



The use of Lesson Study to prepare students to ask purposeful questions in a poetry Socratic Seminar

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PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- Setting the context
 - The Socratic Seminar as a pedagogy
- The Study
 - Lesson Study as methodology
 - Our process
- Discussion of results





WHAT IS A SOCRATIC SEMINAR?

“The Socratic Seminar is a formal discussion, based on a text, in which the leader asks open-ended questions. Within the context of the discussion, students listen closely to the comments of others, thinking critically for themselves, and articulate their own thoughts and their responses to the thoughts of others. They learn to work cooperatively and to question intelligently and civilly.” (89)

Israel, Elfie. “Examining Multiple Perspectives in Literature.” In *Inquiry and the Literary Text: Constructing Discussions in the English Classroom*. James Holden and John S. Schmit, eds. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2002.



A decorative illustration of an orchid branch with several flowers and leaves, positioned in the top-left corner of the slide.

It is NOT

- A debate
- An informal chit-chat
- A rehearsed speech
- Second guessing what the teacher's correct answer will be
- 'Just talk'

It is

- A dialogue





Research on the implementation of Thoughtful Dialogues and Socratic Seminars

Show improvements / gains in

- reading ability and comprehension
- listening skills
- linguistic ability
- metacognition





Research on the implementation of Thoughtful Dialogues and Socratic Seminars

- logical reasoning
- creative thinking
- self-esteem
- emotional intelligence

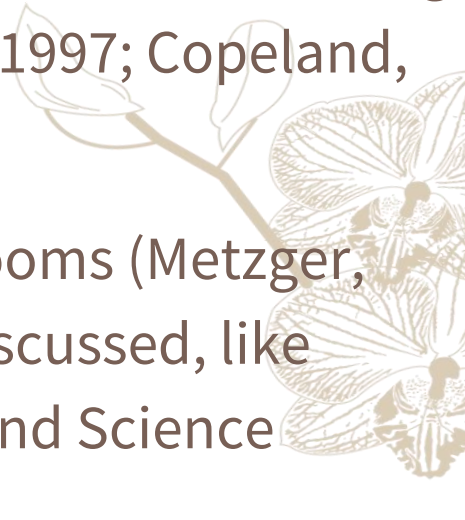
(from research on the impact of the 'Philosophy for children' thinking programme and the Paideia movement)





RESEARCH STUDIES on the use of the SOCRATIC SEMINAR

Research has shown the immense potential of the Socratic Seminar in

- engaging students in and fostering students' critical thinking and close reading (Polite and Adams, 1996,1997; Copeland, 2005)
 - has application not just in language classrooms (Metzger, 1998) but any classroom where texts are discussed, like Mathematics (Tanner and Casados, 1998) and Science (Chowning, 2009).
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PHYSICAL ARRANGEMENT of a SOCRATIC SEMINAR

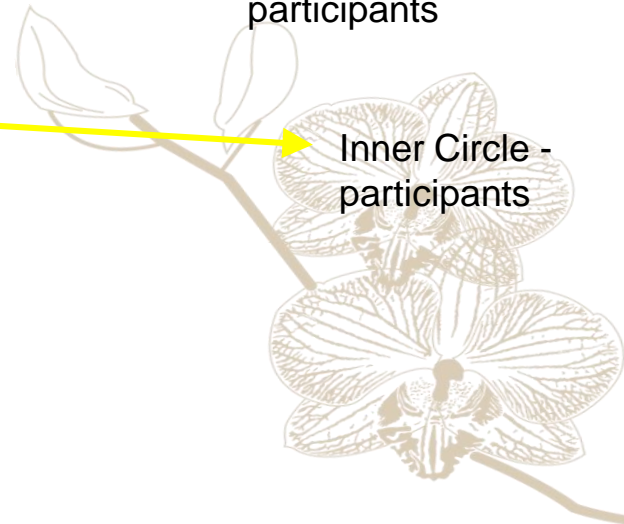
Hot seat - for
observers to
jump in to
ask
questions

[Picture removed]

Class
observers
for
additional
feedback

Outer Circle -
paired with inner
circle for
individual
feedback of
participants

Inner Circle -
participants



The Documents: for students' feedback

Socratic Seminar Observation Checklist

Your Name: _____ Partner's Name: _____

Directions: Each time your partner does one of the following put a check in the box.

Speaks in the discussion

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Makes eye contact with other speakers or as she/he speaks

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Refers to the text

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Asks a new or follow-up question

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Responds to another speaker

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Paraphrases and adds to another speaker's ideas

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Encourages another participant to speak

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Interrupts another speaker

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Engages in side conversation

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Dominates the conversation

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AFTER the discussion: What is the most interesting thing your partner said?

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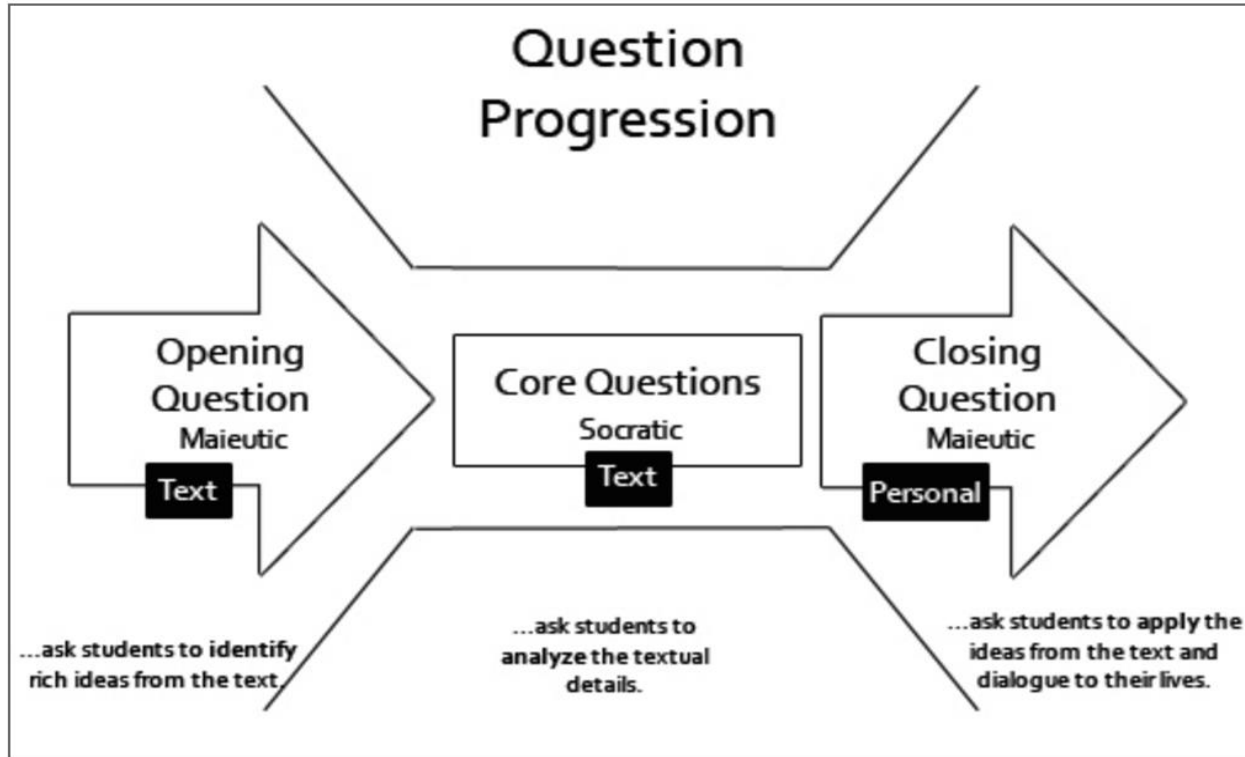
Socratic Seminar Observation Notes

Name: _____

Directions: Choose three participants in the seminar to observe. Write examples of the behaviors listed below as you see or hear them occur.

Participant Name	Offers New Idea	Asks a Question	Refers to Text	Builds on Other's Idea	Distracting Behavior	Other Notes/Observations
1.						
2.						
3.						

PROGRESS OF A SOCRATIC SEMINAR



Types of seminar questions: from The Paideia Proposal
<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/paideia/6911>



RESEARCH QUESTION

How do teachers prepare students to ask more purposeful questions during a Socratic Seminar on poetry analysis?

In particular,


- how can teachers encourage the students to reach expert levels for the advanced skills of *justification, expansion of ideas and making connections* during the Seminar?





LESSON STUDY RATIONALE

To focus on students learning the skills of asking purposeful questions

- Lesson Study was the methodology selected because of its suitability for studying student and teacher behaviours and interactions.
- 



- Lesson Study research is not only used to study students' understanding of academic content, but is also used to examine their readiness before a performance task, for example, whether they have the tools needed to explain [scientific] phenomena (Dobb, 2002).





LESSON STUDY METHODOLOGY

Intervention

- Goal-setting and Literature Review (Jan-Apr))
- Lesson Planning (July)
- Lesson Study - lesson, debrief, reiteration (August)
- Data Collection (August)
- Evaluation





CONTEXT

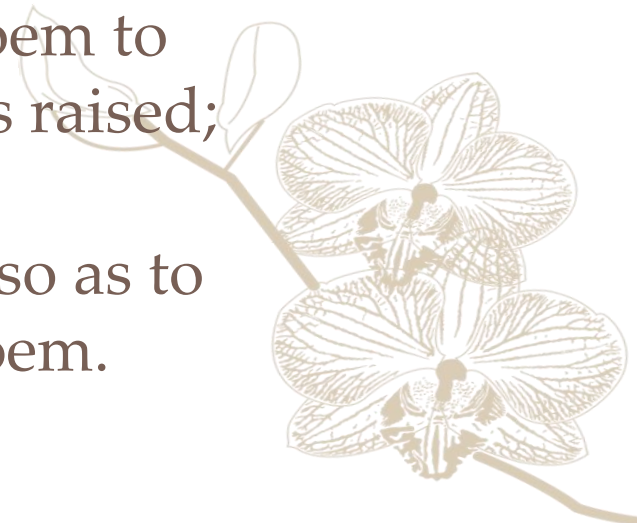
- To cover 5 poems from the poetry anthology, *No Other City*, with no explicit teaching of the five poems.
- Involved classes - 3T, 3S and 3G - two teachers taught these lessons
- Lesson Study Team consists of 4 members





GOAL-SETTING

- The development of two skills was identified as the target to be studied. Students had to learn to:
 1. ask authentic questions about the poem to further/deepen understanding on issues raised;
 2. develop/build on each other's ideas so as to further/deepen understanding of the poem.





LESSON PLANNING

- suggested how seminar ought to be run eg. support materials;
- types of questions and sample stems;
- watched videos of soc sem;
- make available rubrics for assessment to students





PRE-SEMINAR LESSONS

Pre-Seminar Scaffolding lessons conducted over 3 lessons.

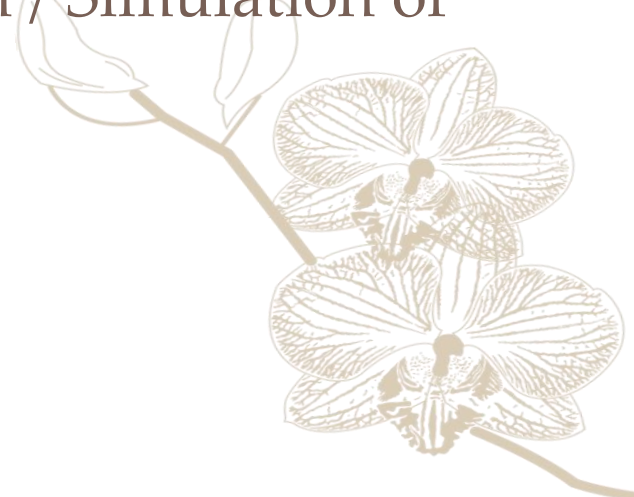
■ **Lesson 1** (30 minutes) – Introduction to Socratic Seminar.

- *To establish groupings*
- *The rationale for Socratic Seminar*
- *Introduction to the various roles in the Seminar as well as the rubrics*





- **Lesson 2** (50 minutes) – Introduction to the skills needed for Socratic Seminar.
- **Lesson 3** (20 minutes) – Demonstration / Simulation of Seminar.



20
mins

Skill: asking authentic questions about text to further understanding

What are **authentic questions**? (Open-ended, no right or wrong answers, meant to further inquiry)

Students examine **sets of questions and types**

- what are world-connection, open-ended, close-ended, universal themes, literary analysis, opening, guiding and closing questions?
- (to clarify) How are close-ended questions necessary to understand the text? (like comprehension questions – e.g. What is the subject matter of this poem? What poetic devices does the poet use? Vs What are the main ideas in the poem? Or What is the poet's tone or attitude towards..?)

ACTIVITY: In groups, **write one question of each type of writing prompt** on the poem “Postcards from Chinatown” or “Night Shift” and **classify each under the types of seminar questions** – if it is an opening question, core or closing question.

Class Discussion: Can prompts be classified under more than 1 type? E.g. What does the poet suggest about postcards from Chinatown? Can be used as a core question to elicit main ideas in the poem as well as a closing question to synthesis the poet's purpose.

- If time permits: What other questions would you ask as opening, guiding or closing questions on this poem?

Application for the Soc Sem: write at least one question in each of the categories.

Ppt and worksheet
s with
question
types and
examples

Students'
copies of
poems

Plain A4
paper




What questions do we ask?

Types of seminar questions

- **Opening Questions**
 - To get participants to identify the main ideas and/or values in the text
- **Core/Guiding Questions**
 - To have participants closely analyse the details of the text, find patterns and infer textual meaning
- **Closing Questions**
 - So that participants personally evaluate and synthesise the ideas and values, writer's purpose and messages

Pre-seminar writing prompts

- **World connection question**
 - **Close-ended question**
 - **Open-ended question**
 - **Universal theme question**
 - **Literary Analysis question (include those from SPECS & SLIMS)**
- 



POST LESSON DEBRIEF

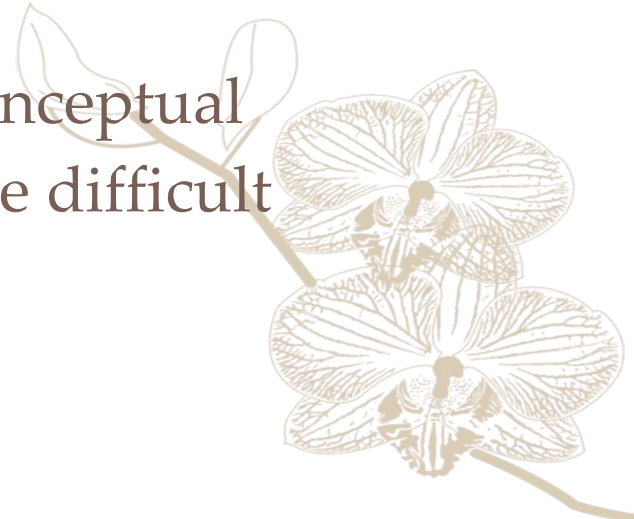
- Achievement of aims/objectives of the lesson;
- Student engagement and demonstration of understanding; and
- Teachers' behaviour in facilitating learning; their encouragement of communication and of moving discussions forward






Lesson 1: DIFFICULTIES OBSERVED

- Students' difficulty in understanding the differences between real-world connection versus universal theme questions
- Their difficulty with applying the conceptual understanding required for the more difficult questions





Lesson 1: ACTIONS TAKEN

- The opportunity during the first debrief session to clarify the differences helped make the teacher's explanation to students clearer during the second lesson.
 - Other changes made for subsequent lessons included pacing, having a focussing text, and a more efficient way of sharing and consolidating student responses.
- 



Clarification



World Connection Qns

To ask

- What does this remind me of in the real world?
- How is this text similar to things that happen in the real world?
- How is this different from things that happening the real world?
- How did that part relate to the world around me?

Universal Themes

- A **theme** is the central idea found within a story or passage. It can also represent a message or lesson the author wants to convey. When a theme is relatable by a wide range of readers, we call this a **universal theme**.
- They incorporate common life experiences or are concepts of human nature that most readers can understand.
- E.g. an individual's struggle towards a personal goal, a person's struggle with humanity, falling in love, life cycles, fate, coping with tragedy, adolescence and discovering the world around us.
- They are universally understood by a majority of readers due to how easily they can be applied to their own lives.
- Universal themes allow readers to connect to the story emotionally.






Examples of questions (Postcards from Chinatown)

- World connection
 - What images are depicted in tourist postcards? How do they represent the country?
 - How are the images portrayed in the postcards different from the reality of the culture of the place?
 - How does the tone change from stanza to stanza? Why?
- Universal Theme
- Literary Analysis





RESULTS: Findings from Lesson Study Debrief 2

- Importance of making Thinking Visible – not just for visual learners but to focus students' attention on the material and help them to analyse and make connections during discussion.
 - Use of post-its
- 



RESEARCH QUESTION

How do teachers prepare students to ask more purposeful questions during a Socratic Seminar on poetry analysis?

In particular,

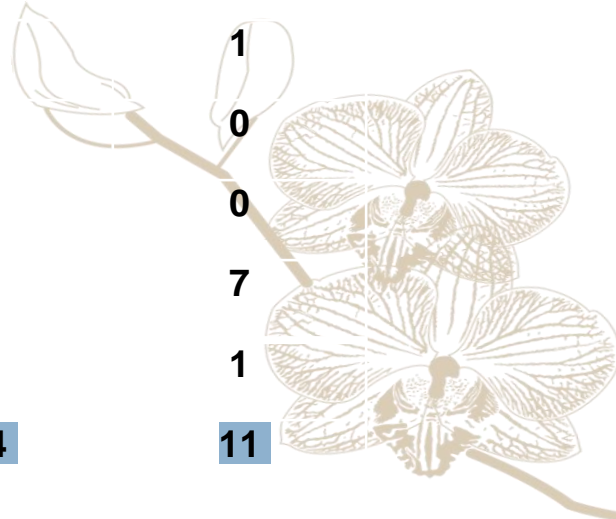
- how can teachers encourage the students to reach expert levels for the advanced skills of *justification, expansion of ideas and making connections* during the Seminar?






Data collected from pupils' Socratic Seminar discussions

Seminar Group recordings	Closed-ended	Open-ended	Literary Analysis	Universal Theme	World Connection
0003	4	1	3	1	0
0004	1	4	12	3	2
0004a	2	5	2	2	1
0005	3	1	7	6	0
00011	2	3	7	1	0
00015	8	6	3	1	7
00016	2	4	5	0	1
Total	22	24	39	14	11






DISCUSSION of DATA COLLECTED

- every group attempted to ask more purposeful questions and were engaged in asking the various question types
 - each Seminar group was able to develop their discussions
 - highest number of question types: literary analysis type questions
- 



RESULTS: Findings from the Socratic Seminars

- Students showed engagement and demonstration of metacognitive activity during the Seminars
 - e.g. following the discussion in order to paraphrase and respond to it/build on it
 - e.g. monitoring their and the group's understanding of the poem - summarising and synthesising main points, expanding & extending ideas to make real-world connections or relate to universal themes
- 



RESULTS: Findings from the post-Seminar student reflections

Analysis (through coding) of student feedback (free response to short questions) on the Socratic Seminar and Process

- Students who indicated that they found these pre-seminar sessions useful to prepare them for the seminar
 - lesson on question types 42%*
 - demonstration lesson 48%*

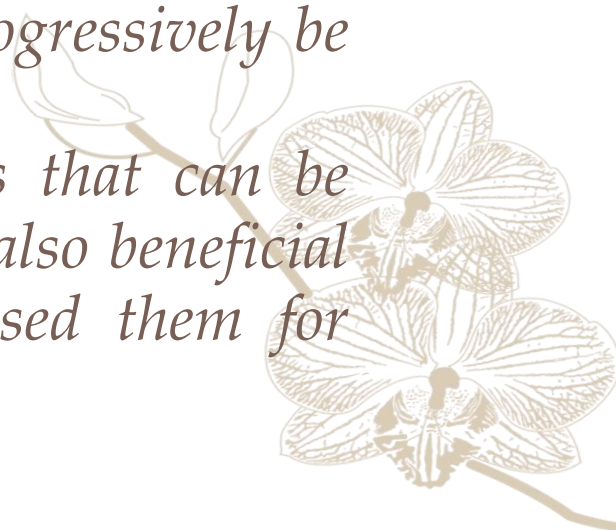




EXAMPLES of STUDENT FEEDBACK: benefits of pre- seminar activity

“The writing activity helped me understand the different types of questions and how they should progressively be asked.”

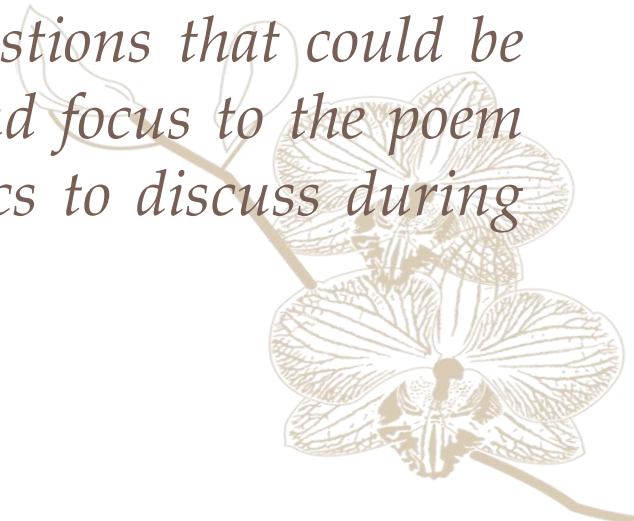
“Learning the different types of questions that can be asked e.g. World Connection question was also beneficial as it kept the Seminar going once we used them for opening/ guiding/ closing questions.”





“The lesson on asking different types of questions – closed ended, universal theme etc. helped me to prepare sufficiently for the seminar.”

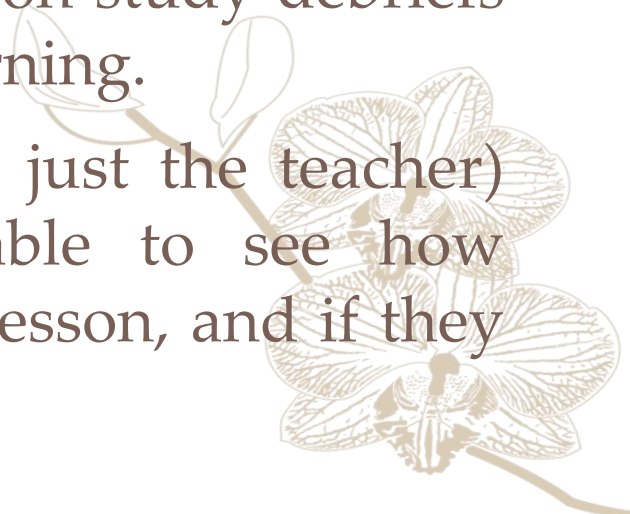
“The pre-Seminar lesson on the type of questions that could be formed and asked helped bring a purpose and focus to the poem and enable us to come up with certain topics to discuss during the actual seminar.”





CONCLUSION


- Clarity in the design of lesson materials was important to avoid misconceptions and confusion. This came about because of the lesson study debriefs we had. Clarity led to improved learning.
- Various members of the class (not just the teacher) could be observed: they were able to see how engaged students were during the lesson, and if they were not, why not.





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