



Learning Experience(s)

Socratic Seminar - The Enlightenment

Social Studies Standard 2 - World History

Key Ideas and Performance Indicators 2.1.3, 2.3.1, 2.4.1,
2.4.2, 2.4.4

Skills:

- Recognizing that others may have different points of view
- Participating in group planning and discussion
- Distinguishing fact and opinion
- Drawing inferences and making conclusions
- Comparing and contrasting ideas

Context:

A Socratic Seminar is a technique that can be used throughout Global History and Geography. It is a student-centered activity. The teacher is a passive facilitator. Students are taught the process of how to conduct a Socratic Seminar, and are given a set of questions prior to the large group discussion. They will discuss, challenge and clarify these questions among themselves, as one large forum. While the seminar is in progress, the teacher is charting and evaluating student responses.

Note: The first component of the seminar process is a pre-seminar task. This task is intended to make the student think deeply about the seminar before discussion begins. To be prepared for this seminar the facilitator will use this task to assess your readiness to participate by concentrating on information you should possess.

Teacher Preparation:

Select works that:

- will sustain discussion
- include complexities, ambiguities, or mysteries which offer several possible interpretations of the issue

Develop Seminar Questions that include:

- Opening questions – are general or direct students into the text for an answer and introduce and explore topics, ideas, themes

- Core questions – content-specific; examine central points; interpret a passage; explore a quotation; offer how or why questions
- Closing questions - establish relevance; connects with real world; applies to self

Questions for the Socratic Seminar on The Enlightenment:

Opening:

- Why is The Enlightenment period of the 17th and 18th centuries considered to be such an important milestone in the development of Europe? Or is it?

Core:

- What did the Enlightenment have more of an influence on: science, politics, or religion?
- Dispute or support this statement: The political philosophy of the Enlightenment was strictly scientific in nature.
- If you had to describe the Enlightenment as having only one focus, what would it be?
- Of all the figures of the Enlightenment, which one do you think epitomized the values and ideas of this time period?

Closing:

- What characteristics of the Enlightenment period can you see evident in our society today?

Time Required:

Teacher Prep — approximately three hours

Actual seminar — approximately 80 minutes

Assessment — approximately two hours

Task:

Have students read the handouts on Socratic Seminar-The Enlightenment (Pre-Seminar Tack):

Handout One ([word](#)) ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

Handout Two ([word](#)) ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

Handout Three ([word](#)) ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

- As you read, mark the pages for main ideas and interesting facts.
- Keep a note sheet where you trace significant ideas throughout the reading; including page numbers
- Identify at least three ideas you would like to explore during the seminar.
- You are to write for 20 minutes on “The Enlightenment.”

- The form of the writing should be an extended paragraph supporting this topic sentence:

“The belief in reason and natural law, established during The Scientific Revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries, was imposed upon other fields of study, such as political, economic, religious, and social thought, during The Enlightenment of the 17th and 18th centuries.”

Give at least two examples of how Reason and Natural Law were applied to each field of study mentioned above.