

### **List of things to think about when choosing a seminar resource:**

- Does it have a clear argument or line of inquiry?
- Does it search for truth?
- Does it demonstrate beauty of design and structure?
- Does it raise timeless questions, or questions that are pertinent to society today?
- Does it address fundamental ideas?
- Does it present the opportunity for divergent opinions or interpretations?
- Does it promote critical thinking?
- Does it lend itself well to scrutiny and deep questioning?

### **Tips for teachers/leaders**

- Have an idea of how you want the seminar to evolve.
- Do not attempt to lead the seminar in the direction you want it to go. **Teacher facilitates; students own.**
- Know your students. The same question may not work as well with one group as with another.
- If students have not read, the seminar will fail. If you have good reason to believe they have not read, do not begin the seminar. Give another assignment instead.
- You have empowered the students by use of the seminar; however, you need to reclaim that power for yourself if they are unprepared.
- Have several opening questions and follow-up questions in mind.
- The seminar is not a bull session or a debate.
- If nothing new is being brought up, or if the responses to your questions are limited, it's probably time to stop the seminar and use the remaining time more productively.
- Even if the opening question falters somewhat, still allow the students to get a "feel" for the topic. Then, redirect them back to the opening question. Often, it means more after a bit of focusing and brainstorming.
- Ask students for a moment of silence to focus on the reading before you ask the first question. This is crucial to the quality of the seminar.
- Try to be unpredictable in the choice of an opening question. They will want to know the question in advance instead of thinking critically.
- Use seminar pieces that enrich or clarify the established course of study.
- Find pieces that will spark students' interests, but these readings do not have to be controversial.
- Be alert! The facilitator must listen intently and anticipate digressions or changes in the direction of the seminar.
- Eliminate all distractions so that students can focus and be good listeners.
- Do not allow students' enjoyment of the seminars to cause you to neglect any didactic teaching or coaching. Use seminars as a tool to enhance student involvement and interest and as a means of speeding up the process of teaching pieces of the curriculum.
- Learn something new in every seminar you lead!!!

*Source:* Socratic Seminar Handbook, FCPS Advanced Academics Office