

Socratic Seminar Plan Scissors

Information: Father Baltar resembles marriage to a pair of scissors and tells the present persons of a married couple who each hides the fact that their son is dead to one-another, also begging father Baltar to help them with the deceit. The text is written by the Spanish author Emilia Pardo Bazán in 1899.

Personal and group goals are set.

Opening question:

If you were the priest, what would you have done?

Possible questions of analysis:

The allegory of scissors

Father Baltar says that marriage is like a pair of scissors. What do the different parts symbolize, according to him?

On page 115 Bathar says: “an example of natural love, purified by divine law!” How is this to be interpreted?

Does father Baltar mean that the marriage of doña Consuelos and don Andrés is a good pair of scissors? Why does he say that they are open in the shape of a cross at the end?

The priest:

What motives does the priest have to agree to don Andrés suggestion to lie on the two occasions? How would father Baltar have acted if doña Consuelo had been healthy? How would don Andrés have acted?

Why do the parents choose father Baltar and not their usual confession priest?

The son:

How does the priest describe the son? Is this the same view of him as the parents have?

Why does the son get to choose his destination when exiled? Why does he choose Manila?

Why doesn't the son write any letters? Does he seem to be improving from the stay in Manilla or not?

Why does don Andrés react the way he does when getting the information about the death of the son? Why does he forgive the murderers?

The relation between doña Consuelo and don Andrés:

How does doña Consuelo react to the false letters? Don Andrés? Why do they react as they do? Do they believe that the son is remorseful and penitent?

Why can't Baltar see doña Consuelo alone at the end? Why does don Andrés agree to let him do this finally?

Father Baltar chooses to tell don Andrés about the death of the son because he thinks Andrés is the strongest of the parents. Is this a correct assumption?

Why are the man and wife lying to each other in this case, when they seem to have had an open relationship? What would have happened if they both would have known that the son was dead? Do they realize that the other one is lying? What could be the reason to their illnesses?

Possible evaluative questions:

Father Baltar asks (page 117): “Was I right or wrong in agreeing?” What would be your answer?

What obligation do you have to speak the truth in a relationship? How does this relate to the obligation to take care of your partner?

Is lying worse in certain professions?

Check the personal goals, meta-dialogue about the group goal.