Socratic Seminar Discussion

The Basics

What is a Socratic Seminar?
“Socratic Seminar” is based on an intellectual tradition generally associated with the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates, who lived during the 5th century B.C.E. Socrates believed that the best way to achieve understanding was to develop and pursue insightful questions. Socratic Seminar establishes a framework for holding discussions centered on this ideal while promoting equal participation among all members of the group. With this in mind, the leader of a Socratic Seminar takes on the role of facilitator instead of direct instructor, helping to provide the participants with a rich opportunity to explore independent inductive discovery.

Participant Guidelines
As a participant of the discussion, you...
1. must refer directly to the text whenever possible.
2. can “pass” when asked to speak.
3. are not allowed to speak if unprepared.
4. must ask follow-up questions for clarification when you are confused.
5. must stay focused on the current conversation - make notes if something unrelated comes up so that it can be discussed later.
6. should speak up when you have something to say - you do not need to raise your hand, but you should also be careful not to interrupt someone else.
7. must look at the speaker and listen carefully.
8. must speak so everyone can hear you.
9. must talk to your other classmates, not to the leader (teacher).
10. must recognize that the quality of the discussion depends on each of you individually - your preparation and participation makes the discussion a success.
Types of Questions

There are 3 types of questions you must formulate in preparation for the discussion:

**Literal**

These include remembering and understanding questions. Consider plot basics.

- What/where is…?
- When/why/how did ___ happen?
- Who was…?
- How would you compare/contrast…?
- How would you explain in your own words…?
- What does the author mean when…?

**Inferential**

These include applying and analyzing questions. Consider deeper level connections.

- What examples can you find to…?
- What facts would you select to show…?
- What would result if…?
- How is ____ related to…?
- Why do you think…?
- What is the theme…?

**Transcendent**

These include evaluating and creating questions. Think out of the box - “real world” connections.

- What is your opinion of…?
- What is the value/importance of…?
- What would you cite to justify/judge…?
- How would you change ____ to create an alternative…?
- Can you predict the outcome if…?
- Can you think of a original way for…?
Grading Checklist

There are two major contributors to your grade for this discussion: preparation and participation. To receive full credit, you must…

_____ Formulate 6 questions based on our Expert Group chapter discussions. _____/50 points
   _____ 2 Literal
   _____ 2 Inferential
   _____ 2 Transcendent

_____ Participate in the Socratic Seminar. _____/50 points
   _____ ask at least 1 question
   _____ respond to at least 2 questions

Total _____/100 points