

Socratic Circles Discussion Activity

Rationale: The objective of this type of activity is to make students comfortable with reading about, analyzing and discussing intelligently historical issues, problems, people and events using primary sources.

Homework: You will need to read the packet of primary source documents thoroughly before you come to class. I want to see and hear evidence that you have actively read and understand the documents. Notes in your journal as well as thoughtful notes on the discussion handout. You should have well thought out comments and questions that you would like to pose during the discussion. In other words, have an **intellectual conversation** with the documents.

In-Class Procedures: As you come into the class for Socratic Circles, pick up a discussion sheet and one colored chip. I will choose which group will start in the inner circle and the outer circle. Groups will both get a chance to be in both inner and outer circles. Every student will have their documents, discussion sheet and a pen or pencil. All students will take notes on key points, questions posed and points of view in the left column of the discussion sheet. Any thoughts, questions or differing points of view discussed or you think of should be written in the right hand column. I want to see evidence of your active participation and thinking processes during the discussion whether it is in the inner or outer circle. The inner circle is the active circle and the outer circle is the passive observation circle.

Inner-Circle Responsibilities: All students in the Inner-Circle will participate in active discussion directly. I will pose the first question and then it is up to you the students to lead the discussion. Address the question and discuss deeper meaning and thoughtful answers while posing new questions to delve deeper into the topic.

- Ø Ask each other questions.
- Ø Pose differing points of view.
- Ø Disagree directly but politely.
- Ø Use examples to support answers.
- Ø Identify a pattern or any bias you noticed in the document.
- Ø Make a well reasoned prediction or hypothesis.
- Ø Go beyond the obvious - articulate the complex or the subtle messages.
- Ø Be aware of the date of the document and who wrote and for what purpose.
- Ø Acknowledge each other by name.

Outer-Circle Responsibilities: Students in the outer circle are to remain quiet, observe and write on their discussion sheet. Especially write down points you would like to make. After about 10 minutes or so I will stop the discussion and turn to the outer circle. At this time the outer circle has a chance to make comments or ask questions. Then the groups exchange positions and round 2 will begin with the next question being posed by me.

Grading of this Assignment: Your grade will be based on the following criteria:

- Ø The extent of your pre-discussion preparation, the quality of your notes on the document.
- Ø The amount and quality of your participation in the Socratic Circle discussion.
- Ø The depth of your discussion sheet notes, the quality of your thinking and analysis of the discussion.

*See the Rubric for more information.