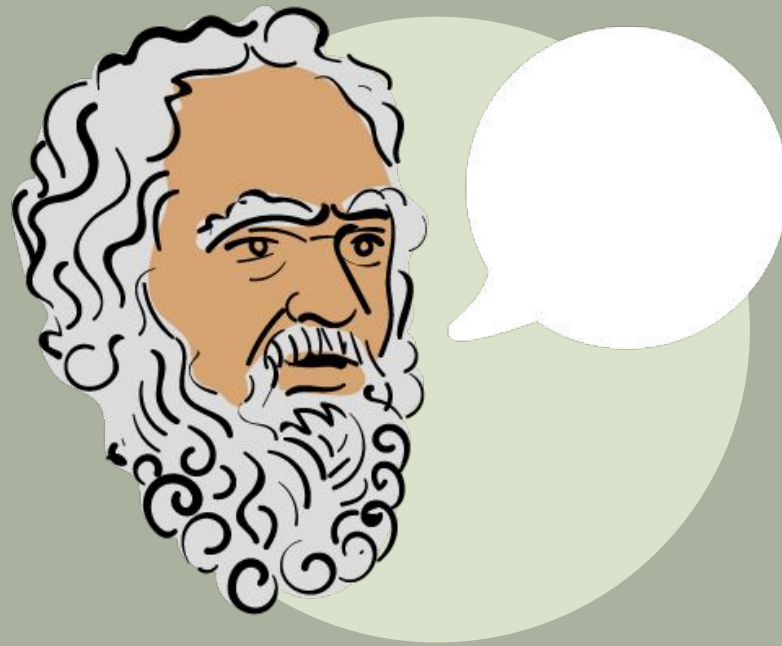
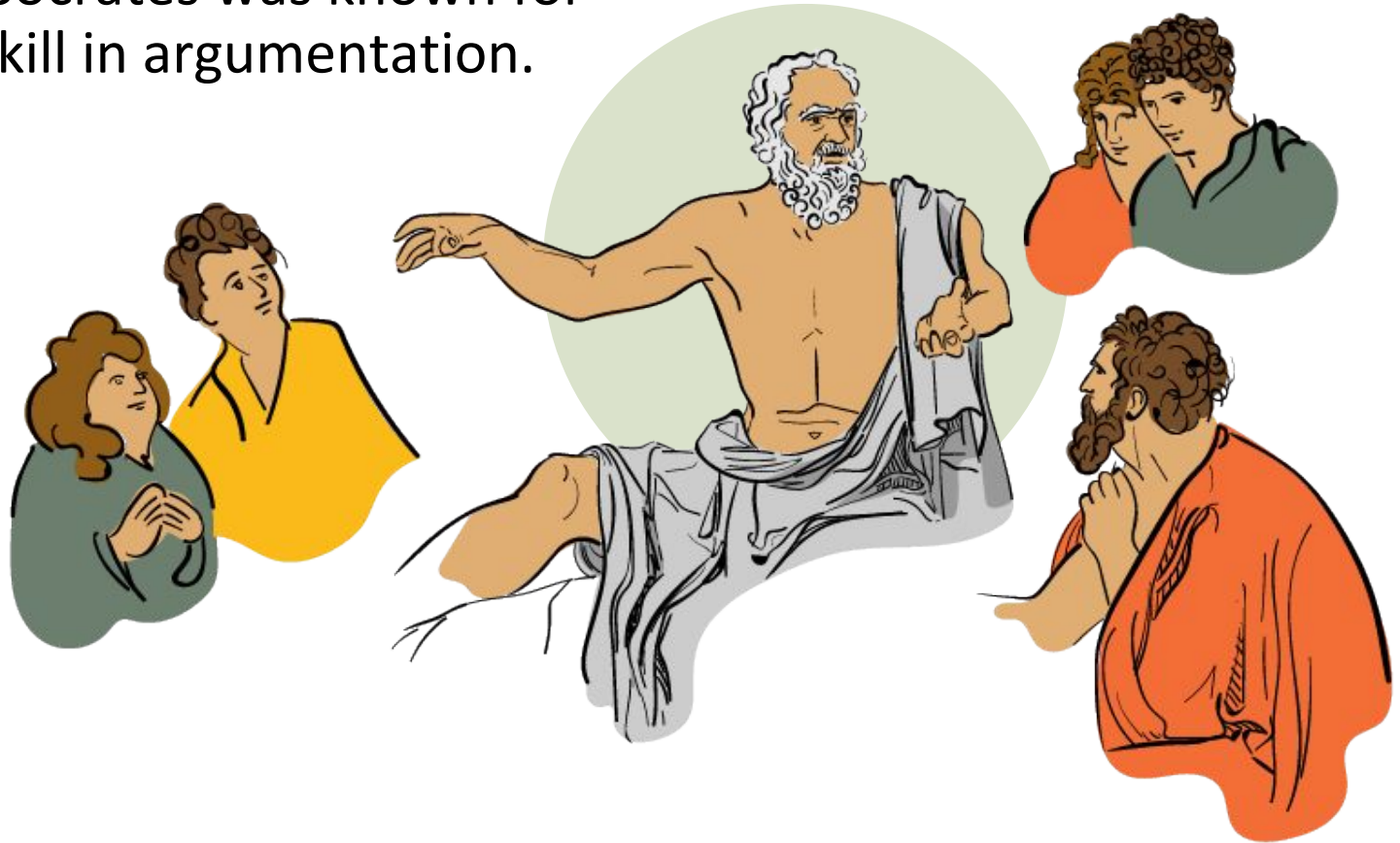


Socratic Discussions



What is a Socratic discussion?

It is a type of discussion named after the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates. Socrates was known for his great skill in argumentation.



What is a Socratic discussion?



“Argument” in this case doesn’t mean angry yelling; it means providing convincing support for an idea or opinion. You know—like a CERCA!

Features of a Socratic discussion



There are many types of Socratic discussions in today's classrooms. But they all share some key principles.

Questioning

*Questions are the most important part
of a Socratic discussion.*

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In a Socratic discussion, the facilitator starts by asking a “big” question. The main discussion question is an open-ended question that has a lot of possible answers.



Questioning

Questions are the most important part of a Socratic discussion.

Participants then develop their responses by asking questions of one another. These detailed questions help the participants make their responses to the main discussion question clearer and better understood.



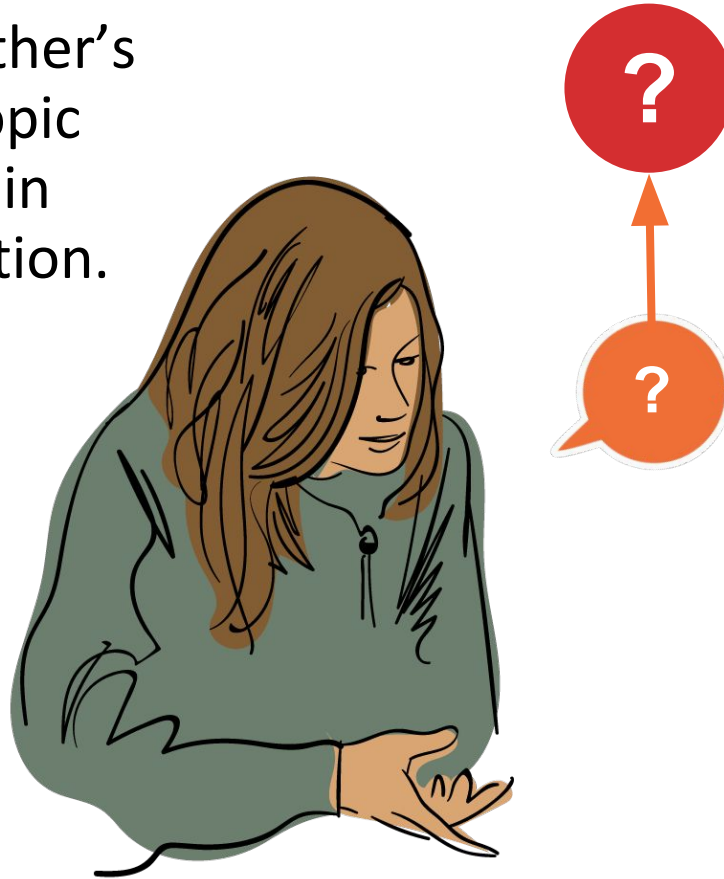
Assumptions

Assumptions are ideas people accept as true, even though others might not share that same certainty.

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Participants also explore questions about one another's assumptions about the topic and assumptions implied in the main discussion question.



Assumptions

Assumptions are ideas people accept as true, even though others might not share that same certainty.

For example, one assumption in a discussion about school uniforms might be:

“It is important for students to feel unified as one school community.”



Assumptions

Assumptions are ideas people accept as true, even though others might not share that same certainty.



“About 15% of U.S. public schools have a uniform policy.”

This statement, however, is not an assumption.
It is simply a fact.

Listening

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Listening

Listening is a crucial part of a Socratic discussion.

The facilitator listens carefully to the participants. That way he or she knows what questions to ask next.



Listening

Listening is a crucial part of a Socratic discussion.

In a Socratic discussion, everyone listens with the goal of learning about others' ideas.

They do not listen with the goal of “winning,” like they would in a debate.



Listening

Listening is a crucial part of a Socratic discussion.

During the discussion, participants contribute and show that they are listening to one another. They agree or disagree, clarify, and build on ideas.



Connecting

The goal of a Socratic discussion is to build a network of ideas around the main discussion question.

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Participants help others understand their thinking by connecting their ideas to evidence and reasoning.



Connecting

The goal of a Socratic discussion is to build a network of ideas around the main discussion question.

Participants listen carefully to connect their ideas to other ideas they heard in discussion.



Connecting

The goal of a Socratic discussion is to build a network of ideas around the main discussion question.

The facilitator uses guiding questions to connect different ideas.

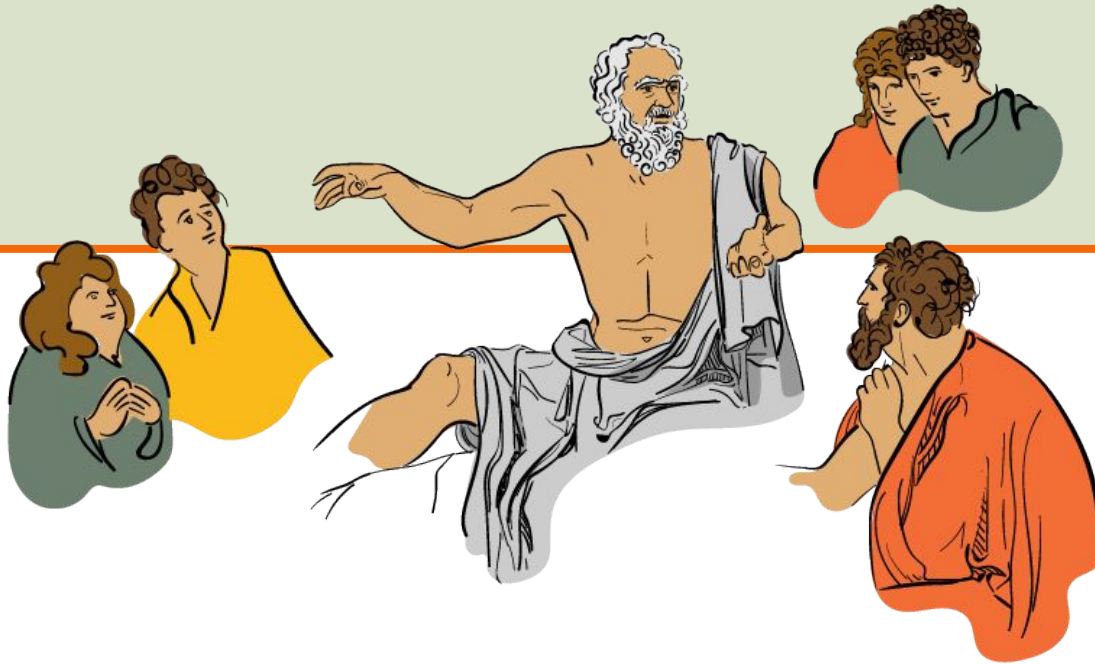


Questioning, Listening, Connecting

These principles make Socratic discussions a powerful thinking and learning tool, for everyone—students and teachers.



Socratic discussions help everyone with critical thinking



Participants consume and analyze information.

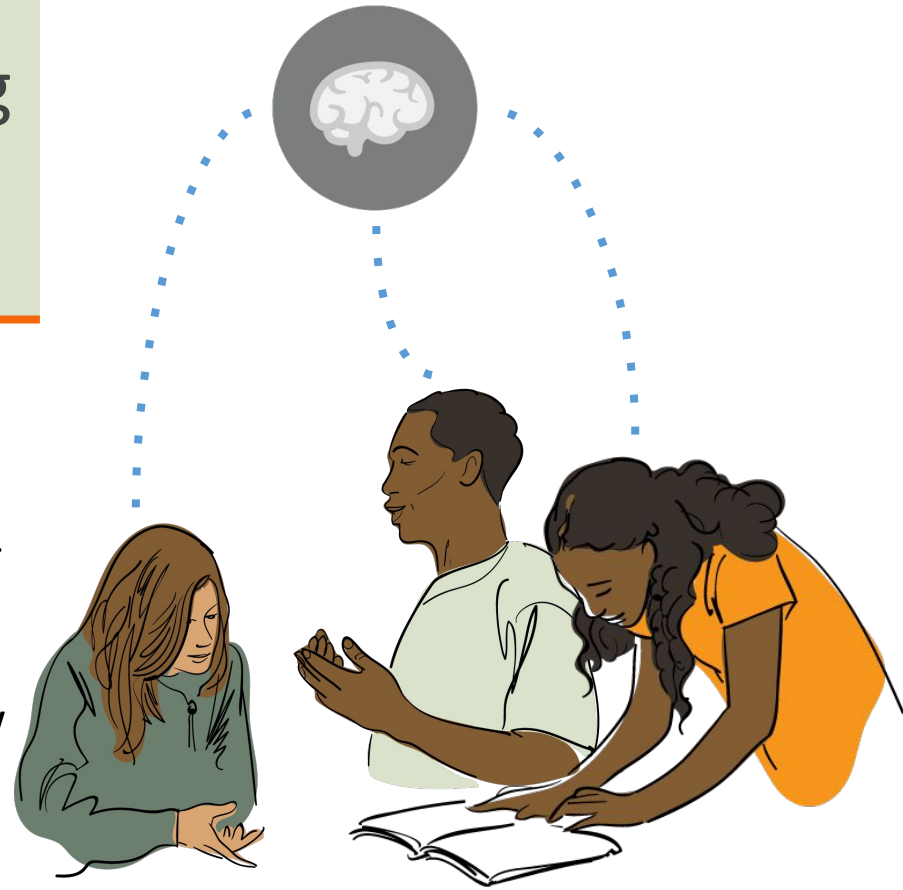
They make sure their analysis is reasonable and supported with evidence. They listen to different ideas and viewpoints.

Socratic discussions lift everyone's understanding to a higher level

All ideas are heard – even surprising and uncommon ones.

Everyone gets a chance to participate-- people who love to talk and those who need a little more time to get comfortable sharing their point of view out loud.

By the end of the discussion, everyone in the group has reached a better and richer understanding that they could not have reached on their own.





Socratic discussions improve the atmosphere inside and outside the classroom

Participants become experts in speaking thoughtfully and thinking things through.

Participants become experts in listening respectfully with the goal of building a shared understanding, not tearing down other people's ideas.

Participants become experts in making connections between texts, ideas, and personal opinions and experiences.

Sample follow-up questions

Try using some of these questions and statements in discussion:

- Can you say more about that?
- What part of the text connects with that idea?
- What do you think of [_____]’s point?
- I agree with you because [_____].
- I disagree with the part where you said [_____] because [_____].

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