

Social Studies Whole-Class Instructional Strategy:

Socratic Seminar, Fishbowl

The Basics

What? A discussion strategy in which students lead a discussion about complex texts

When? While students are working to understand a single text and/or comparing and contrasting ideas across multiple texts

Why? Allows students to refine their thinking about text(s) and formulate new ideas about text(s) based on the ideas of others in preparation for writing about text(s)

How to Implement

1. Identify a concept or theme related to the unit focus and determine the text(s) that address the concept or theme.
2. Decide when best to conduct the discussion (at what point in reading the text(s).
3. Create a question or series of questions about the concept or theme and how it applies to the text(s).
4. Present the question(s) to students and have them complete an [evidence chart](#) to locate evidence for the discussion.
5. Group the students into the best discussion format. Samples of discussion formats are included in “Resources for Additional Information.”
6. Work with students to establish ground rules for the discussion, including the use of [accountable talk](#) and the roles of each circle in the discussion.
7. Begin the discussion by asking the initial question.
8. Monitor and evaluate the content of the discussion and student contributions.
9. Provide different rounds of discussion in which students switch roles between speaker and listener.
10. Prompt students to offer feedback in between rounds of discussion.

Resources and Additional Information

- Graphic Organizers: [Conversation Stems](#) and [Discussion Tracker](#)
- [Outline](#) supporting Socratic seminar, fishbowl
- [Video Model](#) Sample discussion format of this strategy
- [Video Model](#) Another sample discussion format of this strategy
- Example topics in [Bayou Bridges: A Louisiana Social Studies Curriculum](#), in which the Socratic seminar, Fishbowl strategy would be helpful:
 - **Grades 6-8:** The Course of the Civil War (BB G7 U5, LSSSS 7.13, 7.13.d, 7.13.g, 7.13.f, 7.13.h), The Spanish-American War and Expansion (BB G8 U3, LSSSS 8.10.f)