

4. The Socratic Classroom

Time: 50 minutes

Introduction

Socrates often prompted his students with a false claim, only so they would have to work to refute it. In this activity, the teacher will prompt the class with a claim, opinion, or point of view contradictory to that of the essay assigned; it is the students' job to refute said claim. The activity is designed to challenge your students to read an essay, while searching for key pieces of information that relate to and contradict the teachers claim.

Procedure

The activity will start by introducing the topic to be discussed in class. Engage the class in an open discussion where a few student opinions about the topic are addressed. The discussion will stop once the teacher states an opinion, idea or point of view that is contradictory to the essay to be read. Encourage students to write down the contradictory claim. The teacher will then hand out the essay and prompt the students or groups to do the following:

1. Read the text
2. Make note of any evidence that supports the teacher's claim
3. Make note of any evidence that contradicts the teacher's claim
4. Organize the evidence in a graphic organizer (ex. T-Chart below)

<i>Contradictory Claim</i>	
Evidence For	Evidence Against
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • •

After the individual or group work, reconvene as a class. Ask students to share information and display it to the class (whiteboard, overhead, etc.). Have students classify evidence as “for” or “against” the original contradictory claim. As a class, discuss the validity of each piece of evidence; discard invalid evidences. Review all valid evidence.

Lesson Timeline

Introduce and briefly discuss topic	5 minutes
Provide contradictory claim, explain activity and distribute essay	5 minutes
Read essay and take evidential notes	25 minutes
Share evidence with class and discuss validity	15 minutes