

## Socratic Seminar

This activity can be used at any time in a unit after the students have read or listened to lecture on your topic. My favorite way to use the Socratic Seminar is as a closing activity to wrap up a unit or lesson. This is a higher level thinking activity where students are asked to discuss issues related to your chosen topic.

**Objectives-** Students will be able to analyze and discuss/debate topics of concern relating to the environment.

### **Materials-**

Chairs at the front of the room for the panel members

Audience desks arranged in a half moon shape around the panel

Worksheets for students in the audience

**Introduction/Anticipatory Set-** On the day before the activity, the teacher will ask for volunteers for a Socratic Seminar to be held in class tomorrow on your chosen topic. Some examples are Built Wetlands v. Preservation, Finite Resources, or Protecting Native Habitats. Your topic will align with the unit of study on environmental issues that the students just completed. It is ideal to have panel members who have differing opinions/beliefs on the chosen subject; this will make for a more lively discussion.

**Instruction-** Once students are in place (panel in chairs at front, audience in desks), the teacher will distribute the Socratic Dialogue Evaluation Sheet to all audience members (Panel does not have to complete this worksheet as they have volunteered to speak in front of the class). The teacher will begin the Socratic Dialogue with an open ended question. This question must have no right or wrong answer and be one that will get the students thinking about their feelings on your topic. Example questions: “Are built wetlands a sufficient way to replenish the open space we lose due to urban sprawl?” At this time, the teacher will turn the dialogue over to the panel members and take the role of moderator. Panel members must use the knowledge they have gained for the unit of study to back up their answers.

During the Socratic Dialogue, students must respect one another’s opinions and speaking time. Only one person may speak at a time and they may not ridicule others’ views. After panel members have expressed their view on this first question, the floor is open to questions from the audience. Students in the audience must follow the same questioning format (open ended, no right or wrong answer). Students in the audience may also ask panel members questions regarding their answers to questions which have been posed. The students in the audience will complete the worksheet while they are participating in the dialogue. Be sure to leave 5-10 minutes at the end of the discussion for the audience to finish the portions of their worksheets that are still blank.

**ELL/SDAIE/Exceptional Learners Needs-** Have simplified outlines/notes of the unit as a hand-out to support these students.

**Assessment-** Every student on the panel will receive 20 points for their efforts. Take notes during the discussion to see which panel members came prepared and which did not. Possible dock of points for panel members who do not back up their opinions with evidence from the unit. Students in the audience will receive 20 points for completing the worksheet in full. If the worksheet is completed with half of the information missing, 10 points.