



CLASSROOM VIDEO • VIEWING GUIDE

SOCRATIC SEMINAR: SOCIAL JUSTICE

Overview

In this classroom video, social studies teacher Elena Maker leads her students in their first Socratic seminar of the year. The essential question they are exploring is, “How do our personal stories influence how we fight for justice?” In particular, they are considering the personal stories

of civil rights activists Yuri Kochiyama and Angela Davis. Drawing on prior lessons the students have explored from *My Part of the Story*, this class is grappling with how identity shapes people’s choices and actions.

Questions to Consider

1. At **0:15**, Ms. Maker says, “Socratic seminars, in a way, build classroom community.” At what moments do you see that happening in the video? How does the Socratic seminar as a strategy build classroom community?
2. The actual Socratic seminar does not start until **2:47**. What does Ms. Maker do prior to the Socratic seminar to prepare her students for the seminar? What preparation do you think she has done that we do not see?

3. At **3:19**, a student quotes Angela Davis: “That’s why when someone asks me about violence, I just find it incredible because what it means is that the person who’s asking that question has absolutely no idea what black people have gone through, what black people have experienced in this country since the time the first black person was kidnapped from the shores of Africa.” The student references this quote when discussing Davis’s feelings about violence being an inevitable part of the struggle for civil rights. At 4:49, another student asks, “Is it right that the Black

Panthers protect their community by having guns?” The legacies of both nonviolent and violent protest are part of the history of the civil rights movement. How might you acknowledge these moments and/or other difficult aspects of history in your classroom? Do they need to be acknowledged?

4. At **5:46**, Ms. Maker asks, “Let’s take a second. What have we seen that’s been working well so far?” Why does she do this? How might you check in with your students during a Socratic seminar?

Featured

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Video Goals

- **Learn** how a Socratic seminar can be used to structure classroom discussion and to encourage students to use specific evidence to support their claims.
- **Witness** how the teacher checks in with the students to acknowledge what is working and what aspects of the seminar need improvement.
- **Observe** students grappling with the factors that shape Kochiyama’s and Davis’s identities and actions, and how these factors resonate with the students’ own lives and choices.

Lesson Resources

- [My Part of the Story: Exploring Identity in the United States](#)
- [Teaching Strategy: Socratic Seminar](#)
- [Black Is . . . Black Ain’t](#) (video)