

Guidelines for Developing Questions

The learning in Socratic Seminars occurs as a result of the questions asked. Keep these guidelines in mind as you develop seminar questions.

- Be sure that your questions are void of judgment and derived from the text.
- Ask questions that raise questions.
- Avoid asking yes/no questions.
- Ask hypothetical and complex questions.
- Ask questions to which there are no right or wrong answers.
- Continue to ask “why” or to probe the responses of the participants with further questioning.
- Allow yourself to guide the discussion with your questioning but to go with the discussion as well.

Listed below are examples of the types of questions you may want to develop and have ready as the leader of a Socratic Seminar. Use this page to assist you as you examine the text in preparation for the seminar.

1. By what reasoning did you come to that conclusion?
2. What would change your mind?
3. What are the assumptions, explicit or underlying, of this text?
4. Can you identify ideas in the text that seem to contradict one another?
5. What if _____ happened (or were true) instead of _____?
6. What might be some other good titles for this text?
7. What does the text say about the human race (or love, beauty, progress, etc.)? What do you think about it? What might other people say about it?
8. Do the ideas stated in this text seem to agree with or contradict this statement: _____
9. If _____ were writing (composing, painting, etc.) today, what might be different about this work?
10. In recent times, what well-known people are (were) like _____ in the text?
11. What does the term _____ mean in this text?
12. In what way would _____ change, if _____ happened differently?
13. How do you think something from the text was (would be) viewed by _____?
14. In what ways are _____ and _____ alike (or different)?
15. What part of this work provokes the most discussion? Least discussion? Why? What in the text supports that opinion?
16. What important conclusions can we draw from the text?
17. What does the writer/artist assume? What are you assuming?