



Socratic Discussion

Rigorous dialogue to help students develop a deeper understanding of complex topics and build communication, collaboration, and critical thinking skills.

Approximately 30-50 Minutes

Student Tasks:

- Reflect on the questions individually
- Move to large group for discussion
- Reflect and synthesize

Online ThinkCERCA Resources

- Choose words highlighted in the topic overview or text for key terms.

Rationale/Research Base

A Socratic discussion provides an opportunity for students to facilitate their own group discussion based on open-ended questions that emerge from the text(s). Students practice how to listen to each other, articulate their own thoughts, think critically, work cooperatively, and question civilly.

Optimal Application Notes:

Provide a note-taking tool and clear listening objectives.

Before:

- Identify the “big” question and 3-5 sub questions you’ll ask students to discuss. Provide students with these questions in advance of the discussion & allow them time to formulate evidence-based responses.
- Establish discussion rules (i.e. [do not “put down” other’s ideas](#)) and prepare sentence stems/frames for students.
- Prepare discussion space in circle form so everyone can see each other.

During:

- Arrange students into one or more groups.
- Pose the “big” question and let students lead discussion with their prepared responses & sentence stems. Pose sub-questions as needed, help students rephrase for clarity, calling attention to discussion rules as needed.

After:

- (Today) Allow time for silent and group reflection on both the content and the process (i.e., When a discussion rule was broken, how did we fix it?).
- (Today & Tomorrow) Help students synthesize the three most compelling points made in the discussion for display.

Scaffolds & Supports:

- Think aloud with and for students; rephrase concepts students raised with target vocabulary or as an opportunity for students to listen to the concept a second time.
- Provide students with stems and frames prior to and during discussion.

Prepare for the Discussion

Instructions: Using all of the selections from the unit, complete the chart below with a response to the Socratic Question (or claim), reasons, evidence and reasoning, and notes for providing a possible counterargument.

Socratic Question (ELA example):

How can fantasy and various otherworldly elements of stories help us explore important questions about human behavior and society?

Response to the Socratic Question:

Claim

Reasons supporting your response to the question	Evidence and reasoning to support your argument
Reason 1	Evidence and Reasoning 1
Reason 2	Evidence and Reasoning 2
Reason 3	Evidence and Reasoning 3

Counterargument Notes:

Socratic Reflection: Strongest Ideas

Evidence:

Did you learn more about the topic? If so, what did you learn? If not, what might have helped you learn more?

SOCRATIC DISCUSSION RUBRIC

6th Grade	Beginning	Developing	Advanced
Claim/ Counterclaim	<p>A personal claim, or thesis, is not yet developed, or the claim does not yet build on the other ideas that have been shared.</p> <p>The speaker's' claims are not yet identified or categorized by their reasoning and evidence.</p>	<p>The claim, or thesis, states a personal position, but it is not strong or specific, or it is only loosely connected to the other ideas in the discussion.</p> <p>The speaker's' claims are identified, but they are not yet categorized into claims supported by reasoning and evidence and those that are not.</p>	<p>A claim, or thesis, clearly states a personal position on a topic or issue and logically builds on the other ideas to advance a collaborative discussion.</p> <p>The speaker's' claims are clearly identified, and categorized into claims supported by reasoning and evidence and those that are not.</p>
Evidence	<p>Questions and answers do not yet show a clear knowledge of the required material.</p> <p>Multimedia and visual elements are not yet used to clarify information in the discussion.</p>	<p>Responses display a knowledge of required material, but they do not yet draw on explicit evidence from the material to probe and reflect on discussion ideas.</p> <p>Multimedia (e.g. graphics, images, music, sound) and visual elements are used, but they may not yet clarify information effectively.</p>	<p>Responses display a thorough knowledge of required material and draw on explicit evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe deeply and reflect accurately on ideas under discussion.</p> <p>Multimedia elements (e.g. graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays effectively clarify information in the discussion.</p>
Reasoning	<p>Responses do not yet paraphrase or reflect on others' responses to recognize differing perspectives or the key ideas in the discussion.</p> <p>Information from diverse media and formats is not yet interpreted or explained in terms of the topic, so it is not yet logically linked to the discussion.</p>	<p>Responses show an awareness of differing perspectives, but they do not yet restate or reflect on others' responses to show a true understanding of the key ideas in the discussion.</p> <p>Some information from diverse media and formats is interpreted clearly, while other facts or evidence are not clearly explained in terms of the topic or issue of the discussion.</p>	<p>Responses effectively review the key ideas in the discussion and show an accurate understanding of differing perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing.</p> <p>Clear explanations accurately interpret the evidence presented in diverse media and formats (e.g. visually, quantitatively, orally) and logically explain how it relates to the topic or issue in discussion.</p>
Coherence	<p>Responses do not yet show an understanding of the ways discussions work or the ability to set goals and deadlines or assign roles for members in the discussion.</p> <p>Responses do not yet present claims and findings in a logical sequence, nor do they have pertinent descriptions, facts, or details to link them to the discussion in a meaningful way.</p>	<p>Responses show an understanding of the rules of discussion (Socratic, roundtable), but they do not yet show the ability to set goals and deadline or define roles for group members.</p> <p>Responses present claims and findings in logical sequence, but they do not yet have the support of relevant descriptions, facts, or details to link them closely to the claim, or thesis, being debated.</p>	<p>Responses show an understanding of the rules of discussions (Socratic, roundtable) and the ability to set goals and deadline and define roles for each member in the discussion.</p> <p>Responses present claims and findings in logical sequence and are supported by related descriptions, facts, and details that emphasize the main ideas or themes that support the claim.</p>
Audience Appeal	<p>Responses are not yet appropriate for the context or task, and they do not show a consistent use of formal English.</p> <p>Eye contact, volume, and pronunciation are not yet used effectively to connect with the audience.</p>	<p>Responses are appropriate for the context or task, but they show errors in formal English.</p> <p>Eye contact, volume, and pronunciations attempt to reach the audience effectively, but they are used inconsistently.</p>	<p>Responses are appropriate for the context or task and demonstrate a clear command of formal English.</p> <p>Clear eye contact, appropriate volume, and accurate pronunciation present ideas clearly and confidently.</p>

SOCRATIC DISCUSSION RUBRIC

6th Grade	Advanced
Claim/ Counterclaim	<p>A claim, or thesis, clearly states a personal position on a topic or issue and logically builds on the other ideas to advance a collaborative discussion.</p> <p>The speaker's' claims are clearly identified, and categorized into claims supported by reasoning and evidence and those that are not.</p>
Evidence	<p>Responses display a thorough knowledge of required material and draw on explicit evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe deeply and reflect accurately on ideas under discussion.</p> <p>Multimedia elements (e.g. graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays effectively clarify information in the discussion.</p>
Reasoning	<p>Responses effectively review the key ideas in the discussion and show an accurate understanding of differing perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing.</p> <p>Clear explanations accurately interpret the evidence presented in diverse media and formats (e.g. visually, quantitatively, orally) and logically explain how it relates to the topic or issue in discussion.</p>
Coherence	<p>Responses show an understanding of the rules of discussions (Socratic, roundtable) and the ability to set goals and deadline and define roles for each member in the discussion.</p> <p>Responses present claims and findings in logical sequence and are supported by related descriptions, facts, and details that emphasize the main ideas or themes that support the claim.</p>
Audience Appeal	<p>Responses are appropriate for the context or task and demonstrate a clear command of formal English.</p> <p>Clear eye contact, appropriate volume, and accurate pronunciation present ideas clearly and confidently.</p>