

My Socratic Seminar reflection

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WHAT IS A SOCRATIC SEMINAR TO ME?

The Socratic Seminar is a two part assignment where you write an answer to a number of questions in preparation for a debate about a subject. Our first Socratic Seminar was about the causes of the fall of the Roman Empire. The Socratic Seminar made me think about the research I did more than any other project that I have done before. When we talked, we got more information than we would have gotten if we had just answered questions. The Socratic Seminar made me learn a lot about Rome and how and why it fell. The speaking part of the Socratic Seminar also prepared us for if we ever have to speak to an audience.

WHAT I LEARNED

I learned a lot about Ancient Rome and about the socratic method of debating. I also learned when we did the actual debate part of the project. Usually when you type a report, you only know your side, and what you researched, and your opinion. When we did the socratic debate we learned everyone's opinions about Rome and why it fell. I also could speak about what I thought was correct and could comment on what I thought was incorrect.

WRITING QUESTIONS

I found that the best way to approach the Socratic Seminar is not to look for the questions in the articles that are given, but to look for interesting facts or information that you could use as answers, and then build your questions from them.

The first time I read through the articles, I looked for interesting facts, and took a note on the side of the page. When I did this, I focused mainly on Ms. Popa's questions. When I went back through the articles, I took the other useful facts that I had found and I made my questions out of them.

I found that if you concentrate on one subject too much, it feels like it is really hard to write enough questions because you miss facts in other articles that you could be using. If you read through all of the articles, you will find more than enough information to write your questions.

As I read through the articles, I made a note of interesting information in the margins of the articles, or sometimes just noted what the paragraphs were about. This made it easy to match up the information I found with the various factors such as political incompetence, economic depression, moral decay, environmental decay, and Barbarian invasions.

Also, while you are looking through the information, you should look for the main questions that Ms. Popa poses. To do this, I had the articles and the questions posed by Ms. Popa on a sheet of paper right next to me. (It's much easier to do this if you have the questions and articles printed out.) When I came across interesting information, I would see if it answered the main questions or if I could use the information to create an interesting question about one of the factors.

For the speaking part of the assignment in class, I found that it is easier to know the information, than to flip through pages to look for it. It's easiest to participate if you find one subject that you are especially comfortable with and can talk about a lot.