"The Socratic method of teaching is based on Socrates' theory that it is more important to enable **students to think for themselves** than to merely fill their heads with "right" answers. Therefore, he regularly engaged his pupils in dialogues by **responding to their questions with questions**, instead of answers. This process encourages **divergent thinking rather than convergent thinking**" (Adams).

"Socratic questioning recognizes that **questions, not answers, are the driving force in thinking**. Socratic seminars explore ideas, values, and issues drawn from readings or art works chosen for their richness. They also provide a forum to expand participants' familiarity with works drawn from many cultural sources. Leaders help participants to make sense of a text and of their own thinking by asking questions about reasoning, evidence, connections, examples, and other aspects of sound thinking. A **good seminar is more devoted to making meaning than to mastering information**. Seminars strengthen participants' learning by getting them actively engaged in rigorous critical thought. Practical activities are always followed by periods of reflection and discussion about what has been experienced. The goal here is to allow learners to create a community of inquiry for the purpose of making meaning cooperatively" (Raider). [emphasis mine]

**What does Socratic mean? What is a Socratic Seminar?**

Socratic comes from the name Socrates (ca. 470-399 BC) who was a classical Greek philosopher; he developed a Theory of Knowledge.

A Socratic Seminar is a method to try to understand information by creating an in-class dialogue based on a specific text. The participants seek deeper understanding of complex ideas through rigorously thoughtful dialogue, rather than by memorizing bits of information or meeting arbitrary demands for 'coverage.'

**What Do I Do?**

1. 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.
2. It's okay to "pass" when asked to contribute.
3. Do not participate if you are not prepared. A seminar should not be a bull session.
4. **Do not stay confused; ask for clarification.**
5. Talk to the participants, not just the leader.
6. Stick to the point currently under discussion; make notes about ideas you want to come back to.
7. Don't raise hands; take turns speaking.
8. Listen carefully and respectfully.
9. Speak up so that everyone can hear you.
10. Talk to each other, not just to the teacher or the leader.
11. Discuss the ideas rather than each other's opinions.
12. You are responsible for the seminar.

**How Do I Prepare?** Use Post-It notes or jot down important quotes or ideas that you believe will support your argument. Remember that you WILL have your book and notes accessible for this activity! USE your resources!

**BIG Questions:**

* Newspeak language prides itself on eliminating words each year until 2050.  How is language important to freedom?
* What is free thought? Is free thought different from free speech?
* Discuss Winston as a heroic figure. What qualities does he posses that could define him as one?
* Big Brother disallows party members to read and write for pleasure because it promotes independent thought. Is independent thought dangerous?
* The Ministry of Truth, which Winston works within, is concerned with revising the past. Does revisionism exist today? Do you agree with Orwell that knowledge of history, which Winston is particularly concerned with, is powerful or even dangerous?
* In what ways does technology help The Party control Oceania? How does technology function today through television, radio, phones, cameras, satellites, and the internet? Is it used for good or evil?
* Winston stops himself from saying what he actually believes, and maintains great control over his facial expressions to avoid being vaporized.  Do you sometimes feel this way and worry about letting a “thought crime” slip?
* What is the acceptable balance between government control and individual freedom when an individual’s privacy issues are at play?
* Should citizens be prepared to give up personal freedoms and privacy during a national crisis?

**Stem Questions that Facilitate & Sustain Dialogue**

**Agree / Disagree**

* Has anyone else had a similar . . .?
* Who has a different . . .?

**Clarification**

* I'm not sure I understand . . .?
* Tell me more about . . .?
* Do you see gaps in my reasoning?
* Are you taking into account something different from what I have considered?

**Support Questions**

* Can you give us an example of . . .?
* Where in the story . . .?
* What would be a good reason for . . .?
* What is some evidence for . . .?

**Cause and Effect**

* Why do you think that happened?
* How could that have been prevented?
* Do you think that would happen that way again? Why?
* What are some reasons people . . .?

**Different Situation**

* Can you describe a situation that would . . .?
* Suppose \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Would that still be true? Why or why not?

**Counterexample**

* Would that still happen if . . . ?
* What might have made the difference?

**Compare / Contrast**

* How are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ alike? Different?
* What is that similar to?
* Can you think of why this feels different than . . .?
* How does this (poem, book, incident, etc.) remind you of . . .?

**Benefits / Burdens**

* What are some of the reasons this wouldn't (would) be a good idea?
* Would anyone like to speak to the opposite side?
* Those are some reasons this would work; what reasons might it not work?