**FISHBOWL DISCUSSION *The Crucible***

**What is a Socratic Seminar discussion?**

Socrates was a famous philosopher and teacher who was well known for asking questions. He taught his students to think critically by teaching them to question the world around them and ideas presented to them. A Socratic discussion focuses on conversation for understanding and learning. *It is not a debate to be won, or where there is one right or wrong answer.* A Socratic discussion should have the following:

**Ground Rules for Group Participants:**

1. Respond to question and point to evidence in the text to support your answers, providing page numbers for easy reference.

2. Listen to what others say and BUILD on their comments, offering additional evidence, when appropriate.

3. Ask questions to clarify and/or to “probe” another participant’s thoughts and ideas.

4. Don’t step on each other’s talk; be patient and stay focused (do not raise hands).

5. Be open to new ideas and interpretations.

6. Watch your “air time” both in terms of how often you speak, and how much you say when you speak.

**While you are an observer, answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper:**

1. How did listening to the conversation increase/reinforce/cause you to question or change your initial response to these inquiry questions?

2. Identify a point or opinion with which you particularly agree or disagree. What was it and why do you agree/disagree with it?

3. Identify a point or opinion which you would like to build or extend. Explain how/why you would do this.

4. What question would you ask a participant or the group as a whole? Why would you ask this question and how would you answer it?

5. Which of the questions asked during the discussion would you like to answer and what would your answer be?

**The purpose of a Socratic Seminar** is to achieve a deeper understanding about the ideas and values in a text. In the Seminar, participants systematically question and examine issues and principles related to a particular content, and articulate different points-of-view. The group conversation assists participants in constructing meaning through disciplined analysis, interpretation, listening, and participation.

**Directions:** On a separate piece of paper you must answer each question and find a quote from the play to prove each answer (when asked). Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Why does Proctor initially agree to confess that he has trafficked with the devil? Use quotes from the text to support your answers.
2. What causes Proctor to change his mind and not confess? Use quotes from the text to support your answers. What other options does he have?
3. Does this play promote the idea that it’s okay to lie and cheat as long as you can get away with it? Use quotes from the text to support your answers. Apply this to modern-day life also.
4. Is there a hero in this play? If so, who? Think about heroic actions taken by minor characters as well as major characters. If you think the play lacks a hero, explain why you think none of the characters’ actions are heroic. Use quotes from the text to support your answers.
5. Identify one message that Arthur Miller is trying to communicate through writing *The Crucible.* Explain fully what he is attempting to communicate about the human condition, and/or about how humans should or do behave in relationship with one another. Be sure to cite evidence from the text for support.
6. Is John Proctor right or wrong to refuse to sign the paper? Explain your answer. Use quotes from the text to support your answers.
7. Do you believe that people who commit serious crimes (murder, assault) can change? Do you think they should be forgiven by society? Use quotes from the text to support your answers. Try to apply this to a modern-day situation.
8. In any unfaithful marriage or relationship, who is to blame – the adulterous party (John), the counterpart or tempter (Abigail), or the distant spouse (Elizabeth)? Can someone be justified or pushed to cheat on their partner? Use quotes from the text to support your answers.
9. Argue for or against the following statement: "It is nobler to die with integrity than to live with compromised principles that harm others." Use quotes from the text to support your answers. Also, apply to modern-day examples.
10. Despite the lessons learned from the Salem Witch Trials, we have seen the damage of mass hysteria repeated. Why do societies throughout history continue to react irrationally in times if fear or panic?
11. “I am not sure what "The Crucible" is telling people now, but I know that its paranoid center is still pumping out the same darkly attractive warning that it did in the fifties. For some, the play seems to be about the dilemma of relying on the testimony of small children accusing adults of sexual abuse, something I'd not have dreamed of forty years ago. For others, it may simply be a fascination with the outbreak of paranoia that suffuses the play--the blind panic that, in our age, often seems to sit at the dim edges of consciousness… But below its concerns with justice the play evokes a lethal brew of illicit sexuality, fear of the supernatural, and political manipulation, a combination not unfamiliar these days. The film, by reaching the broad American audience as no play ever can, may well unearth still other connections to those buried public terrors that Salem first announced on this continent.” (Arthur Miller, “Why I Wrote *The Crucible*”)  
    Can a work of art such as a play/film change the way the world views certain topics? How? Has this play changed any opinion of yours about the way people behave? How?
12. What is a crucible? Find other words that are similar to crucible and decide why you think it is in the title of the play. Use quotes from the text to support your answers.
13. What are some similarities/differences between the Salem Witch Trials and the McCarthy hearings?
14. Create an open-ended question of your own to keep the conversation going.

An open-ended question is an insightful question about the text that will require group discussion and “construction of logic” to discover or explore the answer to the question. An open-ended question cannot be answered with “yes” or “no”.

Ex: How might the story be changed if the main character was of a different culture or ethnicity? Why? (You may not use this question!)

15. Puritans believed that human beings are inherently (in their innermost heart or nature) evil. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

16.Do you think the mass hysteria created by the witch hunts could be reproduced today? What type of event could cause this type of reaction?

17.Are there any “witch hunts” in America today? In the recent past? Why?

*Students not prepared (who haven’t completed notes) will not be allowed to participate in Socratic Seminar and will lose participation points.*

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5. Which of the questions asked during the discussion would you like to answer and what would your answer be?

1. During class, at least one group of FIVE people will be selected to be in the “fishbowl”—that is, sitting in the middle of the class. This group will discuss several of these questions.
2. While the students in the fishbowl are discussing, the rest of the class needs to be recording—your own comments about what is being said.
3. After four or five minutes, one or two students will be allowed to leave the discussion group and bring in another student or two.

Guidelines:

* ALL students should be prepared to participate in the fishbowl!
* Students watching are NOT allowed to comment during the discussion. (There will be time at the end of the discussion for students to comment.)

Questions:

Discussion Rubric:  
Discussion Participant must be prepared. Remember, that if it is an answer to a question that warrants it, you must give direct textual evidence, if it is comment you can give direct or indirect evidence (you must always draw back to the book).

5- *answer/comment is very thoughtful, complete; deep and analytical, impresses me and peers, sparks new ideas and conversation, text clearly supports answer and is the best text chosen for that answer (\*this is the type of answer that everyone has to pause to think about because it is so insightful)*

4- *answer/comment is somewhat thoughtful, average level thinking, complete; text clearly supports answer*

3- *answer/comment is sort of weak (literal, not analytical), may be incomplete in some way or you may be just regurgitating what the teacher already told you; text may be somewhat weak (but did attempt)… you could have found better text to support*

2- *answer/comment is completely incorrect (makes me wonder if you read the novel), and/or incomplete (but did attempt); it mostly just repeats what someone else already said; text may not connect to their answer at all (but did attempt)*  
1- no *attempt was made*