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# ACCOUNTABLE TALK

## Resource Bundle



PARTNER CARDS

CENTER SIGNS

TEACHER QUESTION CHECKLIST

56 Question Stems  
Reading, Writing, Math,  
Science, & Social Studies



Question Stem	Category
What evidence do you have to support your answer?	Reading
How do you know that?	Writing
What would happen if...?	Math
How is the text organized?	Science
What does the evidence state?	Social Studies

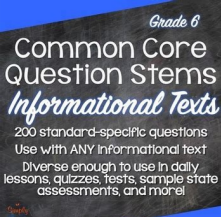
# Socratic Seminar Resources



Created by Heather Godbout ©2017

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## Logic, Meaning, and Conversation

Semantical Underdeterminacy, Implicature, and Their Interface

JAY DAVID ATLAS

Working backwards, think of one or two questions that, when answered, lead up to the first key question you designed, and so on. Yes/No questions or other closed-ended questions can be useful for drawing on previous knowledge to get started on a new topic, but are dead ends for discussions and deeper engagement. Is it clear what the question is about? But the researchers decided to delve deeper. Students are unsure of what is being asked and may refrain from attempting to answer. What is the relationship between critical thinking and problem solving? What is the difference between knowledge and intelligence? What are some possible implications of this? Examples include asking for students' opinions about something, or simply asking what comes into their heads when you introduce an idea or concept. During discussion, questions focusing on form, function, meaning, concept, and strategies may all be termed "guidance questions," and differ from comprehension questions in that learners are not necessarily required to provide correct answers. I think it's very important to give these students a voice and a chance to shine. Lastly, have your other students move to their spot on your chart. FUN SOCRATIC SEMINAR SENTENCE STARTERS Funny Socratic Seminar posters or cards are a fun way to get students talking and can be used in a variety of ways! Some might feel a little silly or cause a few giggles, but I believe this is a great thing! It takes a little of the formality out of accountable talk circles. Be used to stimulate discussion and creative and critical thinking. One of my favorite things about being an English teacher is hearing my students have deep discussions about literature. Technically, teachers are not supposed to be a part of the circle, but as you can see in my image, I put myself at the top, closest to the board. Teachers can require students to ask so many level 1, 2, and 3 questions when given a fictional reading. Write Socratic Seminar question starters on the ball (see picture)3. I mean half of the people I know go to book clubs for fun, so how awesome is it that I get paid to do this? For each learning outcome, create one or two key questions designed to provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate attainment of the learning outcome. All you need is a grid of transition words and students can (or you) can mark them out as they are used. Overall, a simple handout that introduces students to the power of asking the good questions! Over a decade ago, cognitive scientists John D. Depending on the level of comprehension of a topic, students may be able to handle questions of various levels of difficulty. Surprisingly, the two groups came up with plans of similar quality (although the college students had better spelling skills). They often focus on the form or meaning of language structures and items, and the teacher already knows the answer. Low Risk Questions These have no right or wrong answer. What prompted you to ask that question? Now let's add a strategy for all the introverts in the room like me! Out loud discussions are great, but some students can be much more articulate online. How does this concept tie into other subjects you've studied? Schwartz asked fifth graders and college students to create a recovery plan to protect bald eagles from extinction. Ask a balance of referential and display questions. Some questions may involve multiple cognitive skill levels. You can easily make your own collaborative document or download the one in my discussion pack here: Socratic Seminar Talking Toolkit Click to download talking transitions Play Transition WORDS CONNECT 4 In the ideal classroom of our teacher dreams, students would naturally know how to carry a conversation. When did you last come across something that changed the way you think? How important is it to be right all the time? Is failure a bad thing or a good thing? How would your answer be different if...? Effective questions challenge students but are not too difficult. mean? When do we use .....? Put the question through the following filters: Does this question draw out and work with pre-existing understandings that students bring with them? Determine the objectives or learning outcomes for the course. Researchers from North Carolina State University found that the following uses of question-asking were the most efficient during guided problem solving in an introductory programming course: Facilitate students' comprehension and decomposition of a problem Encourage planning a solution before implementation Promote self-explanations Reveal gaps or misconceptions in knowledge. You can find my big list of Socratic Seminar transitions here: Socratic Seminar Talking Toolkit I hope your next class discussion is a success! If you need more Socratic Seminar guidance such as Socratic Seminar question examples, expectations, and more, keep reading here: How to host a Socratic Seminar in Secondary ELA This is a handout that helps students generate higher level questions when reading a fictional text. Next, tell your pillar students to move to their spot of the room that matches up with the diagram. What's the difference between meeting and exceeding expectations? He believes that learning how to ask questions should be considered as critical as learning how to read, write, and do basic math. Here's a cheap soccer ball on Amazon: Soccer Ball (affiliate link)2. What is the most important part of learning? Closed questions are common in conventional tests. "It's assumed that anyone can do it." So far there's no field of "question studies," but Rothstein and his co-director at the Right Question Institute, Luz Santana, are among a handful of thinkers making a career of taking a close look at how questions work, what our brains are doing when they put a question together, and how questions could drive learning, child development, innovation, business strategy, and creativity. These questions can then be used in an in-class Socratic Seminar, partner discussions, etc. How did you arrive at that answer? When planning for a course, develop question strategies. Open-ended questions that probe and elicit expanded thinking and processing of information are useful for involving students in deeper learning. For example, I=Great insight, ? ...sans wine © The value of Socratic Seminars is tremendous, but just like with anything, hosting them the same way every time can become mundane for you and your students. Can you elaborate? If working in groups, students have the opportunity to learn from a variety of perspectives. After practicing this method as a whole class, students can branch out into smaller groups and track their own conversations. Referential Questions These require the learner to provide information, give an opinion, explain or clarify. Convergent questions have one acceptable right answer; students are required to rearticulate a certain response based on conventional wisdom. You can choose to gamify this discussion activity any more by allowing blocking, passing, goals points, etc. This screen shot and video above was part of a demo I did and shows that I am the pink text. You can download a premade class discussion BINGO board here: Socratic Seminar Worksheets and Games or make your own. Students may guess at what you want them to say rather than tell you what they think. College students focused on critical issues of interdependence between eagles and their habitats ("What type of eco-system supports eagles?" and "What different kinds of specialists are needed for different recovery areas?"). Otherwise, here are some ways to spice up your next class discussion to get students talking. The idea is that get BINGO by participating in the class discussion while using a variety of accountable talking strategies. Other times, certain topics create a burst of unfocused energy, so you need a strategy to help center that conversation into a productive format. Students are given question stems for level 1, 2, and 3 questions. So far there's no field of "question studies," but Rothstein and his co-director at the Right Question Institute, Luz Santana, are among a handful of thinkers making a career of taking a close look at how questions work Yet formal education, which is driven by test taking, is increasingly failing to require students to ask the kind of questions that build critical thinking skills. As students start to see lines, they can visualize who is dominating the conversation and who hasn't added to it at all. Students can either play each other groups or the whole class can play against you as the teacher. What's the opposite of .....? Are all smart people good test takers? Now, start the discussion. Too general. Closed/Convergent Questions These have more narrowly defined correct answers which can be recalled from memory and require little reflection or originality. Closed-ended questions such as those requiring a Yes/No response, or an answer from a few possible options (multiple choice) may be useful for quickly checking comprehension. Examples include an explanation strategy that asks students to explain the cause of an event or why a given situation or condition has arisen. This is scaffolding at its best, and you will feel so proud later in the semester when your students are having and tracking meaningful conversations all on their own! "For large class sizes, breaking up into smaller circles may be the only way to achieve this method. Doing so will ensure that you appropriately scaffold questions starting with basic knowledge (remembering facts) to more advanced skills such as analysing or evaluating. Follow the taxonomy with flexibility. What do you want students to know or be able to do as a result of participating in your course? Another strategy is an analytical question that asks students to compare and contrast situations, cases, ideas, people, or objects. When students feel comfortable, they are more willing to open up and let their ideas flow. Refer to Bloom's Taxonomy to review levels of learning. Help students retain material by putting into words otherwise unarticulated thoughts. What do you think caused this to happen? They often focus on content rather than language, require 'follow-up' or 'probe' questions, and the answer is not necessarily known by the teacher. Others are replying to me in the same text box but in their own unique color. Ask questions about important rather than trivial content. Open-Ended/Divergent Questions These are ideal for developing skills such as inferring, predicting, verifying and summarising, as well as eliciting more language. The gist of this discussion strategy is for each student to create their own unique text color or color combo that will follow them throughout the digital discussion. This CONVO BINGO strategy provides accountable talk, choice, and accountability all in one easy-to-play game. That said, if you are new to the Socratic method of teaching and need to master the basics before you spice things up, this is the post you need: How to host a Socratic Seminar in Secondary ELA What does it take to master a subject? Teachers who do not expect instant answers, who display their own honest uncertainties, who take a moment to think about 'What if' or 'What if not' or 'How else could this be done?' or 'What's the other side of the case?' express respect for the process of thought and implicitly encourage students to notice problems and opportunities and think them through." If you have students who overpower the conversation, make sure to implement the rule that you can't have more than 5 boxes marked. Our society depends on them being able to make critical decisions, about their own medical treatment, say, or what we must do about global energy needs and demands." Dan Rothstein, cofounder of the Right Question Institute, a Cambridge-based nonprofit that promotes good question-asking as a life skill, agrees. = Excellent question, \* = Star communicator, etc. WEB OF WORDS OR HARKNESS DISCUSSION METHOD Sometimes certain texts drain the energy from the room (here's looking at you, Hamlet), so you need activities like the Socratic soccer ball to keep students actively learning. I just wanted to give you the idea. Get a soccer ball and a Sharpie. Too loaded. The college students had cultivated the ability to ask questions, the cornerstone of critical thinking. Grade language in questions and try not to over-paraphrase. Once all students are on the same level, pose more advanced questions. You do not need the connect four game set. Some examples of ineffective questions: Too vague. What evidence from real life supports that claim? "During the lead-in to a lesson," says Steve Darn, educator at the Izmir University of Economics, Turkey, "referential questions often form the basis for brainstorming a topic, generating interest, and introducing topic-related vocabulary." Students' responses may be recorded as a mind-map on the board, or in the form of a "what we know / what we would like to know/ what we know now" framework to get creative juices flowing. Of course, technology tracks who comments on what, but using colors allows students to visually see how much they are contributing and how the convo is flowing. Too closed. How do you know when you're right about something? This is where Harkness discussion tracking comes into play. These are designed to elicit learners' prior knowledge and to check comprehension. Before you begin the discussion, explain that the goal is to have equal lines crisscrossing the circle. Will this question stimulate peer discussion? Use Bloom's Taxonomy to guide your question design. Fifth graders tended to focus on features of individual eagles ("How big are they?" and "What do they eat?"). Avoid questions that contain the answer. No one person should have too many lines and no one person should have zero lines. Provide a way to review, restate, emphasize, and/or summarise what is important. 30 Thought-Provoking Questions to Ask Your Students: What is the difference between analysing and assessing? What do we already know about this topic? If you had .....what.....? It can be used with any text, and the gist is this: 1. "English and all other natural languages have a rich vocabulary of thinking consider terms like hypothesis, reason, evidence, possibility, imaginability, imagination, perspective and routine use of such words in a natural intuitive way helps students catch on to the nuances of thinking and thoughtfulness that such terms represent," says David Perkins, senior professor of education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Purposes of Questions Questions can: Help diagnose student understanding of material Engage students to keep their attention and to reinforce their participation. "It's not deliberately taught because it seems to be a natural part of speech that doesn't require much work," Rothstein says. The idea is to provide a big list of transition words that prompt students contribute, agree, disagree, support, elaborate, challenge, summarize, clarify, and connect during a class discussion. It works like a dream! 5. If you happen to be looking to tweak this question ball for younger readers, you should check out this blog post that featured my idea in their roundup: Reading comprehension games that students will want to play over and over! Click to download this BINGO template! PLAY SOCRATIC SEMINAR BINGO Students love games. Students benefit from answering easier questions before difficult ones. Have students stand up in a circle and toss the ball around. Have you ever.....when/where .....? Ask short recitation questions to quickly gauge whether or not there are misconceptions and address them appropriately. Bransford and Daniel J. What is the difference between this concept and that concept? "The overall aim of these questions is to gradually raise awareness of language and skills and to help learners develop strategies for learning in a focused way," Darn says. How would you use this concept in real life? © Sometimes simply giving students one word transition prompts can help students to contribute to the conversation in meaningful ways. You can decide the rules, but try to give a special prize for students who get BINGO to play into the game aspect. What kind of .....? Effective Questioning According to the Cornell University Center for Teaching Excellence, effective questions are meaningful and understandable to students. How would you summarise this? On this task, they found big differences. The best referential questions are those that are 'divergent' or 'open-ended' in that they are broad, may have multiple answers, and require a higher level of thinking from the learners. These types of questions are most effective in initiating discussion. What do you think about .....? Determine how students are thinking. "Perhaps many teachers have too little time to allow students to form and pursue their own questions and too much ground to cover in the curriculum and for standardised tests," the scientists write. Personalise questions where possible. They asked both groups to generate questions about important issues needed to create recovery plans. Do you think some people are born talented? What comes after .....? Be sure to sign up for my Building Book Love Letter here to get a list of Socratic Seminar starters and the full set of directions and ideas for this ELA activity. Give enough time for students to answer. "But people must acquire this skill somewhere. What makes someone a good learner? Divergent questions have multiple possible answers and encourage students to be creative or express insight. Where's the stress in .....? What is the counterargument for that? "Does everyone understand?" "Any other questions?" Most students will not reply, and even if they do, their answer is only a report of their own assessment of their comprehension. When they catch it, they can call out any question in their vision on the ball (no turning the ball around). It's a good way for me to track myself plus gives an anchor to make the circle. 3. Here's how you can design effective questions: Determine the key concept you want students to learn. When one person speaks, you are in charge of drawing a line from his name to the person who adds to the conversation. 5. Here are some emotion themed accountable talking posters and playing cards I created: Accountable Talk Stems, Posters, Task Cards, and Games : Emotion Theme Other Fun Socratic Seminar starter ideas are: Use a pop culture theme (whatever is hot at the moment!) Click to download this silent discussion template! Host a colorful convo silent discussion You now have resources for fostering successful and sociable classroom discussions. And maybe they do, just not about the stuff we want them to discuss. For example, Jamison would be in the back of my room in the pictured circle, and I would be at the front closest to the board. Use open-ended (divergent) questions to encourage opinions, elaboration, and discussion. How do you .....? How does this tie in with what we learned before? Prepare to start your discussion with the last questions you created and work your way toward the key questions that address the course learning outcomes. While you are drawing or projecting the circle, have students do a quick prewrite (You can download my Speedy Starters in this pack)2. Rothstein and his colleagues are trying to tell us something very important. In the 21st century, we can no longer afford to ignore the strategies that promote critical thinking and problem solving skills. 4. What evidence from the text supports that claim? Minimise the use of "yes / no" questions except when checking meaning and understanding or encouraging weaker students. If you want to up the evaluation of this class discussion, make a key with symbols that you can add to each name. Types of Questions Display Questions. Make sure that students clearly understand questions. It's time for a thorough examination of what makes a good question, and how students can benefit from staying curious. "Using the language of thinking is one element of something even more important: being a model of thoughtfulness for one's students. Give appropriate responses to questions, particularly where correction is required, and in order to extend the dialogue. They had learned how to learn. This strategy is SILLY SIMPLE and requires no prep which makes it easy to implement on the fly to capture moments of passionate debate in the classroom! 1. How to live up your Socratic Seminar to get students talking Toss a Socratic Soccer ball This has been one of my most popular strategies of the years and rightly so! It's a great tool to have on hand and toss around when students start to lose focus or drift off during reading time. The purposes of questions vary at different stages during a lesson. What's the reasoning behind your answer? You can complete the question for them and they answer it OR have them complete the question and toss it to someone else to answer it. Does this question raise the visibility of the key concepts the students are learning? What does .... Do you really know something if you can't remember it?

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