

# *Socratic Seminar: Transcendentalism*

## **WHAT IS A SOCRATIC SEMINAR?**

THE GOAL OF A SOCRATIC SEMINAR IS FOR STUDENTS TO HELP ONE ANOTHER UNDERSTAND THE IDEAS, ISSUES, AND VALUES REFLECTED IN A SPECIFIC TEXT OR GROUP OF TEXTS. STUDENTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR FACILITATING A DISCUSSION AROUND IDEAS IN THE TEXTS RATHER THAN ASSERTING OPINIONS.

THROUGH A PROCESS OF LISTENING, MAKING MEANING, AND FINDING COMMON GROUND, STUDENTS WORK TOWARD SHARED UNDERSTANDING RATHER THAN TRYING TO PROVE A PARTICULAR ARGUMENT. A SOCRATIC SEMINAR IS NOT USED FOR THE PURPOSE OF DEBATE, PERSUASION, OR PERSONAL REFLECTION, AS THE FOCUS IS ON DEVELOPING SHARED MEANING OF THE TEXTS AND MORE DEEPLY UNDERSTANDING WHAT THE AUTHORS WERE TRYING TO EXPRESS IN THE TEXTS.

## **THE RULES:**

1. ADDRESS/TALK TO THE GROUP, NOT THE DISCUSSION LEADER OR TEACHER.
2. TAKE TURNS SPEAKING BY WAITING FOR A PAUSE IN THE DISCUSSION. NO NEED TO RAISE YOUR HAND.
3. REFER TO THE TEXT(S) TO SUPPORT YOUR IDEAS DURING THE DISCUSSION. A SEMINAR IS NOT A TEST OF MEMORY; YOU ARE SHOWING THAT YOU UNDERSTAND THE IDEAS, ISSUES, AND VALUES REFLECTED IN THE TEXT(S).
4. ADDRESS THE IDEA, NOT THE PERSON. KEEP IT AS OBJECTIVE AS POSSIBLE.
5. STICK TO THE POINT CURRENTLY UNDER DISCUSSION BY RESPONDING TO THE PREVIOUS PERSON'S STATEMENT AND NOT MOVING ON TO A NEW IDEA. MAKE NOTES ABOUT IDEAS YOU WANT TO RETURN TO IF YOUR MIND IS SPARKED IN ANOTHER DIRECTION.
6. LISTEN CAREFULLY AND SHOW THAT YOU HAVE LISTENED BY USING ACADEMIC SENTENCE STARTERS TO ASK QUESTIONS, MAKE CONNECTION, SUMMARIZE, CLARIFY, ETC.
7. ASK QUESTIONS IF YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT SOMEONE HAS SAID, OR ASK THEM TO CLARIFY WHAT THEY SAID.
8. DO NOT PARTICIPATE IF YOU ARE NOT PREPARED. BY CONTRIBUTING BS ANSWERS YOU ARE POTENTIALLY ROBBING OTHERS WHO ACTUALLY PREPARED OF A STRONG ASSESSMENT GRADE.