**Socratic Seminar**

**English 9**

**Purpose**

Socratic Seminars are student lead discussions. The purpose of the discussion is to develop a deeper understanding of a selected topic. In our discussion, the topics will relate to Maya Angelou’s autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Sings.*

Socratic Seminars are not debates. There is no right or wrong answer. They are meant to be a place to demonstrate your knowledge but to also asks question to develop your knowledge. In order to be successful in a Socratic Seminar you must be willing to participate as both a listener and as a speaker.

**Structure**

You will be paired up with partner. One of you will start as the observer and the other will be the participant.

The **participant** will join the Socratic Seminar to discuss the topic(s). Participants are expected to share ideas, ask questions, refer to the text citing specific passages, listen to the ideas of others, and encourage focused and inclusive discussion during the seminar.

The **observer** will evaluate his/her partner’s participation in the Seminar. Observers may also write his/her partner notes with suggested questions to ask the group, ideas to share, and to generally encourage participation. As an observer you will not participate in the discussion in any other way.

After a predetermined amount of time, the groups will switch roles so the observers will become the participants.

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**Practice Seminar - Wednesday June 11, 2014**

**Guiding Questions:**

1. What are the 6 most important events in the novel *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*?
2. Which 4 characters in the novel have the greatest influence on Maya?

**Preparation**:

* Identify the 6 most important events in the novel.
* It is suggested that you choose events from the beginning, middle, and end of the book.
* Write down your explanation to why these are the six most important events in the novel.
* Mark these events in your book so you can easily find and read the passages during the Socratic Seminar.
* Your preparation will be checked at the beginning of class.

**Final Seminar - Thursday June 12, 2014**

**Guiding Questions**

1. What are the most important thematic topics in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*?
2. Based on these topics, what lesson is Maya Angelou trying to teach her readers by telling them her story? The goal is to decide on a theme that insightful and is not cliché.

**Preparation**:

* Identify a minimum of 4 important events in the story that address the thematic topic you believe is most significant.
* You must find an important from the beginning, middle, and end of the book.
* Within each event, find the passage that best reveals the thematic topic. Mark these passages in your book using a sticky note.
* Next, analyze the passages you found to determine what you think is the important life lesson the novel teaches its readers.
* Write this lesson (theme) down.
* Your preparation will be checked at the beginning of class.