Student Objective

Students will engage in Socratic Seminar in order to evaluate the extent to which the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) created greater racial equality.

Essential Question: To what extent did *Brown v. Board of Education* promote greater racial equality?

Based on AP US History Key Concept 8.2.I.B.i: The three branches of the federal government used measures including desegregation of the armed services and Brown v. Board of Education (1954) to promote greater racial equality.

Background

- *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896)
- *Brown* was the result of two decades of legal strategy by Thurgood Marshall and the Legal Defense Fund
- Argued segregated schools are inherently unequal



Thurgood Marshall talks to press about the *Brown* decision, 1954. (Library of Congress)

The Brown of *Brown*

Linda Brown and her younger sister walk through a railroad switchyard, part of their daily 80-minute commute to school.

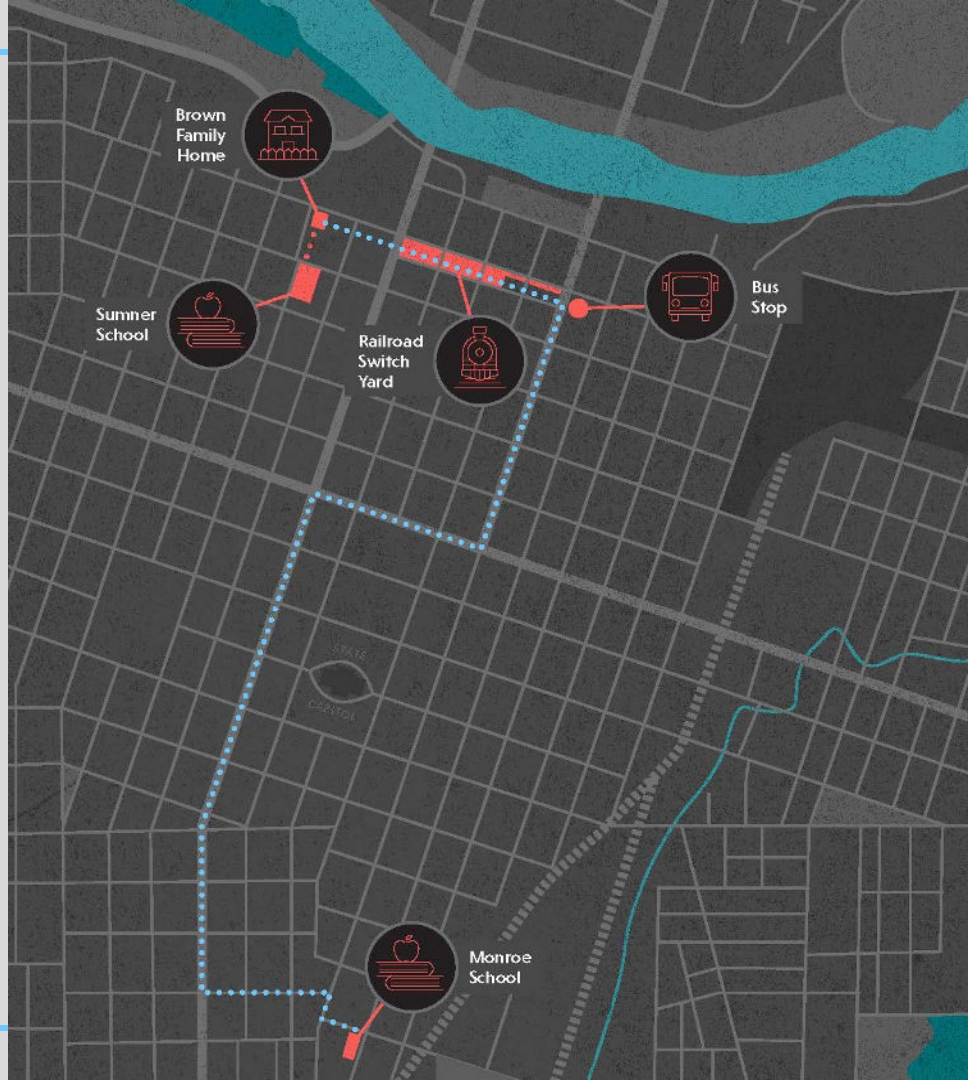
(Carl Iwasaki, The Smithsonian National Museum for American History and Culture)



Linda's Route to School

To get to Monroe Elementary School, Linda Brown had to walk through a dangerous railroad switchyard, cross a busy street, and take a bus.

The all-white Sumner Elementary School was four blocks from her house.



The Brown of *Brown*

Linda Brown and her younger sister walk through a railroad switchyard, part of their daily 80-minute commute to school.

(Carl Iwasaki, The Smithsonian National Museum for American History and Culture)



Brown vs. Board of Education (1954)

The five consolidated cases:

- *Brown v. Board* - Kansas
- *Briggs v. Elliott* - South Carolina
- *Bolling v. Sharpe* - D.C.
- *Davis v. County School Board* - Virginia
- *Belton/Bulah v. Gebhardt* - Delaware



Collection of the Supreme Court of the United States

What is a Socratic seminar?



Steps for a Socratic Seminar

1. Read (and annotate!) the text.
2. Create questions.
3. Establish discussion norms.
4. Discuss! Switch circles if needed.
5. Reflect and write.

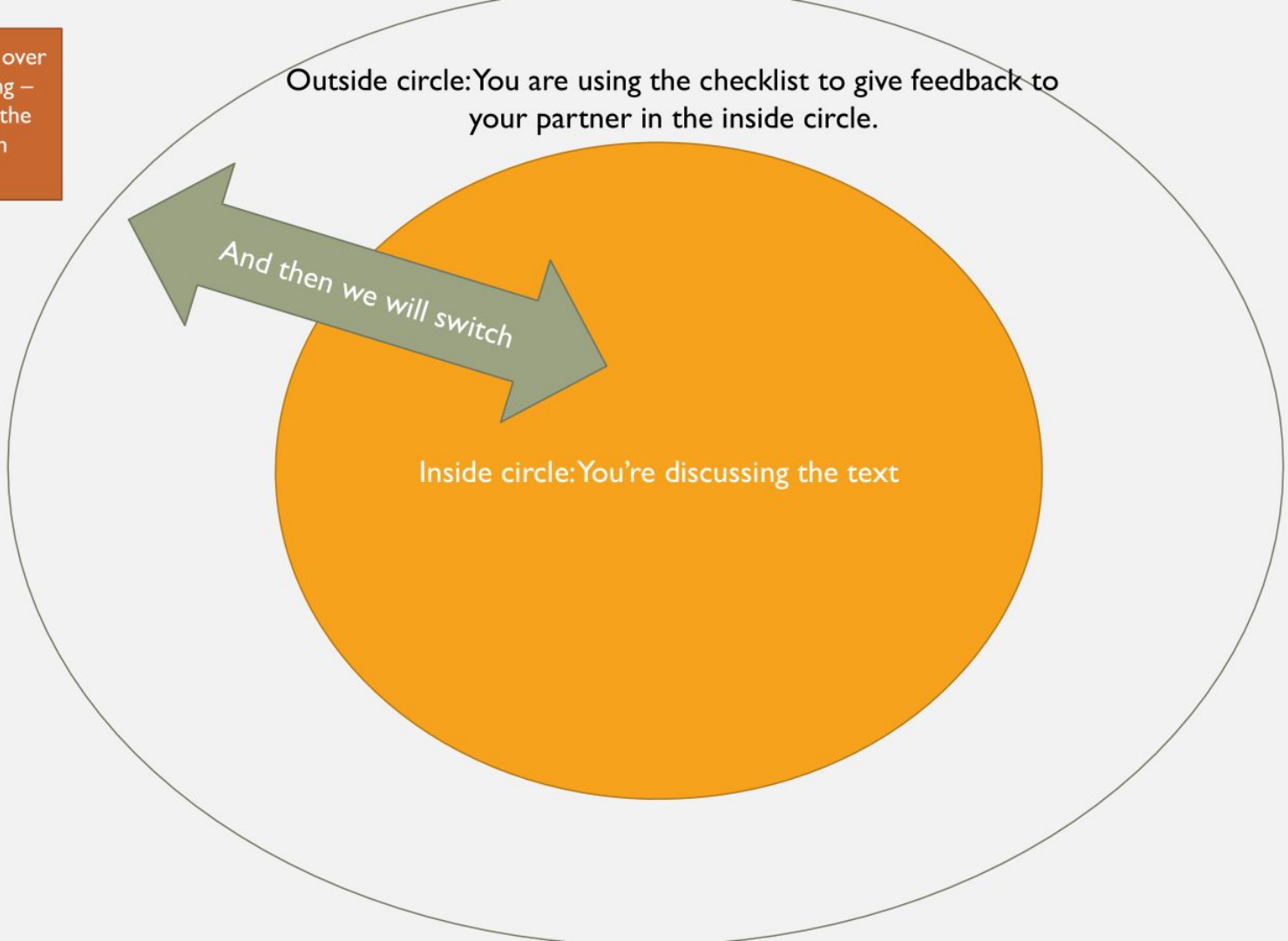
Socratic Seminar Logistics

To prepare for your seminar, consider:

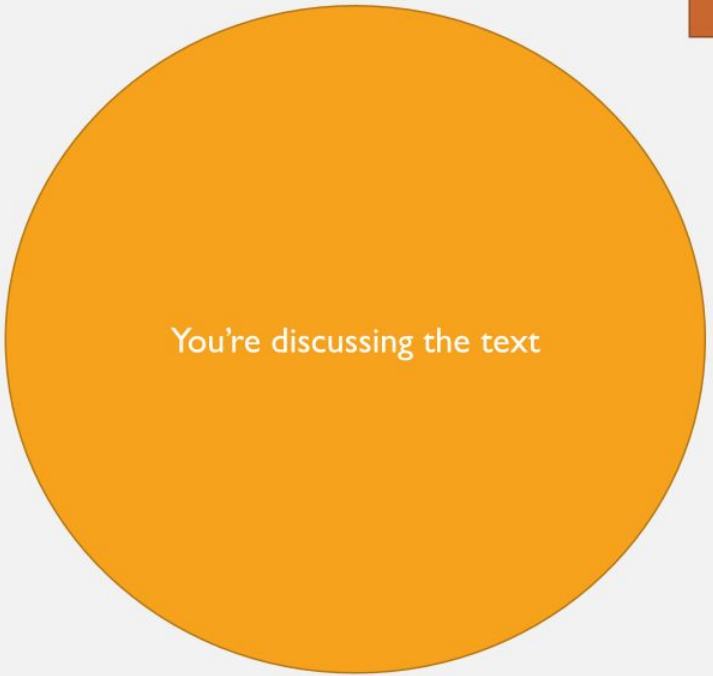
1. Room set-up
    a. Inner circle/outer circle
    b. Simultaneous circles
2. Assigning circle groupings
3. What will the outside circle be doing?
    a. Peer feedback
    b. Taking notes
    c. Writing questions and "running" to partner during discussion
4. How will you evaluate discussion performance?

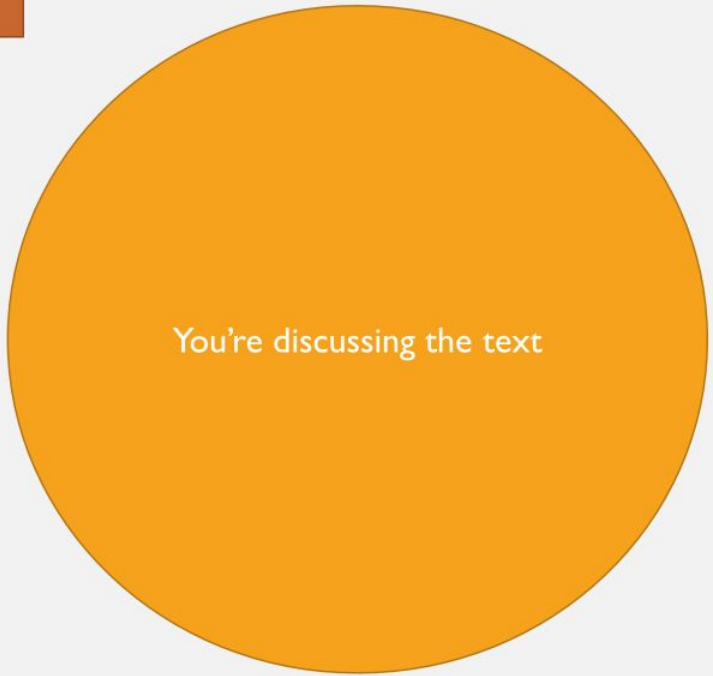
Share: Have you used any other strategies? What other modifications could you implement?

Ms. Morris is over here listening – YOU make the discussion happen!



Ms. Morris is over here listening – YOU make the discussion happen!





Socratic Reflection

Please look at the rubric below and decide how you participated in the Socratic Seminar. It will be helpful to look at the bullet points and highlight/annotate the ones you feel you accomplished. ***On the back of this sheet, write what Level you believe you participated at today, along with an explanation.***

Level 1 Participation

- You offered little to no commentary
- You came to the seminar ill-prepared with little understanding of the text and question
- You did not listen to others, and offered no commentary to further the discussion
- Any comments you made were opinion only

Level 2 Participation

- You offered some analysis, but needed prompting from the seminar leader and/or others
- Through your comments, you demonstrate a general knowledge of the text and the question
- You were less prepared, with few notes and no marked/annotated text
- You were actively listening to others, but did not offer clarification and/or follow-up to others' comments
- Participant relied more upon his/her opinion, and less on the text to drive your comments

Level 3 Participation

- You offered solid analysis without prompting
- Through your comments, you demonstrated a good knowledge of the text and the question
- You came to the seminar prepared with notes and/or a marked/annotated text
- You showed that you were actively listening to others, and offered clarification and/or follow-up to some of your comments
- You sometimes used evidence to support your opinions

Level 4 Participation

- You offer enough solid analysis, without prompting, to move the conversation forward
- You demonstrate a deep and complex knowledge of the text and the question through your comments
- You came to the seminar prepared, with notes and a marked/annotated text
- You showed that you were actively listening to other participants through your comments
- You offered clarification and/or follow-up that extends the conversation
- Your remarks often referred to specific parts of the text
- You frequently used evidence to support your opinions

Step 1: Read the text.

Read "Brown as the Beginning."

Suggested Annotations

- Write the essential question at the top of your paper.
  To what extent did Brown v. Board of Education promote greater racial equality?
- Number the paragraphs.
- Summarize in the margin.
- ? next to something confusing
- ! next to something surprising

Step 2: Create Questions

In a Socratic seminar, students generate questions based on the text to ask each other.

What is one **open-ended question** that you would ask based on the text?

Step 2: Create questions.

Option A: Students create their own questions

Guidelines:

1. Questions must be open-ended ("how" or "why" questions)
2. Questions must be based on the text.

Option B: Provide a list of questions (that students are still using them to ask each other!).

Suggestions:

1. Use the five discussion questions included in the reading.
2. Pull 2-3 quotes from the text and ask students to react.

How else could we scaffold creating questions? What other methods have you used in your classroom?

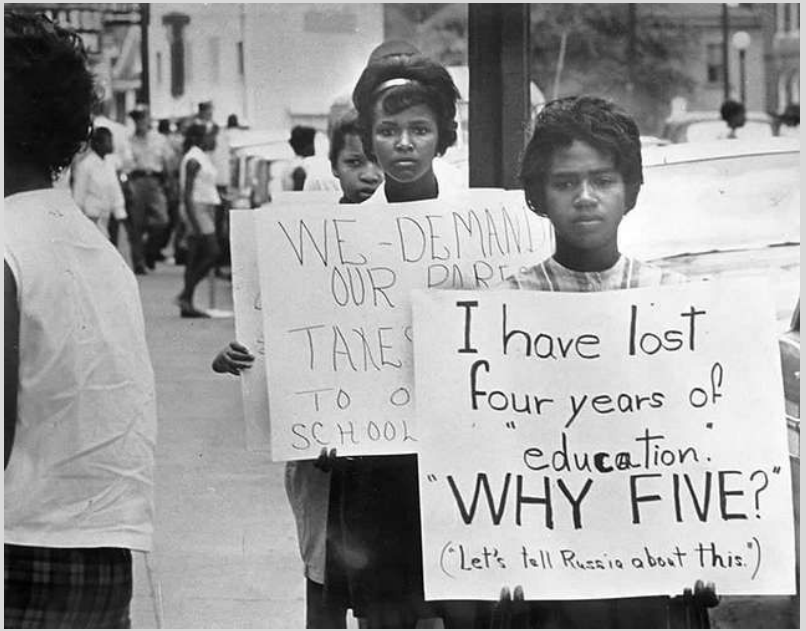
Step 3: Establish Discussion Norms

- Anyone may ask or respond to a question. You do not need to raise your hand.
- You allow the speaker to finish their thought.
- You encourage people in the circle to speak.
- You use evidence from the text.
- You agree in a subdued but supportive way (snaps!).
- You disagree in a respectful way
- "Most respectfully, I disagree because….My follow-up question is…?"
- You monitor your partner's participation while you're in the outside circle

Other suggestions?

Step 4: Discuss

- Remind students of the essential question
- "Whoever has a question can start!"
- Remember—this is student-led!
  - Actively observe—consider printing a roster to take notes
  - Redirect if needed
  - Remind to reference the text if needed



Students protest the closure of Prince Edward County Public Schools in Farmville, Virginia (1963). The school system closed from 1959-1964. (Public domain)

Step 4: Put it in writing.

In a pinch: Try a "3x3":

- On a post-it note, have students write 3, 3-word sentences that answer the essential question.
- Synthesize the information in a limited amount of time. Return to a formal writing activity next class!
- **Give it a try!**

20 minutes: Reflect and answer the essential question.

- Ask students to reflection on their performance in the seminar based on provided criteria.
- Answer the essential question in one paragraph with details from the text.

45-60 minutes: Document-Based Question (DBQ)

- DocsTeach and Library of Congress
- **What 4-5 documents would you want to use?**

Potential DBQ Documents

Be sure to select a balance of perspectives when choosing documents.

Brown promoted greater racial equality:

1. Opinion in *Brown v. Board of Education* (see folder)
2. Image of integrated classroom in Washington, D.C.
3. President Bush with Linda Brown's sister, Cheryl, on the 50th anniversary
4. Map of segregation in the U.S. prior to *Brown*

Brown did not promote greater racial equality:

5. Press Release regarding Little Rock
6. Image of young woman protesting school closure in Virginia
7. FBI Correspondence regarding Boston desegregation violence (see folder)
8. US Accountability Office Report from 2022