

# *To Kill a Mockingbird*



## **Socratic Seminar Assignment**

Here's your chance to put your literary analysis, listening, and speaking skills to the test!

### What is it?

A Socratic Seminar is a student-led discussion that is based on an "essential question." Socrates, an Athenian philosopher born in 469 BC, is credited with formulating this method of discussion. Encouraging participants to sit in a circle, Socrates would draw knowledge from the group by presenting a series of deeply philosophical questions. A seminar consists of four elements: **a text, essential questions, a leader, and active participants.**

\*\*The essential questions:

1. **Is it possible to become an adult in society, to join an adult community, and still keep a child's sensitivity to injustice?**
2. **How does Lee present the following perspectives (world views) in the novel: Rational, Emotional, Innocent, Cynical, and Traditional (based on views received from parents, for example)?**
3. **How does Lee use figurative language to communicate his personal or political beliefs to the reader?**

### What are your responsibilities?

- o Refer to the text when needed during the discussion. A seminar 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.
- o Ask questions about the reading or issues related to the reading.
- o Ask for clarification of something you don't understand.
- o Make judgments that can be defended with the text.
- o Locate facts and examples that can be cited as evidence for an argument.
- o Connect the reading to the real world
- o It's OK to "pass" when asked to contribute.
- o Do not participate if you are not prepared. A seminar should not be a bull session.
- o Stick to the point currently under discussion; make notes about ideas you want to come back to.
- o Move the seminar forward—avoid repetitions.
- o Don't raise hands; take turns speaking.
- o Listen attentively and patiently.
- o Exhibit mature behavior with patience and self-control.
- o Speak up so that all can hear you.
- o Talk to each other, not just to the leader or teacher.
- o Be aware of time in terms of how long you speak and in terms of the needs of others to speak
- o Use specific examples when you speak and avoid generalizations.
- o Avoid speaking for the group; use "I statements" when possible.
- o Avoid interrupting someone when he or she is speaking and avoid side conversations.



### How will you be graded?

- Come to the seminar prepared with five excellent discussion questions, three essential quotes from the text, and an annotated (marked) copy of To Kill a Mockingbird **(10 points.)**
- Participate five times in a **meaningful** way during the seminar. To participate in a meaningful way means to make a comment, make a connection to the text, ask a question that builds on what other participants are saying **(25 points)**
- Being an academic participant **(15 points)**. Do you...

\*Speak loudly and clearly?

\*Listen to others respectfully?

\*Stick with the subject?

\*Avoid inappropriate language (slang, technical terms, sloppy diction, etc.)?

\*Seem prepared/interested?



## Socratic Seminar Worksheet

My seminar will be on: (date) \_\_\_\_\_ up to end of novel with \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ group members

Group leader: \_\_\_\_\_ (the group leader still participates in the discussion, but is also responsible for moving things along ☺)

In order to prepare for the upcoming Socratic seminar and your final project for To Kill a Mockingbird you will need to gather significant quotations and examples from the book. I will be grading you on your level of preparedness.

**Step 1: Finding Evidence from To Kill a Mockingbird:** Find specific examples from the book that help to answer each "essential" question.

**Essential questions #1 Is it possible to become an adult in society, to join an adult community, and still keep a child's sensitivity to injustice?**

\*To consider: : how does Lee communicate her answer? Do you agree or disagree with her? Why?

- I. What you think:
- II. 3 supporting quotes (include page numbers):

**Essential questions #2: How does Lee present the following perspectives (world views) in the novel: Rational, Emotional, Innocent, Cynical, and Traditional (based on views received from parents, for example)?**

\*To consider: which characters does Lee use to present these perspectives? How do these perspectives contribute to the conflict of humanity and society in the novel (Boo's conflict w/ Maycomb, Tom's conflict w/ white justice system, Atticus's conflict w/ his neighbors, and the children's conflict w/ the adult world)?

- I. What you think:
- II. 3 supporting quotes (include page numbers):

**Essential questions #3: How does Lee use figurative language to communicate his personal or political beliefs to the reader?**

\*To consider: what are the connotations of the words Lee chooses? What words or descriptions seem to be repeated? When she uses similes and metaphors, what does she compare? Why does she choose to make these comparisons? What is she trying to make you, the reader, feel?

- I. What you think:
- II. 3 supporting quotes (include page numbers):

**Step 1: Discussion Questions:** Write down 5 discussion questions that you might introduce to the group. Remember, good discussion questions are "open ended" and produce more than just "yes/no" answers, or answers that are easily found in the book. **Ask deep, "so what" questions to enrich your discussion!**