



To modify this Google Doc, go to the File menu and select "Make a copy."

Powerful Conversation Two: The Socratic Seminar

GRADES: 1 - 12

SUBJECTS: Geography

Best for: listening to different voices, encouraging civil discourse

Materials: a focus "text" or topic that would foster multiple viewpoints

Organization: create discussion groups of no more than 10 members

I - Prepare for the Seminar (5-15 minutes)

- Facilitator outlines the purpose of the conversation, to engage different viewpoints on a topic, and connects it to any larger projects or processes.
- Facilitator provides a focus "text" (such as an article, presentation, image, video)
- Facilitator provides 1 or 2 open-ended focus questions to frame the text, such as:
 - How does this issue affect our community?
 - The "text" says " , " what do you think that means and why?
- Participants review the "text" carefully with the focus questions in mind.

II - Review and Agree on the Norms for the Seminar (3 minutes)

Participants will:

- Talk to each other, not just to the facilitator.
- Talk about ideas, not people. If you disagree with someone's idea, address their idea.
- Ask questions of one another. If you would like to hear more about an idea, ask.
- Listen and respond to ideas without trying to "win" a debate or find a "solution."
- Use evidence from the text or your experience to support your ideas.
- Be courteous. Do not interrupt or raise your voice.



To modify this Google Doc, go to the File menu and select "Make a copy."

- Watch your talk time. Be brief and clear. Give others time to share.

Some ways to frame your thoughts:

- "I think _____, because _____."
- "I really liked your idea about _____, and it makes me think of _____."
- "I do not agree with what you said about _____, because _____."
- "We have said a lot about _____, but we have not yet talked about _____."

III - Conduct the Seminar (10 - 20 minutes)

- Facilitator begins discussion with one focus question. Participants discuss.
- Facilitator speaks only to remind the group of norms or to introduce a new question if a topic is exhausted.

IV - Reflect (10 minutes)

- Participants reflect silently for 3 minutes on content and process of the seminar:
 - What is one idea you heard that surprised you or changed your perspective?
 - How did you feel participating in this kind of discussion? Why?
- Facilitator asks select participants to share their reflections.

V - Synthesize (5 minutes)

- Facilitator summarizes some of the major ideas that they heard during the discussion
- If applicable, the facilitator identifies when and how this will be incorporated into work with at least one clear next step.

[CREATIVE COMMONS LICENSE](#)