transition** tracker keeps track of the academic transitions that we're working on.
- **Quote tracker** keeps notes on the quotes that are being cited.
- **Big Board** keeps track of the big thematic questions and ideas in the conversation.

Transitions

Transitions are words and phrases that help us more from person to person or from idea to idea. We have to levels of transitions: proficient and advanced.

Proficient Transitions

Rooting Ideas in the Text

1. Your comment reminds me of [quote, idea]…On page…
2. A related idea/question/comment is…
3. Where do you see that in the text?
4. I would like to (re)direct our attention to the [text]. On page…

Transitioning to a New Topic

1. So far we have discussed [summarize discussion]. I would like to transition us to a new question/ topic…

Developing Ideas Further

1. A related idea/question/comment is…

2. I am unsatisfied with our discussion of [idea] because…
3. I agree/disagree with the notion that…because…
4. Building off of [person's] idea…
5. I have a clarifying question for [person]. Are you asking…
6. I would like to return to our previous discussion of [idea] because…
7. I would like to elaborate upon [person's] idea…

Inviting Someone

1. I'm interested in hearing your thoughts on this question, [person]
2. Thank you! I'm still thinking. Can you come back to me?

Advanced Transitions

Synthesize

1. What I am hearing X, Y, and Z say is… These ideas raise the greater question… because…
2. According to both X and Y, _____. These ideas suggest that…because…
3. Based X, Y, and Z's comments…it seems that we are wrestling with…This is important because…

Going Even Deeper

1. According to both X and Y, _____. Although I agree with these ideas up to a point, I cannot accept the overall conclusion that…because…
2. Even if we accept… we cannot overlook the ambiguity of…because…
3. While I concede that….I still disagree with the notion that…because…
4. I think we might be overlooking [author's] assertion that…because…
5. Even though on first read it may seem that…a closer reading of the passage suggests that…
6. X's claim that…rests upon the assumption that… which is questionable because…
7. I am not convinced that the text suggests... Let's go back to the passage where…in order to consider…
8. By focusing on…, we overlook the deeper problem of…because…

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