SOCRATIC SEMINAR:
WEIMAR REPUBLIC

Overview

History teacher Jacob Montwieler is in the middle of teaching a unit on Weimar Germany. Prior to this class, students have read Voices in the Dark from Chapter 4 of Holocaust and Human Behavior, and now the class will engage in a Socratic seminar about this reading. In a Socratic seminar activity, students help one another understand the ideas, issues, and values reflected in a text through a group-discussion format. Students are responsible for facilitating their group discussion of the ideas in the text; they shouldn't use the discussion to assert their opinions or prove an argument. Through this type of discussion, students practice how to listen to one another, make meaning, and find common ground while participating in a conversation.

Questions to Consider

1. At **0:09**, Mr. Montwieler refers to Socratic seminars as examples of "authentic learning." What do you think he means by that? As you watch the video, where do you see that happening?

2. From **2:25** to **4:43**, Mr. Montwieler gives his students instructions: first he gives some directions about using the text, and then he shares general guidelines about the Socratic seminar itself. Why do you think he does this? What framing would you give your students before a Socratic seminar?

3. At **8:10**, Mr. Montwieler asks the students to share their "shout-outs"—moments the students identify as aspects of the Socratic seminar that moved their thinking. How does this practice augment the experience of the seminar? How might you use it in your own classroom?

Featured

Jacob Montwieler
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Video Goals

- **Consider** how to use a reading as a basis for a Socratic seminar.
- **Observe** how the teacher prepares his students to participate in the seminar.
- **See** the Socratic seminar teaching strategy in action.

Lesson Resources

- **Teaching Strategy: Socratic Seminar**
- **Reading: Voices in the Dark**
- **Holocaust and Human Behavior, Chapter 4**