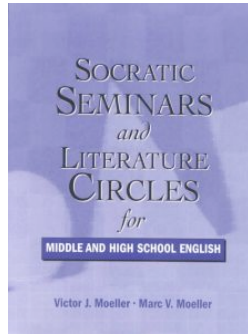
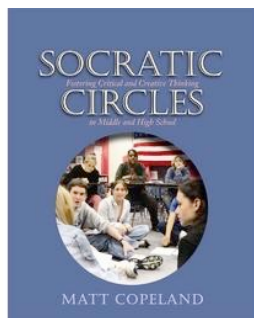


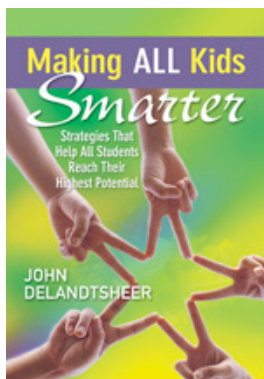
## Resources for Teachers



SOCRATIC SEMINARS AND LITERATURE CIRCLES – Victor Moeller, Marc Moeller



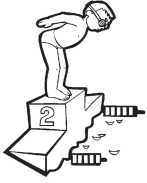
Socratic Circles: Fostering Critical and Creative Thinking in Middle and High School– Matt Copeland



Making ALL Kids Smarter: Strategies That Help All Students Reach Their Highest Potential – John DeLandsheer



SOCRATIC SEMINARS IN THE BLOCK – Pam Brewer, Wanda Ball



## Background - [http://www.studyguide.org/socratic\\_seminar.htm](http://www.studyguide.org/socratic_seminar.htm)

The Socratic method of teaching is based on Socrates' theory that it is more important to enable students to think for themselves than to merely fill their heads with "right" answers. Therefore, he regularly engaged his pupils in dialogues by responding to their questions with questions, instead of answers. This process encourages divergent thinking rather than convergent.

Students are given opportunities to "examine" a common piece of text, whether it is in the form of a novel, poem, art print, or piece of music. After "reading" the common text "like a love letter", open-ended questions are posed.

Open-ended questions allow students to think critically, analyze multiple meanings in text, and express ideas with clarity and confidence. After all, a certain degree of emotional safety is felt by participants when they understand that this format is based on dialogue and not discussion/debate.

Dialogue is exploratory and involves the suspension of biases and prejudices. Discussion/debate is a transfer of information designed to win an argument and bring closure. Americans are great at discussion/debate. We do not dialogue well. However, once teachers and students learn to dialogue, they find that the ability to ask meaningful questions that stimulate thoughtful interchanges of ideas is more important than "the answer."

Participants in a Socratic Seminar respond to one another with respect by carefully listening instead of interrupting. Students are encouraged to "paraphrase" essential elements of another's ideas before responding, either in support of or in disagreement. Members of the dialogue look each other in the "eyes" and use each other names. This simple act of socialization reinforces appropriate behaviors and promotes team building.

Pre-Seminar Question-Writing:

Before you come to a Socratic Seminar class, please read the assigned text (novel section, poem, essay, article, etc.) and write at least one question in each of the following categories:

WORLD CONNECTION QUESTION:

Write a question connecting the text to the real world.

Example: If you were given only 24 hours to pack your most precious belongings in a back pack and to get ready to leave your home town, what might you pack? (After reading the first 30 pages of NIGHT).

CLOSE-ENDED QUESTION:

Write a question about the text that will help everyone in the class come to an agreement about events or characters in the text. This question usually has a "correct" answer.

Example: What happened to Hester Prynne's husband that she was left alone in Boston without family? (after the first 4 chapters of THE SCARLET LETTER).

OPEN-ENDED QUESTION:

Write an insightful question about the text that will require proof and group discussion and "construction of logic" to discover or explore the answer to the question.

Example: Why did Gene hesitate to reveal the truth about the accident to Finny that first day in the infirmary? (after mid-point of A SEPARATE PEACE).

UNIVERSAL THEME/ CORE QUESTION:

Write a question dealing with a theme(s) of the text that will encourage group discussion about the universality of the text.

Example: After reading John Gardner's GRENDL, can you pick out its existential elements?

LITERARY ANALYSIS QUESTION: Write a question dealing with HOW an author chose to compose a literary piece. How did the author manipulate point of view, characterization, poetic form, archetypal hero patterns, for example?

Example: In MAMA FLORA'S FAMILY, why is it important that the story is told through flashback?