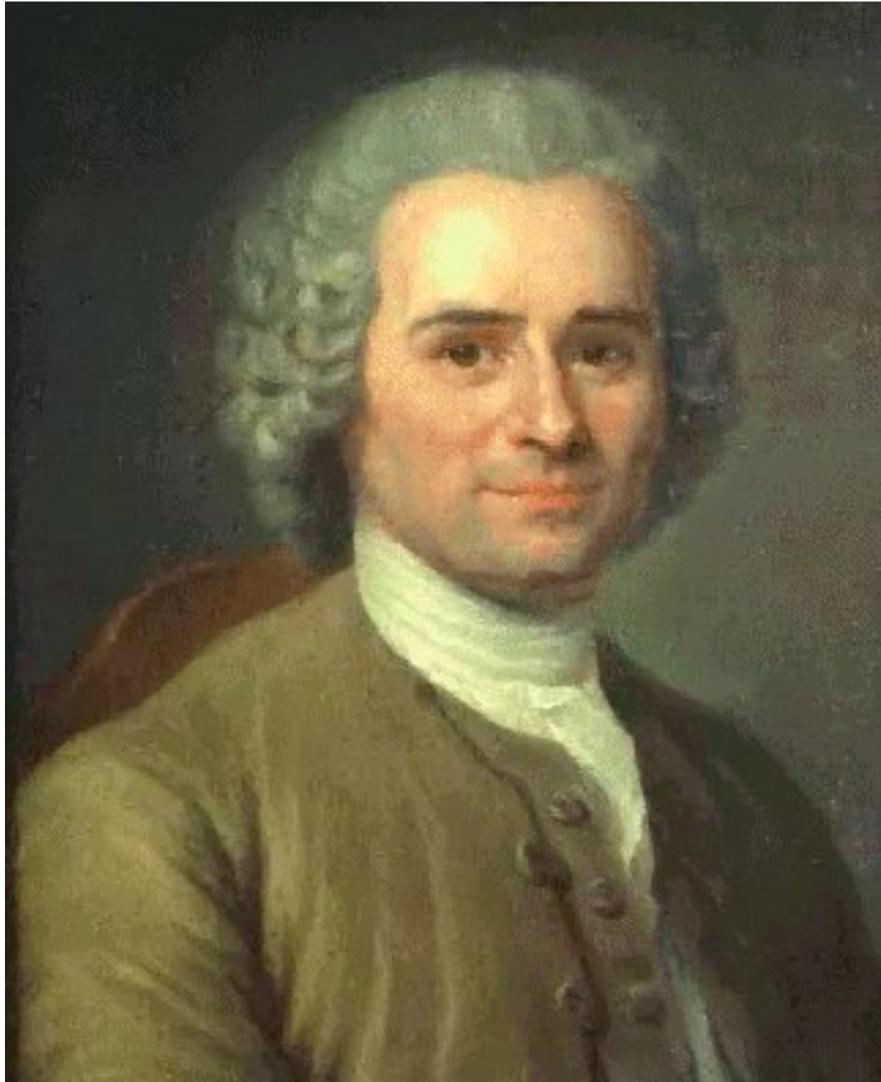


The Enlightenment

A Socratic Seminar



<http://cepa.newschool.edu/het/profiles/image/Rousseau.gif>

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The Enlightenment: A Socratic seminar based on Rousseau's Social Contract.

Overview:

In this lesson students will participate in a Socratic seminar focused on Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *The Social Contract*. Students will read an excerpt from *The Social Contract* and answer several questions that will guide them through the important aspects of the reading. The questions will act as a ticket to gain entrance into the class Salon. As distinguished guests to the Phoebus Salon, students will participate in a discussion of the text in the form of a Socratic seminar. Not all of the students have participated in a Socratic seminar, so they will be introduced to the style of lesson and learn about the norms for participation. After the discussion is complete the class will debrief. To assess understanding of the text and participation during the discussion, whether it is spoken contributions or thoughtful reflection, students will complete an exit ticket for homework.

Grade level/Class:

This Socratic seminar is designed for a gifted World History II class composed of ninth and tenth graders.

Time:

The lesson is designed for a 90 minute block schedule class.

Background Information:

The Age of the Enlightenment, or the Age of Reason, was a period in European History that took place during the later half of the seventeenth-century, and the whole of the eighteenth-century. It was a period of great achievement when man set aside his superstitions and fears and used scientific inquiry, thought, and reason to explain the world he lived in. The Age of Enlightenment resulted in advancements in science, mathematics, technology, medicine, philosophy, and politics and government.

One of the more influential philosophes of the enlightenment was Jean-Jacques Rousseau of Switzerland. Rousseau was a patron of the arts, music, literature, and especially of political thought. In one of his most famous works, *The Social Contract*, he set forth his ideas about government and society. This work and his ideas have inspired social and political thinkers for over two hundred years, and have inspired both peaceful and revolutionary reform.

Rationale:

I have selected this lesson to complete a unit on the Enlightenment and Scientific Revolution. I chose Rousseau's *Social Contract* for a number of reasons. Rousseau was an influential philosophe and enlightenment writer. State standards require students to be familiar with Rousseau and the term social contract. His ideas concerning government and politics are also important ideas that students should be familiar with. His writing contrasts with absolutism which students learned in their previous unit. His ideas also set the stage for the next unit on the French Revolution. Although this is a world history class, students who master an understanding of Rousseau's ideas will be able to apply them to American History when they cover the Declaration of Independence and the Revolutionary War.

I believe that a Socratic seminar is an appropriate lesson. It provides a gifted class with the opportunity to engage in discussion of the text as well as learn and practice discussion skills.

The lesson differentiates learning, and gives students the opportunity to do all the talking while finding value in an aspect of history. Finally, the seminar will provide students with an opportunity to compare the ideas proposed in *Social Contract* with other Enlightenment political writers and prepare them for an upcoming test.

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to explain the political and social ideas of the Enlightenment by analyzing Rousseau's *Social Contract* (WHIII.6d.).
2. Students will explain the purpose of government while understanding the rights, roles, and status of the individual in relation to the general welfare (NCSS VI a. & b.).
3. Students will be able to demonstrate good discussion skills in a Socratic seminar.

Assessment:

To assess student learning, and whether my objectives have been met, students will complete an exit ticket from the salon. This ticket will demonstrate to me that students paid attention during the seminar and understand the critical information contained in Rousseau's *Social Contract*. Students will be required to respond to two hypothetical situations using what they have learned from the seminar. In the first question students will write a brief summary of what a government created by Rousseau would look like based on what he revealed in the text. The second question asks students to analyze an imaginary country and determine what Rousseau's reaction to the situation would be on the basis of what they have learned.

Content and Instructional Strategies:

The Text-Rousseau's Social Contract

Origin and Terms of the Social Contract

Man was born free, but everywhere he is in chains. This man believes that he is the master of others, and still he is more of a slave than they are. How did that transformation take place? I don't know. How may the restraints on man become legitimate? I do believe I can answer that question....

At a point in the state of nature when the obstacles to human preservation have become greater than each individual with his own strength can cope with . . . , an adequate combination of forces must be the result of men coming together. Still, each man's power and freedom are his main means of **self preservation**. How is he to put them under the control of others without damaging himself . . . ?

Is there a way to form an association which defends each member and their property using the power of the entire membership, without limiting the freedom of each individual member? This is the fundamental problem; the social contract offers a solution to it.

The social contract's terms, when they are well understood, can be reduced to a single stipulation: the individual member gives his power, goods, and liberty to the whole community. This is first because conditions will be the same for everyone when each individual gives himself

totally to society, and secondly, because no one will be tempted to make that condition of shared equality worse for other men....

Once this community is united into a body, an offense against one of its members is an offense against the **body politic**. It would be even less possible to injure the body without its members feeling it. Duty and interest thus equally require the two parties to aid each other mutually. The individual people should be motivated from their double roles as individuals and members of the body, to combine all the advantages which mutual aid offers them....

Individual Wills and the General Will

In reality, each individual may have one particular will as a man that is different from-or contrary to-the general will which he has as a citizen. His own particular interest may suggest other things to him than the common interest does. His separate, naturally independent existence may make him imagine that what he owes to the common cause is a minor contribution. He may also regard the moral person of the State as an imaginary being since it is not a man, and wish to enjoy the rights of a citizen without performing the duties of a subject. This unjust attitude could cause the ruin of the body politic if it became widespread enough.

So that the social pact will not become meaningless words, it includes this commitment, which alone gives power to the others: Whoever refuses to obey the general will shall be forced to obey it by the whole body politic, which means nothing else but that he will be forced to be free. This condition, by guaranteeing each individual to the state, gives him a guarantee against being personally dependent on other individuals. It is the condition which all political machinery depends on and which alone makes political undertakings legitimate. Without it, political actions become absurd, **tyrannical**, and subject to the most outrageous abuses.

Indivisible, Inalienable Sovereignty

The first and most important conclusion from the principles we have established thus far is that the general will alone may direct the forces of the State to achieve the goal for which it was founded, the common good.... **Sovereignty** is indivisible ... and is **inalienable**.... A will is general or it is not: it is that of the whole body of the people or only of one faction. In the first instance, putting the will into words and force is an act of sovereignty: the will becomes law. In the second instance, it is only a particular will or an administrative action; at the very most it is a decree.

Need for Citizen Participation, Not Representation

Government...is wrongly confused with the body politic for whom it is an agent. What then is government? It is an intermediary body established between the subjects and the sovereign to keep them in touch with each other. It is charged with executing the laws and maintaining both civil and political liberty.... The only will dominating government ... should be the general will or the law. The government's power is only the public power vested in it. As soon as [government] attempts to let any act come from itself completely independently, it starts to lose its intermediary role. If the time should ever come when the [government] has a particular will of its

own stronger than that of the sovereign and makes use of the public power which is in its hands to carry out its own particular will, at that moment the social union will disappear and the body politic will be dissolved.

Once the public interest has ceased to be the principal concern of citizens, once they prefer to serve State with money rather than with their persons, the State will be approaching ruin. Is it necessary to march into combat? They will pay some troops and stay at home. Is it necessary to go to meetings? They will name some deputies and stay at home. Laziness and money finally leave them with soldiers to enslave their fatherland and representatives to sell it....

The body politic cannot be represented.... Essentially, it consists of the general will, and a will is not represented: either we have it itself, or it is something else; there is no other possibility. The deputies of the people thus are not and cannot be its representatives. They are only the people's agents and are not able to come to final decisions at all. Any law that the people have not ratified in person is void, it is not a law at all.

Questions:

Opening Question: According to Rousseau, what is the social contract?

Core Questions:

What role should government play in the lives of people?

What is the general will?

How should individuals participate in government?

How do Rousseau's ideas compare with other enlightenment philosophes?

Potential Follow-up questions:

Can people be free even with restrictions? What would Rousseau characterize as good government? What if an individual's will is different from the general will. What does Rousseau believe are the benefits of belonging to a political body? What does it mean to be forced to be free? What is the role of the state? How does Rousseau feel about representation of individual and general will? What is the role of a deputy? What should individuals do when the government does not follow the general will of the people? What happens when deputies make final decisions for the people they represent? How do Rousseau's ideas compare with Hobbes and Locke? Would Rousseau support a monarchy, a democracy, or another form of government? What would Rousseau think about the government of the United States of America?

Preparation/Ticket-20 minutes

To prepare for the seminar, students will begin class by reading excerpted text from Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Social Contract*. To guide their reading and focus their attention on important information, students will complete a ticket to gain entry to the salon. When they are finished they will use markers and construction paper to make nametags for themselves.

Room Arrangement:

The class will be arranged for a fish bowl discussion. There are twenty students, a facilitator, and an observing cooperating teacher. To accommodate everyone, the inner and outer circles will each contain eleven desks. To capitalize on time the classroom will be arranged for discussion before class begins.

Establishment of Seminar norms of participation-10 minutes

Before beginning the Socratic seminar, students will receive a sheet that explains the class activity and how students should participate. Students will be given the opportunity to help create a list of additional norms for participation. They will understand that the purpose of the lesson is not to debate, but to work together to understand the text.

Seminar-50 minutes

Students will participate in a Socratic seminar based on Rousseau's *Social Contract*. The class will be discussing the text using a modified version of a fishbowl method of discussion. Students will participate in two rounds of discussion, each followed by a five minute debrief. During round one, students in the inner circle will engage in discussion. The facilitator will supply some questions that will induce discussion, but will be sure to let students do most of the talking. While the inner circle discusses the text, the outer circle will fill out an observer worksheet and record the success of the discussion, and whether the norms for a Socratic seminar are being followed.

After twenty minutes of discussion the class will have five minutes to debrief. The outer circle will present their opinion of how the discussion went and whether or not the inner circle followed the norms for proper participation. Once the class understands how the discussion can be improved, the roles will be switched. The new inner circle will now engage in discussion for 20 minutes while the outer circle fills out an observer worksheet. Again after about twenty minutes of discussion, students will debrief for five minutes or so. Lastly, we will establish goals for the next time we participate in a seminar.

Review/Exit Ticket-10 minutes

Before the class is over, students will receive an exit ticket. The ticket will be used to assess student understanding of the text, and gauge their participation during the discussion. During the remaining class time the teacher will explain the ticket and review the enlightenment.

Resources:

Rousseau, Jean Jacques. *The Social Contract or Principles of Political Right*. Modern History Sourcebook: Fordham University. <<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/Rousseau-soccon.html>>.

Differentiation:

This lesson has been designed for a gifted World History II class composed of ninth and tenth graders. Due to the difficult reading level and length of Rousseau's original work, I have excerpted important portions and altered some of the language to present a challenge to students without causing struggle and frustration. Instructors can use this text in its original format, or excerpt it further into a bulleted version depending on the reading ability of students. Sections of

the text will be numbered so students can refer to the text, and quickly find quotes and excerpts mentioned during the seminar.

The classroom set up has also been differentiated. Due to the size of the class, we will be participating in a fishbowl model. Smaller classes can still participate in a seminar arranged in a large group, or in two groups split between two facilitators. Because a sizable portion of the students in the class have not participated in a Socratic seminar before, we will go over the lesson and norms for proper participation as a class beforehand. Students that are familiar with a Socratic seminar may only need a quick reminder before the seminar begins.

To assess student comprehension of the text, and measure their level of participation in the seminar, several assessments will be issued. The entry ticket will guide students through the reading and present questions to prepare them for the seminar. The ticket can be altered to measure reading skills or comprehension. It can also be issued along with the reading the night before. The exit ticket will assess familiarity with the text and the actual seminar. Teachers have the options of grading students on actual participation while they are in the inner circle, or using a test or essay to assess the same objectives.

Adaptations/Accommodations:

This lesson has been developed for students with disabilities. To assist students diagnosed with AD/HD, all oral directions will be supplemented with explicit written directions. Students with IEP and 504 plan accommodations will be permitted to leave the classroom or step out if they become overwhelmed or frustrated. Students that require back up copies of notes will receive complete worksheets and be given extra time to complete assignments as dictated by their accommodations.

Pre-Reflection:

After creating this lesson, I am still uncomfortable with the Socratic seminar. I never participated in a Socratic seminar until this semester. The text is not something I am all that familiar with, and I worry that it may be too difficult for students to read and understand. As a facilitator I have prepared a list of questions, but until I teach the lesson, I wonder whether they will actually engage students and encourage them to participate. I still struggle with wait time, I want to give them enough time to respond to one another and share ideas without rushing them through the seminar.

I think that going over the norms for participation before beginning the seminar will help students. Without a video to model proper participation, I will hand out a sheet with a list of norms. I will leave space for students to come up with their own norms that they think will be important with the idea that they will be more engaged in something they helped create. Discussing how to participate in the seminar and issuing norms should encourage students to participate while discouraging some from dominating. Dividing the seminar into two rounds should help students learn proper participation. Ideally, by the second round they will have learned from their mistakes and become more comfortable with the lesson format.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Block: _____

Entrance Ticket to the Phoebus Salon

Directions:

Read Rousseau's *Social Contract*. When you are finished, go back and read it again in order to answer the questions below. The only way to gain admission to our very select salon is to complete this entrance ticket. You have **Twenty Minutes** to read the text and complete this worksheet.

1. What is Rousseau's social contract?

2. What is the general will?

3. What should the role of the government be?

Name: _____ Date: _____ Block: _____

Exit Ticket from the Phoebus Salon

Directions: Now that you have read the text and discussed it with your classmates, answer the following questions below. Be sure to ground your answers in the text. This worksheet will be turned in during the next class for a grade. Please write complete sentences.

1. If Rousseau created his own government from scratch, what would it be like? What powers would it have? What would it do? Think about its relationship with the people it serves.

2. In the country of Vespa, the government initiates and creates its own acts and laws. It typically ignores the people it serves, and follows its own will. According to Rousseau, how should Vespans (citizens of the country) and the body politic react? How do you think they should react?

Vocabulary Guide

1. **Self Preservation:** Protection of oneself from danger or harm. The natural desire to stay alive.
2. **Body Politic:** The people of a politically organized nation or state considered as a group. It could also refer to the physical person of the sovereign, such as a king, emperor, or voters.
3. **Tyrannical:** power that is oppressive, authoritative, and absolute. Usually it is unjust, severe, and harsh. It typically refers to power that is centralized in a single ruler or administration which abuses its power.
4. **Sovereignty:** supreme power over a body politic. This power is free from external control by people or governments outside of the state.
5. **Inalienable:** A power, right, or freedom that cannot be surrendered, transferred, given up, or taken away. Examples of inalienable rights include natural or basic rights such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Socratic Seminar Guidelines for Participation

- The teacher will act as a facilitator and initiate discussion with questions, but students will do the majority of the talking.
- When participating in a discussion, do not raise your hand. Simply say what you have to say by addressing the class or a student. Be sure not to interrupt someone who is already talking. It should resemble a conversation.
- Address one another by name. It is polite, and also important to mention whose idea you agree or disagree with, or what you are elaborating on.
- Give your classmates a chance to talk. Participating and sharing your ideas is a wonderful thing, but try not to dominate the conversation, give everyone a chance to speak, you might learn something that can change your mind.
- Discuss, but **do not argue!** It is O.K. to disagree with what someone else said or have a different opinion. When it is your turn to talk, address your concern with the idea or statement, not the person. We can disagree without being mean to one another.
- Ground your answers in the text. Your answers to questions and comments during the discussion should be based on what you read. Support your answers by going back to the reading. “I feel this way because in paragraph three on page 2 it says...”
- Give your classmates enough time to find your reference. If you are using the reading to support your, tell the class where your information can be found in the document, and give everyone a chance to find it, and even read it over before you continue.
- Use active listening. If you are not currently talking, you should be listening to your classmates and what they are saying. For one, it is respectful since you would want them to listen to you. Secondly, you need to pay attention to the discussion. What is said might support or go against what you think. You will also be assessed on the discussion afterwards. You need to listen in order to succeed on assessments and exit tickets.
- Remember, the goal of this discussion is to **work together** as a class to understand the reading. There is no right or wrong answer. We want to share ideas, and build off of them in order to comprehend the text.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Block: _____

Outer Circle Observation Sheet

Directions: While the inner circle participates in a discussion, pay close attention. Using your guide for participation in a Socratic seminar, fill out the worksheet below and record how well the inner circle participated. Feel free to take notes at the bottom. You will share your observations with the class after the discussion is over.

Participation: Did everyone in the inner circle participate? Did some people dominate the discussion?

Listening: Was everyone in the inner circle and the outer circle listening and paying attention?

Discussion: When members of the inner circle spoke, did they do so respectfully? Did they interrupt other students? Did they address each other by name? Was it more of a discussion or an argument?

Using the reading: Did inner circle participants ground their responses in the text and refer to the reading?

The facilitator: Did the teacher give students enough time to respond? Did students or the teacher dominate the discussion?

The Social Contract

A treatise by Jean Jacques Rousseau-1762

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