

Thoughtful Dialogues and Socratic Seminars

Students' Reading Comprehension

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SECTION I

THOUGHTFUL DIALOGUES AND SOCRATIC SEMINARS TO COMPREHEND AND UNDERSTAND TEXTS

Research about philosophy of education in action, used in schools as thoughtful, or Socratic, dialogues, shows that student abilities to read and analyze texts progress (Orellana, 2008, Pihlgren, 2008, Robinsson, 2006). The dialogue will help students to develop a sophisticated and identificatory reading. They will learn to organize their reading more systematic (Robinsson, 2006). Other communicative abilities will develop by using thoughtful dialogues, like listening to and understanding others, expressing and underpinning ideas in speech and writing, to cooperate with others, and to build on the ideas of others to develop ones' own (Billings & Fitzgeralds, 2002, Pihlgren, 2008). The dialogue will also have effects on the ability to solve problems and think critically (Orellana, 2008).

Thoughtful dialogue labels a group of methods of philosophizing dialogues. The methods are slightly different regarding how they are performed but they all have similar approaches. A thoughtful dialogue is open and respectful, and at the same time with an analytic character; it springs mostly from the ideas of the students, with the teacher working as a scaffolding facilitator. By examining a text, a picture, or a question from some decided points of view, the students will cooperate to come to a deeper understanding. This paper focuses on describing and elaborating research articles and results from Socratic (or Paideia) dialogue, as this particular methodological approach has shown good effects on students' reading comprehension and ability to analyze texts (Robinsson, 2006, Orellana, 2008, Pihlgren, 2008). Other thoughtful dialogue methods are for example *P4C/PwC: Philosophy for/with Children* and *deliberative dialogue*.

Thoughtful dialogue has its background in the European *Bildung* movement¹, enhancing general and life-long education for all citizens. In Sweden the tradition is represented by Professor Hans Larsson, educator Oscar Olsson and later Professor Lars Lindström, who all developed the attitude that Socrates is said to have had in his dialogues: The facilitator practices *maieutics*, midwifery, to help participants deliver their thoughts about central human ideas and values (Pihlgren, 2008). By using Socrates' maieutics as a group activity, with recurrent elements in which the participants mutually and individually probed a text, the general educators gave these dialogues a didactic form, making it possible to use as an activity in education. In the dialogue, texts or pictures are used, that will evoke questions and reflections, and that will promote several interpretations.

The dialogues' possibilities in education

Catarina Schmidt (2013) shows in her doctoral dissertation that school education rarely offers the students the possibilities to discuss their interpretations, or to analyze texts interactively. However, these activities are necessary if the students are to understand texts and keep an interest in reading. The Socratic, thoughtful dialogues will result in advanced linguistic development and communicative abilities, especially if they are paired with supportive activities before and after the dialogue (Robinsson, 2006). By discussing literature on their own terms in the dialogues, the students will also get the opportunity to embrace the cultural heritage in literature, and this will support their self-perception and understanding of theirs and other cultures (Pihlgren, 2010). The

¹ *Bildung*, a German word used to describe a cultural and political phenomenon that became common in Scandinavia and German speaking countries in the later part of the 19th century.

connection between language and thinking is well known and practicing Socratic dialogue will also have an extensive impact on students' advanced cognitive abilities (Orellana, 2008, Pihlgren, 2013).

Thoughtful dialogue can be used in all school subjects to enhance students' thinking, understanding, and knowledge, not only as part of language education (Pihlgren, 2010). The dialogue will give the participants deeper insights about the central ideas in different subjects, and also an opportunity to investigate and value these ideas. The text and the discussion can also present moral and ethical dilemmas to the participants, which they will have to consider and value. Thereby, the thoughtful dialogues will also offer a powerful method when working with the fundamental values of society – not as a set of rules to be taught and learnt, but as a practice in analyzing and taking a stance.

Theoretical base

Interactive educational methods, where the student feels interested and involved, are shown to be highly related to students' success in school (Haroutunian-Gordon, 1991, Wolf et. al, 2006). The methods in thoughtful dialogue presuppose that learning is interactive: By practicing with others the individual will internalize intellectual and communicative skills. Later, these skills will help the individual to analyze and make choices on his or her own, even in complex situations. Learning in dialogue can be compared to Lev S. Vygotsky's way of seeing learning as an interactive process, where the individual will have access to a proximal (potential) development zone, in addition to the actual level of development. This proximal development zone (PDZ) can be reached in interaction with others and with the context (Billings & Pihlgren, 2009). According to Vygotsky, the individual will first access thinking skills in cooperative interaction. Later on, the individual is able to make use of these abilities on his or her own, analyzing and solving problems without the support from others. In a pedagogical context, the development process presupposes that context as well as interaction is arranged as a scaffold to support the intended learning. Good conditions for such an interactive learning is created in the thoughtful dialogue by forming a cooperative dialogical culture and guiding the intellectual examination, using a methodological structure and rules for the dialogue.

There are several types of dialogue in the classroom: Instruction, debate, conversation, and inquiring dialogues (Burbules, 1993). The thoughtful dialogue is an inquiring dialogue, an activity guided towards discovering, understanding, and learning in a non-authoritarian way. The dialogue gives the participants a special chance to catch and understand differences, by letting several voices and ideas be heard (Dysthe, 1996, Holquist, 2004). The open and inquiring quality of the questions are of great importance to the intellectual content, and hence, to the results the dialogues will have on the development of the individual (Orellana, 2008).

Identificatory reading

To be able to participate in the cooperative inquiry of the dialogue, the student will have to read the text. However, it will not be enough to just read it – the student will have to develop a certain way to read, directed towards understanding and analysis, rather than decoding or memorizing (Coles, 1989, Marton & Säljö, 1997). Rosenblatt (1995) makes a difference between “efferent reading”, where the reader searches for information and

has no real interest for the text itself, and “aesthetic reading”, where the reading is explorative and will explore both the text and the inner self of the reader.

Wade et al. (1994) points at a “critical-analytical” search reading, where the reader searches for assumptions or hidden messages. Trondman (1994) calls this type of engaged reading “identificatory”, where the reader embraces the text in a personal, emotional way, but also by analyzing and examining the text, comparing its content with the personal experiences. The reader understands him- or herself and the world better when the reading presents him or her with possibilities to relate to different actions and motives. Ricœur (1993) points out that part of the text’s function is to offer the reader opportunities for self-reflection. The reader will question the text and interact with it through an inner dialogue. By reading the text, the reader will take a distance to his or her every-day perceptions and thereby think new creative thoughts: “*When I read, I ‘unrealize’ myself*” (Ricœur, 1993, p. 155). Through the identificatory reading, the reader will hence be more apt to take on the challenges of life (Emery & Csikszentmihalyi, 1981, Furman, 1998, Lindström, 2000, Trondman, 1994). Not all texts are possible to use, when aiming at this particular type of reading. The text will have to be complex, and not so easily understood (cf. Bakhtin, 1996, Derrida in Olsson, 1987). The text should be open to interpretations, which later can be explored and elaborated in the cooperative thoughtful dialogue (Lindström, 2000).

The thoughtful, Socratic, dialogue has been chosen by the Swedish National Agency for Education as one of the research based and scientifically documented methods to enhance reading comprehension among students in grade K-9.

Facilitating a thoughtful dialogue in class

The thoughtful dialogue differs from other teaching activities in some important aspects. Extensive research has shown that teachers’ speech dominates 70-75 % of the talking in classrooms (Liljestrand, 2002). The conversational pattern in the classroom is often limited to the teacher initiating a question, the student answering, and the teacher evaluating the answer. More than half of the answers are obvious – the teacher asks questions that he/she already knows the answer to, in order to control that students know or understand (Wolf et. al, 2006). This might be necessary during lessons where the teacher is presenting new knowledge to the students. Even when dialogue or exploring methods are used, a certain result might be desired, something particular that the student is supposed to understand or know after the activity. However, this kind of approach is not possible to use in the thoughtful dialogue. The facilitating teacher must refrain from controlling the content in the dialogue, and the values and ideas that will be presented during the dialogue. In its ideal form, when working as intended, the thoughtful dialogue is an open, cooperative, and critically examining interlocution among equals, exposing little difference between the facilitator and the participants. In the classroom, this must be considered the goal, something achieved after several, recurrent dialogues at best. As a pedagogical activity the dialogue will improve by teachers and students taking several steps of development on the way towards the goal. The facilitator’s role will differ from the participant’s in the beginning: Even though the teacher is a partner in the egalitarian dialogue, he or she will have to control the progression of the dialogue.

The facilitating role could be difficult to acquire in the beginning and takes practice, even though the teacher is used to work with dialogues or experiments (Pihlgren, 2008). The teacher might in the beginning experience that his or her good ideas no longer are in focus, something that one might not have realized that they have actually been before. The facilitator will not feel appreciated or acknowledged – feelings that often are sources of joy in the teaching profession. When the personal ideas no longer guide the content, the facilitator might experience feelings of doubt: Maybe the participants will learn “wrong” values – where is the limit to what they might be allowed to critically analyze? Inexperienced facilitators tend to feel uncertain and afraid of losing control because it is hard to see what might cause that something goes wrong in the new situation. The lack of experience and of role models might make the teacher ask him- or herself if the thoughtful dialogues really are worth the time they take. However, research shows that recurrent and systematic thoughtful dialogues show good effects on reading, communicative ability, ability to critical analysis, and social skills. When the class has participated in thoughtful dialogues a couple of times, the participants are familiar with the dialogue structure, and will control parts of the dialogue. The teacher will only intervene to enhance thinking about some idea, to unveil weak reasoning, or to point out important ideas that might otherwise be forgotten.

The facilitator's questions

The teacher's way to pose questions is crucial if the dialogue is to be reflective and analyzing in a way that will enhance students' ability to understand texts. Factual questions, where the teacher is looking for a particular answer, will rarely lead to deeper reflection. Questions like *What's the name of the main character in "The hunger games"?* *Where is the boy in the story going?* *What year was the battle of Trafalgar?* *What is 8⁴?* are best avoided in the thoughtful dialogue. Using interpretive, analyzing questions is more effective, when the students have to "read between the lines" to gather and analyze information to find likely solutions or sustainable interpretations, and weed out the less probable alternatives. The interpretive questions facilitate the process by encouraging the students to compare, critically examine, and evaluate information or points of views. Questions like *Why does Heathcliff lie about his first wife?* *Why does Jack trade his mother's cow for a couple of beans?* *What way to solve this equation will be most effective?* *Why did the Vikings turn Christian after having believed in the Norse gods for several hundred years?* are all interpretive. Evaluative questions encourage the student to estimate or evaluate and this type of questions belongs to the last section of the dialogue. The answer is here to find "beyond the lines" and the participant is asked to take a personal stance. *Is it ever right to kill a man, and in that case, when?* *What outweighs, the benefits or the drawbacks, do you think?* *How would you do, if you happened to be in the same situation as the main character in the story?* are evaluative questions.

Interpretive, analyzing questions in combination with evaluative questions give students the best possibilities to practice their understanding and thinking. A key to classroom discussion is to refrain from seeking consensus, and to cultivate an openness towards differences and distinction. A good thoughtful dialogue is distinguished by the fact that students (and teacher) leave the dialogue with more questions than they had when entering the discussion. This will make the thinking process continue.

The structure of the dialogue

My own research (Pihlgren, 2008) shows that it is important to use a certain structure to reach the desired results. The dialogue should include the following sections, every section aiming at a particular cognitive function:

1. The dialogue starts with an opening question, and all participants are asked to answer it. The students read or hear the text before the seminar, preferably several times. The opening question encourages all participants to evaluate the text from their pre-cognition when reading the text. The participants take a silent pause to think about their answer to the question. The question is then answered by all participants. By listening to the exposed ideas they will discover that there are several different interpretations.
2. The core of the seminar is the interpretation and analysis of the text. The group works together to try to come to a better understanding, by examining the text and the participants' statements critically. Participants are asked to support their statements by referring to the text, building on what has been said before, by presenting bold ideas that might differ from what has been said before or from what is conventional, and at the same time meet each other with respect. The teacher has prepared a number of interpretive questions, but these might not be presented, depending on what turn the dialogue takes.
3. At the end of the dialogue, the facilitator asks the participants to reconnect to their own everyday experience, by asking them an evaluative question, closely connected to what has been discussed.
4. When the seminar has closed a meta-dialogue follows, to give the participants opportunity to evaluate their performance in the dialogue. The meta-dialogue is an important learning opportunity, focusing on the anticipated dialogical cooperation. The formative assessment rubrics presented in Appendix B and C offer some help when conducting the meta-dialogue.

Dialogical rules

It is important to create an allowing atmosphere, where cooperative critical examination is possible. This is done by different means, showing what is desired in the dialogue. The dialogue can be described as a "game" with other rules than those that are generally exposed in the classroom practice. Presenting the following rules on the white board before the seminar takes place is a starting point:

- We will help each other to think carefully about the ideas presented.
- There are several possible answers.
- Listen carefully to what others say.
- Be prepared to change your mind if you discover a better idea.

If the students are to internalize this approach, they will have to practice. All beginners will observe the facilitator to get guidance in what is accepted or not in the dialogue. This makes it necessary for the facilitator to speak more than what is actually intended in the thoughtful dialogue, to show how the dialogue is performed. The facilitator might have to encourage or emphasize by gestures or facial expressions what is proper or not. However, the facilitator must be observant to when encouraging or correcting by speech, gestures, and facial expressions tend to control the intellectual content, rather than exposing the sought dialogical culture. In the daily profession as a teacher, one of

the tasks is to teach children and youngsters what are accepted and desired values in our society. As a facilitator of thoughtful dialogues the teacher will instead have to encourage a critical analysis of all values and ideas, even those that are considered undesirable.

Practical considerations

The dialogues should be held on a regular basis (Pihlgren, 2010). Participants should be seated so that they can see all other participants, preferably around the same table or in a circle. All participants need a copy of the text, and they have to come prepared to the seminar by having read or listened to the text. The length of the seminar depends on the age of the participants. The youngest, five-six years old, have physical strength to go on for around 20 minutes, even if they often want to continue the dialogue. Older students could preferably go on for about an hour or even longer. If the dialogue lasts more than one and a half hour it is likely to cease to be productive: No new ideas are presented and the old are repeated. The length of the seminar is also dependent on how interested the group is in the ideas presented in the text. As in most dialogical events, the optimal group size is 8-15 participants. In such a group all will be able to speak if they wish, and there will be a good variety of ideas enriching the dialogue. If the group consists of less than six participants there is a risk that they come to consensus and that no bold ideas are presented, at least if the group consists of beginners.

Dialogues in larger groups

In most school settings the groups that the teacher will have to manage consists of more than 15 students. One way of coping with larger groups is of course to divide the group into two, one group participating in the seminar, and the other group working with assignments related to the subject addressed in the seminar text.

Another way of coping with a larger group is to assign some volunteer students to be silent observers. The observer might have as an assignment during the dialogue to observe how the group sticks to the rules or to take notes on which important ideas are presented. The observer sits outside the dialogue circle and takes notes during the seminar, but cannot participate or speak during the seminar. After the dialogue, during the meta-dialogue and evaluation, the observers present their observations before the group evaluates their own performance in seminar.

In experienced groups, familiar with the dialogue structure, students can facilitate the dialogue. By planning the seminar together in class, and then forming smaller groups, several dialogues can be held in the same classroom at the same time. The teacher then has the possibility to take an observing role and give feedback to the groups during meta-dialogue.

Planning a thoughtful dialogue

Good planning is important to the outcome of the thoughtful dialogue. Planning a thoughtful dialogue is a skill that takes some practice. A collegial discussion when planning is very valuable to prepare for the dialogue with students.

Choosing texts

An interesting text to discuss will contribute to the quality of the dialogue. The choice of text is dependent on what the teacher wants to accomplish and why, with what group and under what circumstances the dialogue takes place. Choose a text that will inspire thought, which can be interpreted in different ways and are difficult in the sense that students will have to work to understand and interpret it. If the text is too easy to grasp or holds to few ideas, the subject of dialogue will soon be hollow. If the content doesn't hold contradictions, several possible interpretations or "cracks", it will not support the dialogue. A text presenting a certain moral or a clear message is hardly able to use, even when the text might be fantastic when used for other purposes. *Rikki-Tikki-Tavi* by Rudyard Kipling is the story about a little mongo, saving a family from an attack from some vicious cobras. It is an excellent story to read aloud to the class, but will unfortunately hardly work as a text in a thoughtful dialogue – the moral is given, the mongo is good, the cobras are evil. The story about Mowgli from the same author, telling us about the human child brought up by wolves and finding himself between the world of humans and that of animals, is on the other hand an excellent text for a thoughtful dialogue, with many dilemmas and possibilities to probe. Newspaper articles or traditional school texts often does not hold the complexity demanded. On the other hand, original texts often work very well. Reading excerpts from Martin Luther King's speech or Charles Darwin's theories on natural selection will work better than choosing a text from a school book for social or natural science.

Working order when planning seminars

The seminar should include the following parts:

1. Opening question
2. Core including analysis and interpretations
3. Socratic, evaluative question

However, when you are planning the seminar, you will benefit from not doing it in this order! Start by reading the text closely, preferably several times. Note questions and comments. Reflect on the messages of the text, the main theses, the logical strengths and flaws, uncertainties, or contradictions in reasoning, presentation, or content.

Start with the core analysis

After reading, summarize your thoughts as questions of interpretation or analysis, not as statements. These types of questions are questions where the answer is not obvious or self-evident, but has to be sought by interpreting information from the text. The answer is not to be found by reading directly from the lines, but rather from reading between the lines. The core questions of interpretation and analysis are used in part 2 in the actual seminar. By starting the planning process by constructing the core questions the facilitator will have an easier task of finding the central ideas of the text. This might give you some ideas on how to articulate productive core questions:

- How would you interpret, what's the meaning of this (according to the text, the author, the character)?
- If this would have been differently, what would then happen?
- In what way are ---- and ---- alike (different)?
- What's the difference between ---- and ----?

When planning, the facilitator does not know if any of the core questions will be used or not during the interpretive and analyzing part of the dialogue. That depends on how the

dialogue will evolve. During the dialogue, the facilitator will listen to the participants, pose questions to follow up and develop the thinking of the students, sometimes questions that was planned and sometimes new questions from what evolves through the dialogue. All questions that were planned by the teacher might not be used during the seminar, sometimes because the dialogue turns in another direction. However, they might come in handy when the dialogue lacks intensity or interest, and the participants need help to find new angles.

Try and find clusters of questions, helping you to clarify the areas addressed by the text. This might also help you to make the questions well defined, apt, and naïve enough to give the participants tools to see beyond their prejudices. You find some examples in Section II.

Next step: Find an opening question

The opening question is in fact the only question that the facilitator is sure to be asking during the dialogue. It will help the participants to understand the text. It will also help them to see some of the central ideas imbedded in the text, and that the ideas might be considered from several different angles. The opening question should be constructed to address both the content of the text and the participant's first impressions when reading the text. The opening question is evaluative, and requests the participant to make a first interpretation from the reading. It should be open to many possible answers, not only "yes" or "no". Preferably, the group will not reach a mutual understanding or answer to this question, or it will not lead on to alternative ideas. The question could not be too extensive or complex, or else it will be hard to answer without having analyzed the text thoroughly. These starters might help you to formulate a productive opening question:

- How/ who/ what --- would you choose (from the text)?
- Which sentence/ line/ paragraph/ word would you chose as the most central/ most challenging.
- If you were participating in the text who/what/ how would you ---?
- Give the text a (new) name/ headline.
- Would you agree with the main idea in the text? Motivate your answer!

Conclude with evaluative questions

The last step of making your seminar plan will be to reflect on and find some evaluative questions that might function as a conclusion of the seminar, and to help the participants to connect the ideas discussed in the dialogue to their personal experiences. As was the case with the core questions, the facilitator might not use the prepared evaluative questions. They will work as alternatives, if needed. If no obvious questions of values are found when planning, the facilitator might ask the participants to relate the text and dialogue content to the present:

- If this would have been today, how would you ---?
- What consequences would this have today?
- What would happen if ---?

When the plan is finished you might benefit from comparing your plan to the advanced rubrics presented in Appendix B, to control that your plan includes what is required to

make the dialogue successful, and to prepare yourself to what is the practical part of conducting the dialogue.

Students' preparation

If the text is to work as a support in the dialogue, the participating students must take time to read and work with the ideas and dilemmas that the text presents. Otherwise the discussion is at risk of ending up displaying their own beliefs and opinions, without promoting deeper understanding or analysis. Student's individual reading could also be complemented by the teacher reading the text aloud in class. Younger students might benefit from having the whole text read aloud and then read parts of the text individually, depending on their individual reading ability. These preparatory lessons can also serve to prepare the dialogue by asking the students to reflect on one of the interpretive core questions. Preferably, the text is read more than once before the thoughtful dialogue. This will give the students opportunity to know the text and find their way when looking for paragraphs or events during the seminar. Refrain from reading the text at the same lesson as the thoughtful dialogue is held. This will take time and effort from the dialogue and will not give the students time to prepare their thoughts properly, and will eventually result in poor quality discussions.

During preparation, the student individually analyzes and poses questions when reading the text. The best way to do this is by interpreting and reading with the pencil in hand, that is to take notes in the text. The students will benefit from having the teacher showing how this is done, after having their first thoughtful dialogues. To scribble impressions, questions, comments, and assumptions in the text supports memory when the cooperative dialogue has started. By doing this, students will learn to pose interpretive and evaluative questions. The preparation will become a miniature dialogue between the text and the participant.

The great ideas of mankind

Robert M. Hutchins was one of the founders of "The Great Books Foundation", a study circle movement in the USA, using thoughtful dialogue to enhance students' and adults' thinking and reading comprehension (see www.greatbooks.org). When we ponder on questions that mankind has reflected over throughout history, Hutchins proposed that we will take part in 'the Great Conversation' (Hutchins, 1952). By taking part in the ideas from different times and masters and discussing them, we will be able to speak and discuss with them, even though they are part of history. The ideas will be valued differently – by individuals, in different époques, and in different cultures, and over time the ideas have been contradictory (Pihlgren, 2010). We will have to analyze and value. Mortimer J. Adler (1982) developed these ideas in the Paideia movement (see www.paideia.org) and widened the thoughtful dialogues, using literature as well as other types of "texts"; pictures, art work, drawings, mathematical problems, and films in all subject areas. The thoughtful dialogue became a part of the ordinary teaching in preschool, compulsory school, and high school.

Adler (1982) describes learning as a Greek temple, where the student's knowledge, competence, and dispositions in every subject area is a roof on top of three solid, equally important pillars: get knowledge, practice skills, and explore/create. All three pillars need to be activated in each subject, if genuine learning is to take place. Knowledge and

skills are part of the daily practice in schools, and most teachers know how to teach and coach the students towards good results in these areas. The third pillar represents an exploratory and creative part of learning. Using the knowledge, skills, and the understanding that the student has acquired at this point, he or she can now grasp the ideas, components, and character of the subject area, by elaborating some of the central ideas, and by creating within the subject area. This might be done by using creative activities like painting, composing, designing, or inventing. This is also the area for thoughtful dialogue. The dialogue offers a possibility to investigate the important ideas that constitutes the character of the subject, and the student has the opportunity to cooperate with others, contributing with his or her own thoughts and ideas, and thinking new ones. In dialogue the students value their own ideas and others (also of the classics) and compare these to their experiences. The insights they achieve will be integrated as new knowledge and an enlarged understanding, resulting in a deep understanding of the subject, hard to get if teaching would have consisted solely of activities in the first two of Adler's pillars.

All three pillars, e.g. knowledge, skills, and exploring/ creating, ought to be part of teaching (however, not necessarily in that order) (Pihlgren, 2010). The activities might be planned within the same week in school, with skill training constituting most of the time. Adler's theoretical image of the temple of learning can work as a scaffold to the teacher when planning pedagogical activities. It can also help the teacher to evaluate the educational praxis – have I used all three pillars in this area, in my subject, or in a theme, to make students' learning sustainable?

The fundamental ideas of every school subject

Every subject has its fundamental ideas, patterns, traditions, and concepts (Pihlgren, 2013). The school subject has emerged from some fundamental ideas, forming the subject, and which is the purpose and goal that makes the subject eligible in the set of valuable knowledge for generations to come. The fundamental ideas of the subject are connected to how the students will learn and understand the subject. The curriculum will help the teacher to see what these fundamental values can be – they are the purpose of why this is taught (Pihlgren, 2010). A fundamental idea in physics is for example that knowledge about power and power transmission will be tools to a sustainable energy supply. A fundamental idea in sports is that physical well-being and motoric competence are important to attain life-quality. In social science, a fundamental idea is that we are dependent on cooperation with others to enhance and develop society.

One way of controlling that the text you plan to use in dialogue is beneficial and will result in a productive dialogue is to use Mortimer J. Adler's (2000) list of great ideas, discussed by mankind throughout history. The list cannot tell whether an idea is good or bad, and it is not complete. However, it gives us a map of important idea areas as a starting point. A productive text ought to address more than one idea or the dialogue will end soon and is at a risk of being shallow (Pihlgren, 2010). You find the list in Appendix A.

The dialogue in thematic and subject integrated units

The thoughtful dialogues will benefit from being integrated in planning and teaching longer thematic units, where the teacher integrates presenting new knowledge, training skills, and the thoughtful dialogues. An example from Junior Great Books (1992), applied

to some of the plans presented in Section II, shows how the text might be used as material for a longer teaching sequence.

1. In the first lesson the teacher introduces an evaluative question, related to the text. The students think about this question individually for some time and are then asked to discuss it for some minutes before the text is read. I will here use the plans for "Diablo baby" (elementary class), "Allah will provide" (middle class), and "The chance of humming" (secondary class)(see plans and texts in Section II). Starting the thematic unit, the first question to these text could be:
 - a. Diablo baby: *How can one know if someone is good or bad?*
 - b. Allah will provide: *Why do we have to work?*
 - c. The chance of humming: *When you feel at your best, how do you feel?*

After this students will read the text individually, or the teacher will read the text aloud. The class will then discuss questions they have about the text and sort out misunderstandings. The era of the text (if it is historic) might also be discussed if this will enhance understanding.

2. The second lesson (or homework) consists of reading the text once more and answering one interpreting question. To the chosen texts, these could be:
 - a. Diablo baby: *How do you think the baby feels?*
 - b. Allah will provide: *Why doesn't Bou Azza help his wife to bring home the gold?*
 - c. The chance of humming: *In what ways does the camel ride differ from standing on the logs, do you think?*
3. During the next lesson the students and the teacher will interpret concepts in the text. Asking questions about certain words and concepts presented in the text and reflect on how these are used the students see deeper meaning in the text.
4. The thoughtful dialogue is conducted during the following lesson. You find the plans in Section II.
5. During the concluding lesson the students individually write an essay in order to internalize and deepen the understanding of the new ideas, comparing them to their earlier experiences. Here are some starting points from the chosen texts:
 - a. Diablo baby: *Are people born good or bad or do they develop to become either? What arguments could you find for either standpoint? What is your own view? Motivate your position.*
 - b. Allah will provide: *Would it be possible for everyone to follow Bou Azza's advice? Would you follow it? Motivate your stance and also answer the potential arguments that you would meet from someone disagreeing with you.*
 - c. The chance of humming: *What is the most important posture in life and how could it be achieved? What obstacles are stopping or hampering you from taking that posture? How can you solve it?*

Subject integrated dialogue

In subject integrated education several subjects cooperate to teach a theme, presenting the students to a more holistic approach to understanding. At least four perspectives are common to all subjects:

- A historic perspective
- An environmental perspective
- An international perspective and

- An ethical perspective.

These perspectives give teachers of different subjects four approaches to what areas they could cooperate to create a holistic understanding for the students. The four perspectives will also facilitate the choice of texts for thoughtful dialogues within the subject integrated theme. Texts dealing with these four perspectives will have effects on understanding in every subject integrated in the thematic unit.

Finally – good luck with you Socratic and thoughtful experience!

See films:

Classroom discussion (1): The Paideia Method:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fSKLRX3jqHM>

Classroom discussion (2): The Paideia Seminar:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67My29dydtU>

Classroom Discussion (3): Teachers' perspectives

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TLlfoMeqIIE>

Read more:

Pihlgren, A. S. (2008). *Socrates in the Classroom. Rationales and Effects of Philosophizing with Children*. D diss. Stockholm University.

The Great Books Foundation. www.greatbooks.org. Hämtad 2014-05-21.

The National Paideia Center. www.paideia.org. Hämtad 2014-05-21.

SECTION II

Seminar plans

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Diablo baby

by Marianna Gartner



Diablo baby

Plan

Group goals and personal goals are set

Opening question:

You find this baby outside your house with a note on its chest saying "Take care of me".
How will you act?

Alternative question: Is this baby good or evil?

Textual analysis/core questions:

What can we know about the baby from looking at the picture?

Are the horns growing on the baby's head or are they faked?

Are the tattoos real or are they faked? What do the tattoos show?

Is it a boy or a girl?

How does the baby feel?

How has the baby been nurtured for and taken care of?

Where does it sit?

What is it looking at?

What can we tell about the baby's parents from looking at the baby? If we look for the parents, who will we be looking for?

Potential Socratic/evaluative questions:

Are humans good or bad when they are born? Could there be evil children?

How different can we allow individuals to become? Is everything accepted?

What is different and what is normal?

Little "Diablo" is now older and will start tomorrow at your school as a student. How will you welcome him/her?

Evaluate group goals



Bou Azza watched with weird fascination.

ALLAH WILL PROVIDE

*North African folktale as told by
Robert Gilstrap and Irene Estabrook*

Bou Azza was an honest woodcutter who worked hard each day cutting down trees which he sold in the marketplace of a small North African village. His efforts were not highly rewarded, however, for he earned barely enough money to keep his young wife and himself in food and clothing.

Because he was getting old in body, Bou Azza wondered with each passing day how much longer he would be able to work and who would take care of him and his wife when he was too old to do so.

One afternoon as the hot sun beat down on him, Bou Azza gathered together the logs he had cut that morning, fastened them with a piece of rope, and slung them over his shoulder. Then he set out down the hill toward his tiny house on the outskirts of the village.

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Before reaching his home, Bou was forced to stop and rest beneath an olive tree near the road. As he wiped the perspiration from his forehead, he suddenly noticed a horned viper curled up on the ground a few feet away from him. At first the old woodcutter was very frightened, for he knew that a bite from this reptile would surely kill him. Carefully he climbed up to a high branch of the olive tree. But after watching the snake for a few seconds, Bou Azza realized that he had nothing to fear. The snake had other interests.

On one of the lower branches of the tree, not far from where Bou Azza was sitting, there was a small bird. The snake was staring at the bird with its beady black eyes, swaying its long, slender body back and forth, and occasionally spitting out its evil-looking, forked tongue.

At first the bird did not notice the snake, but when she did, her small feathery body was seized with helpless terror. Gripping the fragile little twig on which she rested, she tried to move her wings, but they were frozen with fear. She also tried to sound an alarm, but her beak opened and shut without a sound coming out.

As the snake swayed back and forth, Bou Azza realized that the bird had been hypnotized by the viper's movements, and he watched the two animals with weird fascination.

As Bou Azza looked down, the viper held the bird in its merciless stare, swaying from side to side like the

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pendulum of a clock, while the helpless victim became more and more paralyzed. Then suddenly the little bird fell from the branch and landed just a few inches from the snake. As Bou Azza watched, the snake ate its prey whole—feathers and all. Then, satisfied, it crawled away looking for new victims.

Bou Azza, rested from his journey but sickened by what he had just witnessed, headed for home with his wood on his back and an idea in his head.

As Bou Azza walked home in the twilight, he thought more and more about his idea. After a time he said to himself, "I am a fool! The serpent finds much food without really working for it, thanks to Allah, whereas I, a man, must work very hard in the hottest part of the day to earn just a mouthful of food. Allah alone is good, and with his help I will be like the serpent. No longer will I work so hard to get food when the serpent gets it for nothing. So shall it be."

And continuing on his way home, Bou Azza wore an expression of contentment over the new way of life that the serpent had revealed to him.

On the following morn, instead of rising before the sun made its way into the sky, Bou Azza stayed in bed until noon. Then he took his grass mat to the rear of the house, where he sat under a fig tree.

His wife became worried at his strange behavior, and when she saw that he obviously had no plans to work for the day, she went to him and said, "Bou Azza! What is

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wrong with you today? Are you not going to cut wood to sell in the market?"

"No, wife," said Bou Azza as he stretched in the sun. "I will not leave my mat even if I die of hunger. Yesterday I saw a serpent finding his food without working, and I have decided that if Allah feeds the serpents, he will provide me with my bread."

His anxious wife had no idea what her husband was talking about and thought he had gone mad.

"Please get up," she cried, and she tugged at his clothing. But nothing she said or did made any difference, and when twilight came to Bou Azza's home, he was still resting on his mat.

The poor woman was sick with worry, for she had always counted on her husband for food and money. But when she realized that he would not change his mind, she hurried to the woods while there was still light to see and looked for mushrooms to sell at the market in the village.

She looked for hours, scraping away leaves, digging under fallen logs, searching everywhere. Suddenly, as she dug into some soft earth, her knife hit something hard buried beneath the surface of the ground. Rapidly she dug the dirt away and uncovered a metal cooking pot with a lid. After working for some time, she pried the lid off and discovered that the pot was filled with shimmering gold pieces.

The animals of the forest drew close to watch her struggle helplessly with the giant pot as she shouted with excitement. But it was too heavy for her to lift. She ran as fast as she could to the house, crying with happiness. "Oh, Bou Azza," she shouted. "I have found a whole pot of gold. Come with me. Help me bring it to the house."

Actually, Bou Azza was impressed with the thought of the gold. But he had made a promise to himself not to move, and now he could not lift his finger.

"Oh wife," he said, without opening his eyes. "If Allah saw fit to let you find such a treasure, surely he will give you the strength to carry it home. Personally, I have decided not to move an inch!"

This reply made his wife furious, and she ran to the house of her brothers to see if they would help her carry the pot home. Naturally her brothers were delighted with the prospect of sharing so much gold, and they ran with Bou Azza's wife to the forest and helped her carry it home.

When she and her brothers reached her house with the giant pot spilling over with gold, she felt sure that her husband would get off his mat and help her count their fortune.

"Get up, you lazy lout!" she shouted as she stood over her husband, who slept peacefully on his straw bed. "I hope you have enough energy to come and count your riches."

• ROBERT GILSTRAP AND IRENE ESTABROOK •

"Did I not tell you?" he said sleepily. "I am not going to lift a finger until Allah drops fortunes on my head just as he showered gifts on the serpent."

"Just as you like," the angry wife said as she filled her skirt with hundreds of heavy gold pieces and poured them over her husband's head.

"Praise be to Allah!" her husband shouted as the gold pieces fell around him. "Praise be to the one and only Allah! Do you not now see, my wife, that serpents and men are all his creatures and he does provide for all of us?"

His wife did not understand, but she did know that for the rest of their lives she and her husband would live in luxury and that Bou Azza would never have to work again.

And every time someone came to visit them, Bou Azza told them this story, ending each time with the words, "Why work? Allah will provide."

And although his listeners felt that he was wrong, no one could contradict him.

Allah will provide

Plan

Group goal and personal goals are set.

Opening question:

If Bou Azza would have asked you for advice when he gets home after his experience with the snake, what advice would you give him? Motivate your answer!

Possible questions of interpretation:

Bou Azza:

Is Bou Azza sensible or is he unwise?

What makes Bou Azza get the idea about stop working? Could there be other reasons that he wants to quit working?

Why does he think Allah will help him but not the bird?

Why doesn't Bou Azza want to help his wife to carry the gold when he thinks that Allah will provide?

The wife:

Why hasn't the wife worked outside home before?

Had she been able to deal with that Bou Azza doesn't want to work in some other way than she chooses to? What would that have led to?

If her brothers had had the same idea as Bou Azza, would she have been able to take the gold home?

Cause and effect:

Why does the wife find the gold?

Are the friends right in thinking that Bou Azza is wrong? In what way could they explain that his reasoning is erroneous?

Did Allah provide for Bou Azza? With what motives, do you think?

Are there other possible causes to what happened?

Possible questions of evaluation:

Is it possible for all to follow the advice of Bou Azza and stop working? What would happen in that case?

How can we know that God really is speaking to us? How can we know what is God's will or not?

Conclude with an evaluative meta-dialogue about the group and individual goals.

The Chance of Humming

A
man
standing on two logs in the river
might do all right floating with the current
while humming in the
now.

Though
if one is tied to a camel,
who is also heading south along the bank—at the same pace—
all could still be well
with the
world

unless the camel
thinks he forgot something, and
abruptly turns upstream,
then

uh-oh.

Most minds
do not live in the present
and can stick to a reasonable plan; most minds abruptly turn
and undermine the
chance
of
humming.

Poem by Rumi. Translated by D. Ladinsky.

The chance of humming

Plan

Group goal and personal goals are set.

Opening question:

What line of the poem do you find to be the most central? Motivate your answer!

Possible questions of interpretation:

The poem structure:

What is the poet trying to accomplish by separating the poem in lines the way that he does?

The poem is divided in several sections. What is happening in each section? In what section do things turn? Why?

What words are used to describe the water? Senses? Consciousness?

Physical phenomena:

What's the difference between floating on the logs and going on the camel? Who decides where you would go if you float on the river? If you are tied to the camel?

What's the meaning of telling the reader that the camel is heading south? Why south and not north?

The meaning of the poem:

Why does the poet let the man hum? What does he want to show by that?

Why has he chosen a camel that turns around? What is the meaning of the man being tied to the camel?

What is meant by "all could still be well with the world"? How should it be interpreted?

The poet writes "Most minds do not live in the present". How should that be interpreted? What is meant by "living in the present"?

Attitude to life:

In the poem the camel ride upstream is compared to certain minds. What do these minds do wrong, according to the poet?

What attitude should we have towards life, according to the poet?

What is meant by a "reasonable plan"?

Why is the poem called "The chance of Humming", do you think?

Possible questions of evaluation:

What message will you remember from the text /our dialogue?

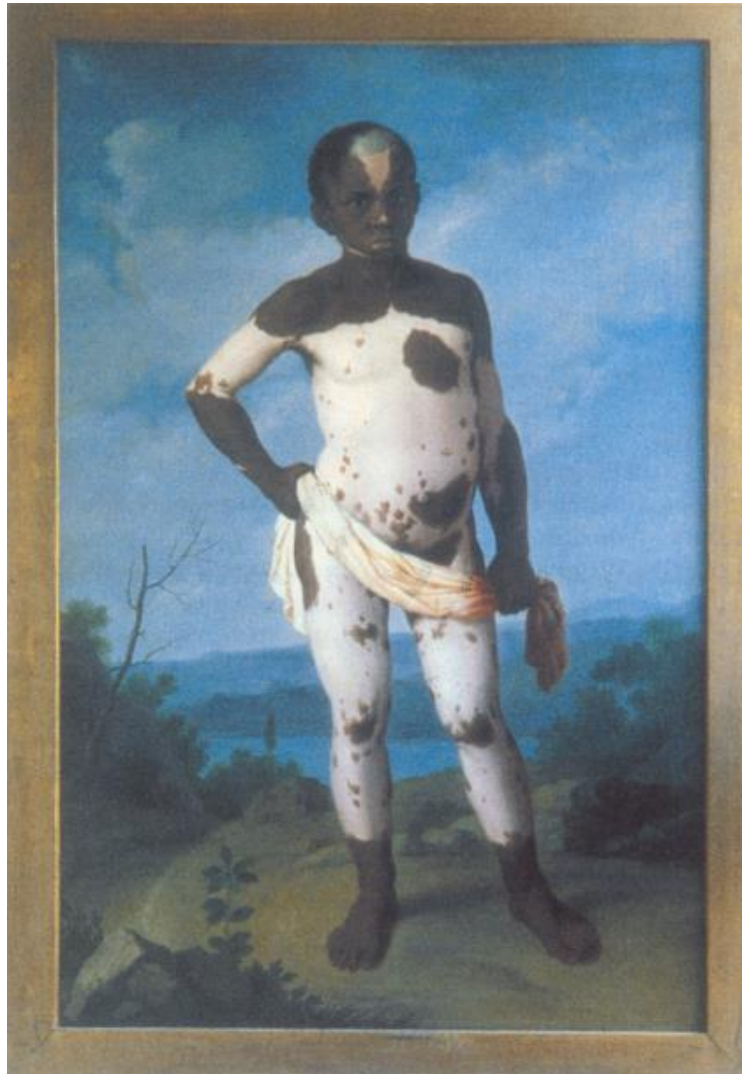
Do you agree with the poet about the suggested attitude towards life? If you think it's right, is it always so or are there exceptions?

Who decides how your life will turn out – destiny, God, or you yourself?

Conclude with an evaluative meta-dialogue about the group and individual goals.

Portrait of Siriaco

by da Rocha



Portrait of Siriaco

Plan

Personal and group goals are set

Opening question:

If you would look like Siriaco, would you have let someone paint you? Motivate!

Interpretation:

Siriaco:

How old is he?

What attitude does he have?

How does he feel – physically/mentally?

How can we interpret his face expression?

Why is he dressed the way he is?

The context:

Where is Siriaco painted?

Where is this landscape situated? What kind of landscape is it?

Is this his natural habitat?

Why is there a bare twig painted in the landscape?

The artist:

Is Siriaco painted in this landscape or elsewhere?

Composition – angle, position in the picture, choice of colors?

Why has the artist painted him so naked?

Evaluative questions:

What motives do we have to show ourselves – power, happiness, money, science or feeling alive?

Which are our motives to look at the exposed?

When is exposing honorable and when is it not?

Is it OK to do anything in the name of science?

Evaluate group goal

Abraham and the sacrifice of his son.

Muslims, Christians and Jews all tell that Abraham was ordered to sacrifice his son and he was willing to do so but God gave him a sheep to sacrifice instead of his cherished progeny. However, the story is told slightly differently according to religious interpretations. This is the Christian version in the Bible.

Genesis 22

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

² Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you."

³ Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. ⁴ On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵ He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you."

⁶ Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, ⁷ Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.

"The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

⁸ Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.

⁹ When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

¹² "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

¹³ Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.

¹⁴ So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided".

Abraham and the sacrifice of his son

Plan

Personal and group goals are set

Opening question:

What advice would you give to Abraham if he would have come to you after the first message from God?

Interpretation:

Abraham:

What are Abraham's feelings when he gets the mission? What are his feelings when the angel stops him?

Why does Abraham tell the servants to stay? Why doesn't he tell them what he is about to do?

Why does Abraham let Isaac carry the wood and the knife?

Is Abraham really going to sacrifice Isaac?

Why does Abraham call the place "The Lord Will Provide"? What does verse 14: "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided" mean?

Isaac:

What do we know about Isaac?

Does Isaac know what is going to happen? When do you think he realizes what is going on?

What are Isaac's feelings before he is tied to the altar? When he has been tied? When he has been untied? Why?

God:

Why does God call out Abraham's name the first time?

Why does God let an angel call for Abraham to stop – why does not God call this time?

In verse 12 the text reads: "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." Who is talking here?

What motives does God have?

Evaluative questions:

How could you know that God is really speaking to you?

Would you sacrifice something that you hold precious if that would give you God's love or trust?

Evaluate group goals.

Raptor Gallery at the Lindsay Museum

by Lillian Vallee

There they are
The ones whose eggshells held
The ones who got out of the nest alive
The ones not completely contaminated
The ones that avoided
The cars
The cats
The wires
The walls
The bullets
The BBs
The glass window panes
The one-eyed, one-winged, one-legged, nerve damaged, malnourished,
imprinted, infected, electrocuted, and mutilated

Animals

They sit like a jury of your peers
And the verdict is in:

Guilty

Raptor Gallery of the Lindsay Museum

Plan

Group goal and personal goals are set

Socratic seminar

Opening question:

If you visited the Lindsay Museum, would you go into the Raptor Gallery? Motivate your answer.

Textual analysis/core questions:

Who are “they” in the text, do you think?

What has happened to them?

Are humans responsible for everything done to “they” in the poem?

At the end the text says: “They sit like a jury of your peers”. How should this be interpreted?

Who is giving the verdict?

Who is condemned to be guilty?

Potential Socratic/evaluative questions:

Could individuals be held responsible for environmental problems and in that case for what?

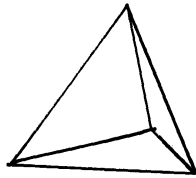
Should humans take responsibility for animals and their wellbeing? Why/why not?

Post-seminar

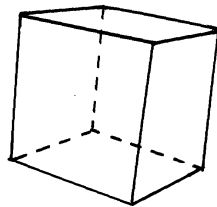
Evaluation:

The personal goals are evaluated by each individual (someone might share his/her evaluation). The group goal is evaluated by the group. Potential observers are given the opportunity to share their observations and reflections.

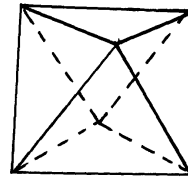
Geometric bodies



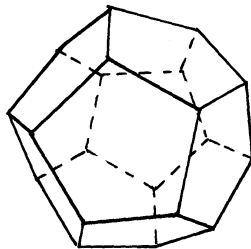
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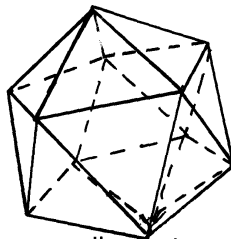
Kub



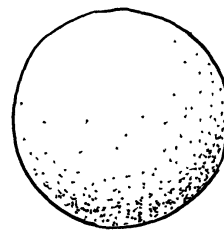
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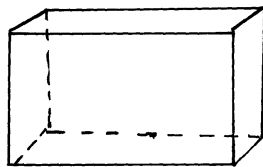
Dodekaeder



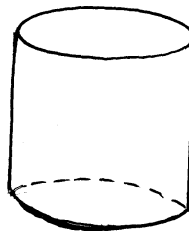
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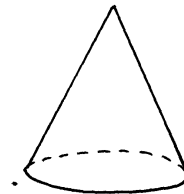
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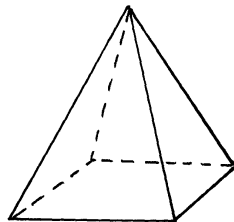
Rätblock



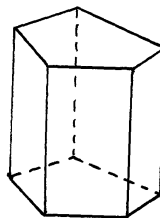
Cylinder



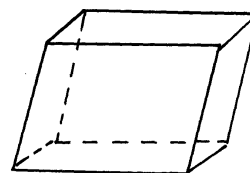
Kon



Pyramid



Rak prisma



Parallelepiped

Geometric bodies

Plan

Personal and group goals are set

Opening question

What bodies do you find most alike? Most unlike? Motivate!

Analysis:

The bodies' constitution:

What shapes do the bodies consist of? What parts would we need if we wanted to build them?

What use could we make of each body? Why?

Could they be built from any material?

If you just look at the shape – which are more alike/unlike? If you look at their parts? If you look at their function

Forms of culture and nature:

Try and find as many everyday things that looks like the bodies! What are the similarities/differences?

Which of the bodies would be suitable as houses? What would the rooms look like?

Try and find as many things in nature that look like the bodies! What are the similarities/differences?

Why does nature prefer certain bodies and why do culture prefer certain bodies? Are there any differences? Why?

Possible Socratic questions (evaluative):

Why do we need geometric bodies? What use do we have from recognizing them?

What shapes do you find most beautiful? Most harmonic? Most disturbing? Why is order and structure important to humans?

For what reason do our use of geometric bodies look so alike (houses, cans, tubes)?

How would a table of similarities/differences of the bodies look like?

Evaluate group goals.

Mathematic problems

ORANGY

At the school's yearly picnic three groups of students were assigned to mix the juice.

This is how they mixed:

Group 1: 1 part concentrated juice, 4 parts water

Group 2: 2 part concentrated juice, 3 parts water

Group 3: 3 part concentrated juice, 5 parts water

Which mix tasted most orangy?

GENEROUS GRANDFATHER

David's and Linda's grandfather intends to give them a sum of money the next months, so that they can buy their first car. Grandfather has thought of three plans that he can use when he gives them the money:

| Month | Plan A | Plan B | Plan C |
|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1 | \$100 | \$ 10 | \$ 1 |
| 2 | \$ 200 | \$ 30 | \$ 2 |
| 3 | \$ 300 | \$ 70 | \$ 4 |
| 4 | \$ 400 | \$ 130 | \$ 8 |
| 5 | | | |
| n | | | |

What plan do David and Linda think that grandfather should use? Why?

Mathematic problems

Plan

Personal goal and group goal are set

Opening question:

How would you solve the problem? Why?

Analysis:

Solving the problem:

What solutions are possible?

Do we lack any information, to solve the problem?

The authenticity of the problem:

Would you have solved the problem if it would have happened to you at home?

Would this problem occur in reality? (What motives does grandfather have, offering the students alternatives?

What are the differences between math's problems and real-life problems?

Possible Socratic questions (evaluative):

What is the use of solving mathematical problems? Motivate!

What guides people's behavior the most – logic or feelings? Which is best? In what situations?

Evaluate group goals.

Zero

The seminar is inspired from "Wat had je gedacht?" by Kristof van Rossem & Goedele de Swaaf.

$$0 \times 5 = 0 \times 9 = 0 \times 4 = 0$$

$$0 + 4 = 4$$

$$0 + 8 = 8$$

$$5^0 = 1$$

$$0^0 = ?$$

$$5/0 = ?$$

$$05462 = 5462$$

$$546120$$

I count "up": 1, 2, 3, 4...

I count "down": ...4, 3, 2, 1, 0!

$$0,4561 = 0,4561000000000000....$$

$$4523 \neq 45230$$

Zero

Plan

Group goal and personal goals are set.

Opening question:

Is Zero a number? Motivate!

Write down the answers on the board in two columns:

Yes, because... No, because...

...and in time four columns:

Number: Yes, because... Number: No, because... Figure: Yes, because Figure: No, because...

Analysis:

Use the text to analyze:

How come 0×5 is zero, while $4 + 0$ is 4?

Why is 5^0 one and what will 0^0 be?

Could you divide 5 with nothing? Anything?

Why is $05462 = 5462$ but not the same as 54620 ?

Why do we start with one when we count but end with zero when we count down?

Why is $0,4561 = 0,45610000000000000000...$ but $4523 \neq 45230$?

What functions does zero have in the respective cases?

Possible Socratic questions (evaluative):

Is zero = nothing or anything?

What calculations could we make without the zero? How would we do?

Why was zero invented?

Is zero a number or not? What speaks for/against?

Evaluate group goals.

An ominous baby

By Stephen Crane

A BABY was wandering in a strange country. He was a tattered child with a frowsled wealth of yellow hair. His dress, of a checked stuff, was soiled and showed the marks of many conflicts like the chain-shirt of a warrior. His sun-tanned knees shone above wrinkled stockings which he pulled up occasionally with an impatient movement when they entangled his feet. From a gaping shoe there appeared an array of tiny toes.

He was toddling along an avenue between rows of stolid, brown houses. He went slowly, with a look of absorbed interest on his small, flushed face. His blue eyes stared curiously. Carriages went with a musical rumble over the smooth asphalt. A man with a chrysanthemum was going up steps. Two nursery-maids chatted as they walked slowly, while their charges hob-nobbed amiably between perambulators. A truck wagon roared thunderously in the distance.

The child from the poor district made way along the brown street filled with dull gray shadows. High up, near the roofs, glancing sun-rays changed cornices to blazing gold and silvered the fronts of windows. The wandering baby stopped and stared at the two children laughing and playing in their carriages among the heaps of rugs and cushions. He braced his legs apart in an attitude of earnest attention. His lower jaw fell and disclosed his small even teeth. As they moved on, he followed the carriages with awe in his face as if contemplating a pageant. Once one of the babies, with twittering laughter, shook a gorgeous rattle at him. He smiled jovially in return.

Finally a nursery maid ceased conversation and, turning, made a gesture of annoyance.

"Go 'way, little boy," she said to him. "Go 'way. You're all dirty."

He gazed at her with infant tranquility for a moment and then went slowly off, dragging behind him a bit of rope he had acquired in another street. He continued to investigate the new scenes. The people and houses struck him with interest as would flowers and trees. Passengers had to avoid the small, absorbed figure in the middle of the sidewalk. They glanced at the intent baby face covered with scratches and dust as with scars and powder smoke.

After a time, the wanderer discovered upon the pavement, a pretty child in fine clothes playing with a toy. It was a tiny fire engine painted brilliantly in crimson and gold. The wheels rattled as its small owner dragged it uproariously about by means of a string. The babe with his bit of rope trailing behind him paused and regarded the child and the toy. For a long while he remained motionless, save for his eyes, which followed all movements of the glittering thing.

The owner paid no attention to the spectator but continued his joyous imitations of phases of the career of a fire engine. His gleeful baby laugh rang

against the calm fronts of the houses. After a little, the wandering baby began quietly to sidle nearer. His bit of rope, now forgotten, dropped at his feet. He removed his eyes from the toy and glanced expectantly at the other child.

"Say," he breathed, softly.

The owner of the toy was running down the walk at top speed. His tongue was clanging like a bell and his legs were galloping. An iron post on the corner was all ablaze. He did not look around at the coaxing call from the small, tattered figure on the curb.

The wandering baby approached still nearer and, presently, spoke again. "Say," he murmured, "le' me play wif it?"

The other child interrupted some shrill tootings. He bended his head and spoke disdainfully over his shoulder.

"No," he said.

The wanderer retreated to the curb. He failed to notice the bit of rope, once treasured. His eyes followed as before the winding course of the engine, and his tender mouth twitched.

"Say," he ventured at last, "is dat yours?"

"Yes," said the other, tilting his round chin. He drew his property suddenly behind him as if it were menaced. "Yes," he repeated, "it's mine."

"Well, le' me play wif it?" said the wandering baby, with a trembling note of desire in his voice.

"No," cried the pretty child with determined lips. "It's mine! My ma-ma buyed it."

"Well, tan't I play wif it?" His voice was a sob. He stretched forth little, covetous hands.

"No," the pretty child continued to repeat. "No, it's mine."

"Well, I want to play wif it," wailed the other. A sudden, fierce frown mantled his baby face. He clenched his thin hands and advanced with a formidable gesture. He looked some wee battler in a war.

"It's mine! It's mine," cried the pretty child, his voice in the treble of outraged rights.

"I want it," roared the wanderer.

"It's mine! It's mine!"

"I want it!"

"It's mine!"

The pretty child retreated to the fence, and there paused at bay. He protected his property with outstretched arms. The small vandal made a charge. There was a short scuffle at the fence. Each grasped the string to the toy and tugged. Their faces were wrinkled with baby rage, the verge of tears.

Finally, the child in tatters gave a supreme tug and wrenched the string from the other's hands. He set off rapidly down the street, bearing the toy in his arms. He was weeping with the air of a wronged one who has at last succeeded in achieving his rights. The other baby was squalling lustily. He seemed quite helpless. He wrung his chubby hands and railed.

After the small barbarian had got some distance away, he paused and regarded his booty. His little form curved with pride. A soft, gleeful smile loomed through the storm of tears. With great care, he prepared the toy for travelling. He stopped a moment on a corner and gazed at the pretty child whose small figure was quivering with sobs. As the latter began to show signs of beginning pursuit, the little vandal turned and vanished down a dark side street as into a swallowing cavern.

An ominous baby

Plan

Personal and group goals are set.

Opening Questions

If you would have watched what happens in the text, what would you have done?

Analysis

The characters

What are the characters of the two boys?

How would you describe the relationships between the characters in the story?

Why are the nurses reacting to the baby the way they do?

How are they reacting and why?

The baby

What do you think about the way Crane uses the word "baby?"

How does he react to the nurse telling him to go away?

When and why do you think he decides to take the fire engine?

In what mood is the baby in different phases of the story?

Why is the story called "The ominous baby"? In what way is the baby ominous?

The setting

Where is the story taking place? At what time?

Why do you think the author has chosen the setting? This set of characters?

The story and its interpretations

How does the language in this story lead your thinking?

What, if anything, disturbs you about this story?

What assumptions does this story challenge?

Evaluative question

What does the story really mean, do you think? What does the author want to say?

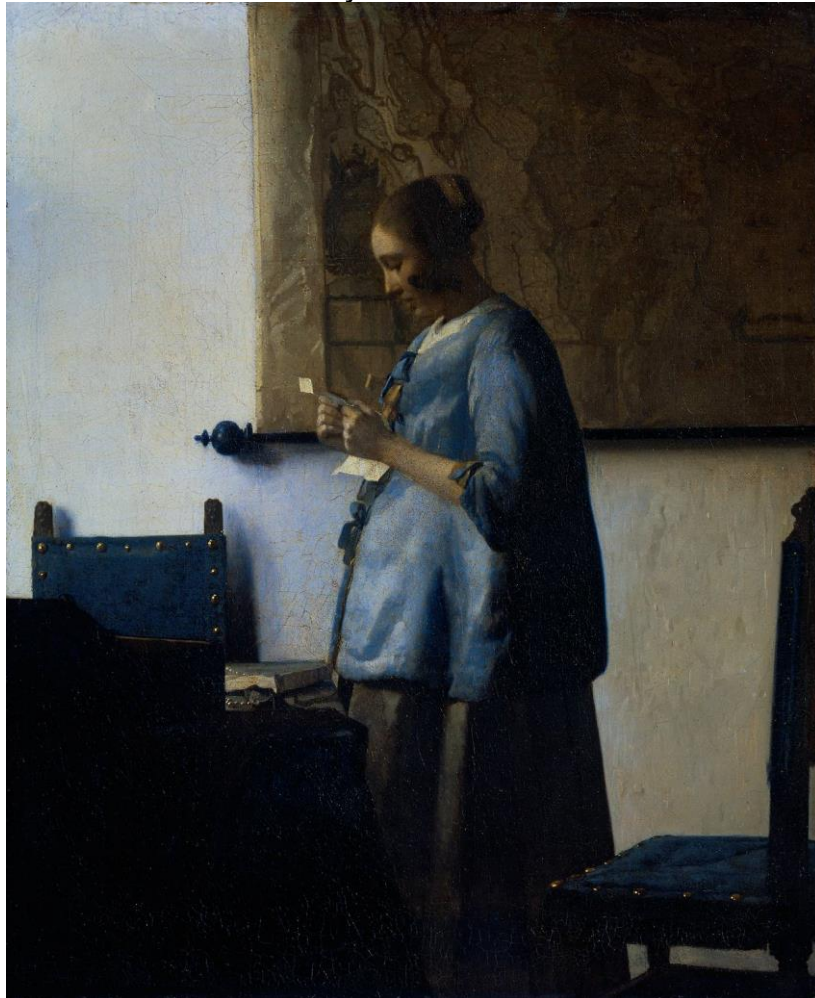
Are there ominous things in our society, telling us about things we should consider?

Which, in that case?

Evaluate group and personal goals.

Woman reading a letter

by Vermeer



Woman Reading a Letter

Plan

Group and personal goals are set.

Opening question:

Take another close look at the painting. What's one word to describe what you think the woman is feeling (just one word)? Why do you think that is what the woman is feeling?

Analysis:

The context

What do you imagine this room feels like?

Smells like?

Who is the woman? What do we know about her?

The message

What hints at the message the letter conveys?

Who might be the writer?

Does the writer of a letter have any responsibility to the reader? What?

Does the reader of a letter have any responsibility to the writer? What?

The effects

Has the receiver's life changed by getting the message or not? How? Why?

Who is responsible for the change (– the writer, the reader, destiny)?

Who owns the letter (the reader, the writer or someone else)?

Who's message is it (the readers, the writers or the letters)?

Evaluative questions:

Would you rather write a letter or receive one? Why?

Who would you like to write to and in what way would that person's life change from you writing?

What letter would you like to receive yourself and from whom?

Evaluate personal and group goal.

Appendix A. Mortimer J. Adler's list of great human ideas (Adler, 2000, revised in Pihlgren, 2010)

| | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Animal | Imagination | Rhetoric |
| Aristocracy | Immortality | Revolution |
| Angel | Influence | Quality |
| Appreciation | Judgment | Quantity |
| Art | Knowledge | Same and different |
| Astronomy | Labor | Science |
| Beauty | Language | Sense |
| Being | Law | Sign and symbol |
| Cause | Liberty (or freedom) | Sin |
| Chance | Life and death | Slavery |
| Citizen | Love | Soul |
| Compassion | Man | Space |
| Consciousness | Mathematics | State |
| Constitution | Matter | Strength |
| Courage | Mechanics | Time |
| Culture | Medicine | Theology |
| Custom and convention | Memory and imagination | Thoughtfulness |
| Deduction | Metaphysics | Truth |
| Democracy | Mind | Tyranny and despotism |
| Desire | Monarchy | Universal and particular |
| Destiny | Nature | Violence |
| Dialectic | Necessity and possibility | Virtue and vice |
| Dream and reality | Number | War and peace |
| Duty | Oligarchy | Wealth |
| Education and learning | One and many | Will |
| Element | Opinion | Wisdom |
| Emotion | Philosophy | Work |
| Equality | Play | World |
| Eternity | Pleasure and pain | |
| Evolution | Poetry | |
| Experience | Politeness | |
| Faith | Power | |
| Family | Principal | |
| Form | Progress | |
| Friendship | Prophecy | |
| God | Proportion | |
| Good and evil | Punishment | |
| Government | Purity | |
| Habit | Reasoning | |
| Happiness | Relation | |
| History | Religion | |
| Honor | Resilience | |
| Hypothesis | Resistance | |
| Idea | Respect | |

Appendix B. Advanced rubrics for participants' performance in thoughtful dialogues.

A compilation of rubrics presented in literature (Pihlgren, 2003: Cf. The National Paideia Center, 2002:2, Johnson, 1996, Resnick & Junker, 2006, Roberts, 1998, Roberts & Billings, 1999, Wiggins, 1998).

| | <i>Preparation for seminar</i> | <i>Conduct during seminar</i> | <i>Taking active responsibility for group discussion</i> | <i>Logic reasoning</i> | <i>Listening</i> |
|---------------------------------|--|---|---|---|--|
| MASTER Excellent | Conduct and written work indicate participant has read the text carefully; is thoroughly familiar with the text's main ideas; can identify opposing ideas in text, can offer insightful interpretations and evaluations of it, is respectful of the text while also reading critically, and has come prepared with thoughtful questions and reactions noted in the text material. | Demonstrates respect for the learning process, for the text, the collaborative dialogue and to shared inquiry. Shows patience with differing views and with complexity. Promotes discussion by statements and by questions to others. Talks to everyone, not just to facilitator or to some of the participants. Avoids talking too much, too long, too quite. Avoids inappropriate (e.g. diminishing) language or "picking" on others. | Takes clear responsibility for the seminar's progress or lack of it. Shows initiative by asking others for clarifications and by introducing others in discussion. Takes stock of the overall direction and effectiveness of the discussion, and takes steps to refocus or redirect conversation and/or to cause others to rethink previous statements. Asks questions to other participants, explores other perspectives and helps enter deeper into the ideas. Ensures that unnoticed points are attended to. | Arguments are reasonable, apt, logical and substantiated with evidence from the text so as to consistently move the conversation forward and deepen the inquiry. The analyses made are helpful in clarifying complex ideas. Clarifies connections between ideas of previous statements from participants and shows similarities and connections between seemingly opposing ideas. Criticisms made are never ad hominem. | Listens unusually well and builds statements on what others have said before. Takes steps routinely to comprehend what is said, is consistently attentive (as reflected in direct and indirect evidence). Shows attention with conduct and body language, e.g. by looking at the person talking. Makes notes of thoughts and questions during seminar. Later responses (actions, comments, and writings) indicate accurate and perceptive recall of what was said and by whom. |
| APPRENTICE Good | Conduct and written work generally indicate participant has read the text carefully, grasps the main ideas, can offer reasonable (if sometimes incomplete or surface) interpretations, and has come with apt questions and ideas regarding the text noted in the text material. | Generally shows, in language and attitude, respect and understanding of the goals, processes and rules of the dialogue and of shared inquiry. Can sometimes show impatience with contradictory, provoking or ambiguous ideas. Participates and promotes the dialogue, poses questions, but is sometimes ineffective in sharing own insights, in advanced examination or in collaborating with others. May tend to speak to facilitator only or to get into debate. Seldom uses inappropriate (e.g. diminishing) language or "picks" on others. | Is generally willing to take on facilitative roles and responsibilities. Comments on other statements but does not necessarily encourage others to participate. Either makes regular effort to be helpful (in moving the conversation forward and/or including others in it) but is sometimes ineffective in doing so OR does not typically take a leadership role but is effective when so does. | Arguments are generally reasonable, apt, and logical. There may be some minor flaws in reasoning, evidence, or aptness of remarks, but the ideas contribute to an understanding of the text or of the comments made by others, although they seldom shows connections between ideas or between seemingly opposing ideas. Criticisms are rarely ad hominem. | Listens well, and often builds statements on what others have said before. Takes steps to comprehend what is said. Generally pays attention and/or responds appropriately to ideas and questions offered by other participants. May sometimes be too occupied by own idea to hear others. Makes notes sporadically during seminar. Late responses involve accurate recall of what was said and by whom. |
| TRAINEE Fair | Comments indicate that the participant may have read the text but has either misunderstood it (due either to difficulties in reading and/or assuming a stance that is too egocentric or presentcentered) or has not put enough disciplined and focused effort into preparing for the seminar. Varying patterns of participation also suggest that the participant's preparation is inconsistent. | Speech and conduct shows that participant misunderstands the purpose of the discussion and/or is undisciplined as to seminar conduct and –thinking. Readily expresses the idea that his/her ideas are essential for understanding the text and sometimes loses patience and disrupts the thinking process in group. Debates rather than discusses and shows insight/understanding only when asked. Participates (even often) but with unclear or inadequately explained statements OR listens and thinks but seldom speaks and/or only when asked. Sometimes uses inappropriate (e.g. diminishing) language or "picks" on others. | Takes on facilitative roles and responsibilities infrequently and/or ineffectively. Have read text and can therefore make some relevant comments but insists too forcefully or does not participate actively enough. May misconstrue the responsibility by lobbying for favored opinions or speakers only, and/or by trying to close off discussion of diverse and unresolved views in favor of neat-and-clean premature closure. Asks few (if any) questions to other participants. | Unsubstantiated or undeveloped opinions are offered more than sound arguments. Comments suggest that the participant has some difficulty in following the complex arguments of others (as reflected in questions asked and/or non sequiturs). Even if the comment is not faulty, it may not be connected to the previous comments or questions. Participant may sometimes resort to ad hominem attacks instead of focusing on critique of claims and arguments. | Does not regularly listen very well and/or is not always attentive, as reflected in comments and body language. Perceives some ideas as unimportant but pays attention to other. Verbal reactions reflect an earlier difficulty or failure to listen carefully to what was said. Behavior may signify either that the participant lacks effective note-taking strategies and/or does not grasp the importance of listening to different points of view and reflecting on them. |
| NOVIS Unsatisfactory | Either is generally unable to make adequate meaning of texts or has generally come to seminar unprepared. The participant may be unable to read complex texts and/or use disciplined strategies for understanding and taking notes on such texts. | The participant shows little respect and/or understanding for the seminar process. Often uses interruptions and disturbances. Seems to lack vital components in thinking skills: argumentation either on routine, tries to disturb and/or oppose without arguments, or is disengaged – very unwilling to speak even when asked, making other conclude that participant opposes the seminar process or others opinions by mocking others, laughing at others etc. | Plays no active facilitating role of any kind, or actions are consistently counterproductive in that role. Asks no questions to other participants | Comments suggest that participant has great difficulty with the analytical requirements of seminar. Remarks routinely appear to be non sequiturs and/or so illogical or without substantiation as to be not followable by others. References to text are practically never done. Little or no consideration for previous statements. Participant may often resort to ad hominem comments to text author and other students. | Does not listen adequately, as reflected in later questions or comments (for example, non sequiturs, disrespecting comments and repetitions of earlier points as if they hadn't been spoken) and/or body language that is very suggestive of inattentiveness or disinterest. Makes no notes during seminar. |

Appendix C. Rubrics for participants' performance in thoughtful dialogues.

This rubric have four criteria (Pihlgren, 2010): Thinking and reading, listening, speaking, cooperating. The facilitator or the student fills in three (or more) levels:

Y.= Yes I made it through the whole or most parts of the seminar.

N.= No, I didn't make it at all or not enough.

S.= Sometimes it went well, sometimes not.

Every participant may also take notes in a logg, a notebook with notes from each seminar. The rubrics can be part of such a logg.

| | |
|---|--|
| THINK AND READ _____ I analyzed the text and what was said in dialogue. _____ I read the text close and tried to understand what it was about. _____ I used text to support my ideas. _____ I asked a question about an idea or thought. _____ I explained why I agreed or disagreed with someone else. | LISTEN _____ I looked at the person speaking. _____ I didn't talk when someone else talked. _____ I asked if I couldn't hear or understand someone's comments. |
| SPEAK _____ I spoke voluntarily at least twice. _____ I spoke loud and clear. _____ My comments concerned the text, questions or other's statements. | COOPERATE _____ I used other people's names. _____ I showed respect to others in my comments. _____ I showed respect to others in my conduct. |

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