

The term “Socratic” comes from the Greek philosopher Socrates. Socrates believed that his students would learn best when he stepped out of the way and let the students do the talking with one another. In fact, if a student asked Socrates a question, he was likely to fire another question back at the student.

As it turns out, Socrates was a pretty smart guy, and thousands of years later, we’re still using the same strategy.

This week we will be conducting a mini-Socratic seminar – mini only in the fact that I will be participating and guiding you in order to help you along. Later in the year we will have Socratic seminars that are entirely student-lead, but for now I’ll help you to understand what one should look like when everything goes well. Here are the main things you need to remember:

1. **Everybody participates!** I know speaking up in class is not everybody’s strong suit, but as this is an honors class, I have an expectation that you will be able to find a way to get over your fears and talk with the whole class – even if it’s just to ask a question.
2. **Everybody listens!** I’ll be more impressed if you can recall a comment that somebody else made during the discussion rather than interrupt someone to get your crucial analysis through.
3. **Every comment counts!** I’ll be keeping track of what you add to the discussion. Remember, questions (as long as they are high-value) are just as important as comments.

Everybody must participate in this discussion, as it is a major part of your summer reading grade. If for whatever reason you happen to miss class on the discussion day you will be required to stay after school and have a one-on-one seminar with me ASAP.

The dates for our discussion will begin Wednesday, August 19 and Thursday, August 20. You should all have read the assigned poems and prepared comments or questions about those poems for the day of your discussion.

Guiding Questions:

* + 1. What do you think the main idea of the poem is/what is the poem about?
    2. What is the author’s purpose or perspective?
    3. What does the form of the poem (the way it looks on the page) add to the meaning?
    4. What is the most important word/line/stanza of the poem and why?
    5. How do the poems relate to your life?
    6. Why is this material important? Is it important?
    7. What did you like about the poem? What didn’t you like?

Additional Guiding Questions:Prepare questions for your classmates to discuss during the seminar.

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Write a question connecting the text to the real world.
4. Write a question dealing with a theme(s) of the text that will encourage group discussion about the universality of the text.