

Socratic Circle Guidelines:

1. Refer to the text when needed during the discussion. A circle is not a test of memory. You are not "learning a subject"; your goal is to understand the ideas, issues, and values reflected in the text.
2. It's OK to "pass" when asked to contribute, but you are expected to contribute at some point during the discussion.
3. Do not participate if you are not prepared. A circle should not be a bull session.
4. Do not stay confused; ask for clarification.
5. Stick to the point currently under discussion; make notes about ideas you want to come back to.
6. Don't raise hands; take turns speaking.
7. Listen carefully.
8. Speak up so that all can hear you.
9. Talk to each other, not just to the leader or teacher.
10. Discuss ideas rather than each other's opinions.
11. You are responsible for the circle's success, even if you don't know it or admit it.

These are the steps we will follow:

Step 1

You will have 10 minutes to read the text. While you are reading you should write questions you have on the page's margin. You can circle words you don't know, and underline key phrases. Keep track of the story or idea as it unfolds and also note word patterns and repetitions. Think about what the author is saying, meaning, and if it's true. You will have 10 minutes to annotate the text.

Step 2

I will divide the group into two parts. The inner circle sits on the floor or in chairs, facing each other. The outer circle sits in chairs behind the inner circle quietly observing. I'll state an opening question for the discussion. The question will reflect a genuine curiosity on my part, and it will lead you back to the text to speculate, evaluate, define, and clarify the issues involved. Responses to the opening question generate new questions from you and me, leading to new responses.

The initiating question is: "How does the singer feel in this song?"

General question: "Why do you think she wrote the song?"

Step 3

The outer circle observes, listens, and writes a critique of the inner circle's dialogue. You should focus on how the ideas are presented rather than what is being said. Make notes about these specifics: who asks the best questions; who speaks most and least; who leads the group; who distracts the group. You will complete Socratic Circle Feedback Form (attached).

Step 4

The assessment for this activity will be a self-assessment of your reflective journal entry for everyone and the feedback form completed by the outer circle. Also, I'll be making notes on the circles to help me assess your performance.

Step 5

The follow-up to the circle will be a thesis statement. It is a concise statement for an imaginary literary essay. After the assessment, as a group, we will complete the following:

In ***Fordlandia***, Kate Campbell and Walk Aldridge employ (method/communication technique) to reveal (what message)?

Annotating The Text

- Circle any vocabulary words you are unfamiliar with or would have difficulty explaining to others.
- Underline key phrases.
- Keep track of the text/poem idea as it may unfold.
- Note word patterns and repetitions or anything that strikes you as confusing or important.
- Write down any questions and/or answers in the margins.

Keys to a Successful Socratic Seminar

1. Be prepared. Read the assigned text carefully, probably more than once. Try your best to fully understand it.
2. Write thought-provoking questions. Remember to write both questions and answers. Your questions and answers will be checked before the beginning of the seminar.
3. Keep an open mind during the discussion. Look for the strengths in other people's ideas. Be prepared to change your point-of-view based on what you have learned.
4. If several people wish to talk, raise your hand and wait quietly to be called upon. Do not raise your hand while another student is speaking.
5. Speak loudly enough for everyone in the room to hear you. Look at other students when talking. Bring the assigned reading to the discussion; you may wish to refer to it.
6. If you don't understand something, ask clarifying questions.
7. If you don't have something to say, it is OK to "pass" when asked to contribute.
8. When in the outer circle, pay close attention to the discussion, and take notes.