

### Socratic Circle Final



Jacques Louis David, The Death of Socrates, 1787

Socratic seminars (a.k.a. Socratic Circles) are formal discussions, based on a text, in which the leader asks open-ended questions, and participants are encouraged to engage in thoughtful reflection that collaboratively builds meaning. Reflecting Socrates' belief that the answers to all human questions and problems reside within us, Socrates was convinced that the surest way to attain reliable knowledge was through the practice of disciplined conversation. He called this method the "dialectic." Our dialectic should not be considered a debate - all actively engaged participants are "winners" because the point is not to determine "right or wrong." Rather, your goal is to thoughtfully share, listen, and demonstrate what you've learned.

The text we will discuss are the Renaissance to early modern chapters of *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*. Prepare for the Socratic Circle by identifying (with title, artist, and date) at least two exemplary works of art that you feel you know well and are comfortable discussing. Bring large images of these two works to the seminar.

Here's how the Socratic Circle will work:

- Students will be divided in half and arranged in an inner circle and an outer circle.
- The inner circle will be asked an open-ended question, and participants will respond in a manner that demonstrates what they know about different artistic styles, artists, intentions, and theories. Meanwhile, participants in the outer circle will observe and create new questions, which will be asked during the following round.
- After 10 minutes of discussion, participants will switch from inner to outer circle, and vice versa.
- Discussion (questioning, "piggy-back" responses, communal problem-solving) will be encouraged over debate (rebuttals, persuasive rhetoric, taking sides).
- Participants are encouraged to offer interpretations and analysis of works, to respectfully challenge, and to offer alternative views. Remember that Socrates loved playing "Devil's advocate" and feigning ignorance of a topic to delve deeply into a subject.

| Socratic Circle Grading Rubric                |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| Demonstration of knowledge                    | out of 10 points        |
| Discusses multiple works & multiple artists   | out of 10 points        |
| Discusses multiple styles & multiple theories | out of 10 points        |
| Comments are relevant and extend knowledge    | out of 10 points        |
| Communication skills                          | out of 10 points        |
| <b>Total</b>                                  | <b>out of 50 points</b> |