

Socratic Circle Preparation Guide

“To question well is to teach well. In the skillful use of questions, more than anything else, lies the fine art of teaching.”
--Earnst Sachs

1. Carefully read/watch the assigned text(s).
2. Reflect critically on what you have read/watched.
3. Reread it.
4. Highlight or take notes on ideas/techniques that are especially intriguing or meaningful.
5. Annotate in the margin(s) for easy reference.
 - a. Identify rhetorical strategies, themes, symbols, etc. used by the author.
 - b. Identify any passages that you did not understand.
 - c. Note connections between this selection and other texts, historical events, or personal experiences.
6. Support your ideas with specific, cited textual evidence.
7. Compose a typed, professional document that presents your ideas.
 - a. Use MLA formatting.
 - b. Include the citation(s) for the work(s) referenced or cited in the document.
 - c. Develop each response so it is a minimum of 300 words.
 - d. Support each response with cited textual evidence.
 - e. Demonstrate grammatical mastery in your writing.
8. Submit your finalized responses to Turnitin.com.

The Document

1. Formatting – 5 points
 - a. You were expected to learn MLA and APA formatting in 10th grade – I hope you were paying attention. I do not accept documents that are formatted incorrectly.
 - b. Since you are writing about a text, whether it is visual or written, use MLA formatting for Socratic Circle responses unless otherwise instructed.
 - c. The only MLA rule I want you to break is the line spacing. Double spacing is what is required for all documents, but BECAUSE I AM INSTRUCTING YOU DIFFERENTLY, I want you to single space the questions and responses to save paper (“play the game” – do what your teacher wants)
2. Citation – 5 points
 - a. All works used to compose your document must be cited.
3. Content – 5 points each
 - a. Don’t worry about being “wrong.” Take chances with your analyses. I am looking for outside-of-the-box ideas and well-placed evidence. You’ll be doing this sort of thing often throughout the year and on the AP exam.
 - i. Student artifices that I am aware of and will result in low-quality responses
 1. Using quotes from the beginning and end of the reading because you don’t want to take the time to look for the most effective evidence.
 2. Wasting 50 -75 words at the beginning of your Socratic Circle response to rephrase the question.
 3. Reusing quotes throughout your Socratic Circle responses.
 4. Meeting the word count bare minimum consistently. Show me that you don’t live by word counts. It doesn’t make any sense to stop your writing and thinking process just because of a word count. A word count is simply a baseline, a minimum.
 - b. Minimum word count for each response to each question is 300 words – welcome to the big leagues.
 - c. Cited textual evidence is essential. Even though you are writing about literature, you are still composing an argument...and all good arguments require cited evidence. Don’t forget those in-text citations. Papers submitted with no evidence and/or no citations will be returned so you can amend them; you might as well do it right the first time.

- d. Avoid the use of 1st person – anything you write is obviously a statement of your opinion; saying “I believe” or “I think that” doesn’t make it any more opinionated. And it sounds unsophisticated.
4. Quality and style of writing
- a. Every writing assignment this year will be an OPPORTUNITY for you to learn how to better control your own writing voice. In other words, responses to Socratic Circle questions are not just about answering questions. Rather, I want you also to practice writing in a way that is engaging and grammatically correct.
 - b. Egregious mechanical errors will result in point deductions. In fact, you had better learn to have infallible writing – college professors will fail papers that aren’t. I earned a “C-“ on an in-class essay in college because I had one comma splice in it. One.
 - i. fused sentences
 - ii. comma splices
 - iii. missing commas – after introductory phrases & clauses; before coordinating conjunctions that join independent clauses
 - iv. erroneously punctuating titles of works
 - v. erroneously punctuating in-text citations
 - c. The grading rubric – each response will be scored on a scale of 5 (best) -1 (worst)

5—These impressive responses meet all length, number, and formatting requirements. They are specific and inspired in their analysis and use of evidence. Rather than pedestrian, obvious commentary, these essays display insightful thinking. They refer to the work intelligently and they cogently explain how the evidence supports the writer’s thinking. Grammatical errors are minimal.

4—These responses meet nearly all length, number, and formatting requirements. They also exhibit effective analysis of the work, but do so with less accuracy and clarity than A-level assignments. The work tends to be obvious and less impressive. They adequately explain how the evidence supports the writer’s thinking. Grammatical errors are somewhat distracting.

3—These responses meet most of the length, number, and formatting requirements, but they may misrepresent the literature, offer arbitrary evidence, or rely too much on simply summarizing or paraphrasing the work. Grammatical errors are distracting.

2—These responses meet some of the length, number, and formatting requirements, but they demonstrate little or no success in analysis. They may substitute simpler tasks for the ones demanded by the instructions. These assignments tend to merely consist of summary and paraphrase with no analysis, or the response lacks development. Grammatical errors make the meaning unclear.

1—These responses fail to meet most of the length, number, and formatting requirements. They show little consideration for the requirements delineated in the instructions. In nearly every characteristic, these assignments are not considered acceptable as a high school assignment, much less an AP-level assignment. Grammatical errors make the meaning unclear.

<h2>The Discussion</h2>

1. On the day of the discussion, you must bring the following items:
 - a. your thoroughly annotated copy of the text being studied
 - b. your printed questions & responses with Turnitin report attached (if you come and ask me before class if you can go somewhere to print your responses, my answer will be “no” – I expect you to come to class prepared)
2. The grading
 - a. As you engage in a dialogue with your peers about the text being studied, I will be keeping track of your contributions on a chart. You earn points for the following:
 - i. 1 point - Contributing significantly to the conversation through extension or elaboration
 - ii. 1 point - Providing new insight or perspective on the text(s) being discussed (going beyond the assigned Socratic Circle questions)
 - iii. 1 point - Referencing specific lines or words from the text as evidence for the contribution
 - iv. 1 point - Connecting the new work with a previously studied text in a meaningful way
 - b. By the end of the discussion, you should have accumulated 6 points.
3. Absences – any absence in an AP class puts you at a serious disadvantage. Missing a Socratic Circle isn’t any different. If you miss a Socratic Circle, you will be required to stay after school for an in-class essay (40 minutes).