A Day That Will Live In Infamy

Overview: The aim of a Socratic Seminar is to help students gain a deeper and richer understanding of a particular “text” by way of discussion. Said “text,” however, is not limited to an actual piece of writing, as Socratic Seminars may be conducted using a film, picture, music or any of a number of other forms of art. Conducting a Socratic Seminar need not be complicated as its purpose is simply to get students to talk about the text in an intelligent manner. The teacher's responsibilities include arranging the room so as to better facilitate a discussion, creating questions to ask students so as to foment and maintain the discussion and to prepare a “ticket” for students to complete in order to help them prepare for the seminar. This particular Socratic Seminar will center around the FDR Fireside Chat given on December 9, 1941.

Grade/Class: 7th grade US History 1877—Present

Length: 57 minutes

Topic: FDR Fireside Chat, War with Japan, explaining that America will go to war with Japan and Germany

Background Information: In 1933, Franklin Delano Roosevelt began to address the American public via radio. These addresses were not simply informational and businesslike, but more akin to a friendly chat in one's home. Coined “Fireside Chats” by Harry Butcher of CBS1, these chats have since become synonymous with the initials FDR. As is well known, America entered WWII in December of 1941 after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. This attack took America by surprise and shocked many a citizen. FDR lost no time in asking Congress to declare war on December 8, 1941. With little deliberation and a nearly unanimous vote, Congress was swift to do so. However, FDR refrained from requesting a declaration of war on Germany, as he rightly assumed that Hitler would automatically declare war on America, once learning the new war in the Pacific.

On December 9, 1941, FDR addressed the American public and informed them of the recent, grave turn of events. He was careful to tell them that the war would be long and hard and that he suspected Germany would soon join it. He also instructed them to be very guarded in their speech concerning war news, as any information taken out of context could endanger thousands of American people. Finally, he encouraged his public to take heart and be confident that America would be victorious in the end.

*Note* This Socratic seminar is intended to be held after students have learned about the various historical events in American history from the end of WWI, through the roaring 20s and the Depression, to the beginning of WWII in Europe. Students will also be familiar with America’s Lend-Lease policy and her diplomatic relations with Japan and Germany.

Rationale: As aforementioned, a Socratic Seminar allows students to garner a deeper understanding of a particular text. This deeper understanding is arrived at by a focused discussion that centers solely on the text at hand. Students will be given several opportunities to speak their opinion about the text and what it means or what the author meant by his particular

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Not only is a Socratic Seminar beneficial in the academic sense that students learn content, but also in the sense of life-skills. As students grow and develop and finally graduate and move into college and the “real-world,” they will greatly benefit from proper discussion skills. It is unreasonable to presume that, for the rest of their lives, they will merely have to raise their hands and wait to be called upon to give an answer to a posed question. This simply does not happen outside of school or some sort of business meeting, and even in the latter it can be rare. A Socratic Seminar will teach students to respond to questions and the statements of others without raising their hands and with proper decorum. It will also help them formulate and express their own thoughts and opinions about a subject, as well as to listen to those of others.

Objectives:
A) Academic
1. After reading and discussing this text, students will be able to identify why America declared war on Japan but not on Germany.
   • **VA STANDARD USII.6a:** The student will demonstrate knowledge of the major causes and effects of American involvement in World War II by identifying the causes and events that led to American involvement in the war, including the attack on Pearl Harbor.
   • **NCSS STANDARD VI.c & VI.d:** Social Studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of how people create and change structures of power, authority, and governance, so that the learner can:
     c) analyze and explain ideas and governmental mechanisms to meet the needs and wants of citizens, regulate territory, manage conflict, and establish order and security;
     d) describe the ways nations and organizations respond to forces of unity and diversity affecting order and security.
2. After reading and discussing this text, students will be able to identify why Germany declared war on America.
   • **VA STANDARD USII.6a:** The student will demonstrate knowledge of the major causes and effects of American involvement in World War II by identifying the causes and events that led to American involvement in the war, including the attack on Pearl Harbor.
   • **NCSS STANDARD VI.d:** Social Studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of how people create and change structures of power, authority, and governance, so that the learner can describe the ways nations and organizations respond to forces of unity and diversity affecting order and security.
3. Students will learn what is meant by **Fireside Chat** and of their importance to American life during FDR’s presidency and specifically WWII.
   • **VA STANDARD USII.1a:** The student will demonstrate skills for historical and geographical analysis, including the ability to analyze and interpret primary and secondary source documents to increase understanding of events and life in United States history from 1877 to the present.
   • **VA STANDARD USII.6c:** The student will demonstrate knowledge of the major causes and effects of American involvement in World War II by describing the impact of World War II on the homefront.
   • **NCSS STANDARD VI.b:** Social Studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions, so that the learner can analyze group and institutional influences on people, events and elements of culture.
4. After reading and discussing the text, students will understand why it was important for the American people to maintain unity and discretion during the war.
   • **NCSS STANDARD VI.f:** Social Studies programs should include experiences that provide for
the study of how people create and change structures of power, authority, and governance, so that
the learner can explain conditions, actions, and motivations that contribute to conflict and
cooperation within and among nations.

B) **Intellectual**

5. Students will hone their discussion skills.
   - **VA STANDARD USII.1e:** The student will demonstrate skills for historical and geographical
     analysis, including the ability to evaluate and debate issues orally and in writing.
   - **NCSS STANDARD X.d:** Social Studies programs should include experiences that provide for the
     study of the ideals, principles, and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic, so that the
     learner can practice forms of civic discussion and participation consistent with the ideals of
     citizens in a democratic republic.

6. Students will be able to interpret a historical speech.
   - **VA STANDARD USII.1h:** The student will demonstrate skills for historical and geographical
     analysis, including the ability to interpret patriotic slogans and excerpts from notable speeches and
     documents.

**Assessment:**

- The day before the Socratic seminar, students will be given a homework assignment in
  which they must read the selected excerpts of this Fireside Chat and complete a Seminar
  Ticket. At the beginning of class, the teacher will check to make sure everyone has
  completed their ticket.
- Because this seminar will not be graded, the teacher will informally assess students by
  making note of who actively participates in the discussion and the number of comments
  each participant makes, as well as noting the depth of said comments. Written feedback
  based on their discussion capabilities will then be provided. The teacher may record the
  Socratic seminar in order to aid her assessment.
- For homework, students will be given an exit ticket to complete. This will consist of the
  same questions posed by the teacher during the seminar with the intent of exposing what
  the students learned about the text from their discussion. Students will receive a
  homework grade and written feedback for their efforts.

**Content and Instructional Strategies:**

**Seminar Text:** FDR's Fireside Chat titled *War with Japan,* given December 9, 1941.
- This is an incredibly rich and heartfelt speech given by FDR on the day after Congress
  declared war on Japan. It is spoken as a father would speak to his child, with FDR,
  eloquent and simple at the same time, lovingly explaining to the American people what
  has happened and what to expect.

**Opening Question:**
- Why is it necessary for FDR to have this Fireside Chat with the American people?

**Core Questions:**
1. In paragraph 3, what does FDR mean when he says, "We are now in this war. We are all
   in it—all the way. Every single man, woman and child is a partner in the most
   tremendous undertaking of our American history"?
• Possible Follow-up Questions: What were men doing during this war? What did women do? What do you think children did during WWII?

2. Why does he call this "the most tremendous undertaking of our American history"?
• Possible Follow-up Questions: What is America trying to do by going to war with Japan? Why was it necessary for America to go to war with this Island nation? So why is this "tremendous?"

3. What does paragraph 4 tell us about FDR? In other words, what kind of a person do you think he was, based on what he said here?

4. In paragraph 6, why does FDR say "If you feel that your Government is not disclosing enough of the truth, you have every right to say so"?
• Prompt, if needed with, “Think about the Bill of Rights . . . the First Amendment . . .”

5. In the same paragraph, what does FDR mean by "you have no right in the ethics of patriotism to deal out unconfirmed reports in such a way as to make people believe they are the gospel truth"?
• Possible Follow-up Questions: What about our freedom of speech? He just said we had every right to exercise it. Do think what is said here stays true to that right?

6. FDR asked Congress to declare war on Japan on December 8, 1941, but he did not ask for a declaration of war on Germany. Why not?
• Possible Follow-up Questions: What do you think “joint plan” means?

7. In paragraph 8, what does FDR mean by "We Americans are not destroyers--we are builders"?
• Possible Follow-up Questions: Do you think FDR wants America to completely destroy Japan and Germany—as in, wipe them off the face of the Earth—or do you think he wants America to help build them back up to be productive and democratic countries that do not commit evil?

*NOTE*: This list of questions may be truncated depending on time restrictions.

Potential Prompts to Encourage More Student Participation:
• What do other people think about that?
• Who thinks that is what FDR meant?
  ◦ Why or why not?
• Thank you for sharing. Would you tell me more about what you mean by that?

Preparation For Seminar, Seminar Text:
In order to prepare for this Socratic seminar, students will be required to read the selected excerpts of FDR's December 9, 1941 Fireside Chat. On the day before the seminar is to take place, the last 10-15 minutes of the period will be devoted to silent reading of the text and whatever is left over will be assigned as homework. Students will also be required to complete a seminar ticket—this may be done during silent reading time or as homework. Please see Appendices A & B.

Room Arrangement:
Prior to class, the teacher will rearrange the desks and chairs so as to form either a large
circle or square (whichever fits better) within the classroom. There will be a maximum of 28 students participating, so it will be a tight fit. A fishbowl arrangement will not be used as the teacher would like to give all students an opportunity to participate at once and believes her students are capable of doing so.

**Preparation of Seminar, Seminar Discussion:**

This lesson will be taught at the end of the week, thereby allowing the teacher to, on Monday or Tuesday, alert students that there will be a discussion later in the week. All week long, there will be mention of the discussion. Students will be told that it is called a Socratic seminar and its purpose is to help them better understand a certain text—in this case, one of FDR's Fireside Chats. They will also be informed that, as they grow and eventually become adults, they will need to know how to engage in good discussions, which is why we will be having one in class.

Perhaps the most important thing they will be told is that the seminar itself will not be graded. The teacher wants it to be an authentic discussion and since authentic discussions in the real-world are not graded, this one will not be either. However, in order to learn about and improve their discussion skills, the teacher will assess their discussion capabilities and discuss these with them individually. Also, they will have to complete a ticket before, and an exit ticket after, the seminar, with the exit ticket receiving a homework grade. They will be informed that these are simply questions pertaining to the text and that the ticket will help them prepare for the seminar, whereas the exit ticket will show me what they have learned from it.

Two days before the Socratic seminar, the teacher will explain its format and that there are certain norms to follow during it. The next day, the teacher will again go over the format and norms with the students. There will also be a quick question and answer session in which students must identify said norms. Students will also be taught certain phrases to use during the discussion. Finally, on the day of the seminar, students will be reminded one more time of these things. The norms will also be displayed on the LCD screen via the document camera.

**Norms:**

1. There is no need to raise your hand.
   ◦ Students will be reminded that they do not, or at least rarely, raise their hands when carrying on a conversation with friends or family and told that, likewise, there will be no need to raise their hands when responding to a comment made during the seminar.
2. Do not interrupt—wait to speak until others have finished speaking.
3. Respond to one another—look at the person you are responding to and the rest of your classmates, not the teacher.
   ◦ Students will be asked to explain what they do when they converse with friends and family. It is expected they will say they look from person to person when they speak, or at least to the person whose question or comment they are responding to.
4. Use the text to support what you say.
   ◦ Students will be told that the seminar is based around the Fireside Chat given on December 9, 1941. Therefore, whatever they say must have a connection to it. If the text reminds them of something from the present, such as a relative who fought in WWII, that is okay and they may share their connection if they wish.

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2 Presumably, students will inquire as to what a Fireside Chat is and they will be thus informed.
3 Please see Procedures section for a description of the format.
5. Respect one another’s opinions.
   ○ Students will be reminded that many different people have many different opinions about many different things. Sometimes there is a clear right and wrong answer and sometimes there is not and that is okay. During our Socratic seminar, they may disagree with someone else and they need to know that it is okay to do so, but that they are not allowed to verbally (or physically) attack one another because of it.

Discussion Phrases: These will help you communicate in a more adult fashion.

- When you agree with someone, say:
  ○ “I agree with _______ because . . . ”
  ○ “I think _______ is right and here's why:”
- When you do not understand someone else's comment, try saying:
  ○ “Would you please explain what you meant by that?”
- When you disagree with someone, say:
  ○ “I disagree with that comment because . . . ”
  ○ “I do not think the text is saying that. I think FDR meant . . . ”
- If you want to learn someone else's opinion, ask:
  ○ “What do you think about that?”

Procedures:
1. Arrange desks accordingly. (pre-class)
2. Write norms and discussion phrases on whiteboard. (pre-class)
3. Place name cards on desks, thereby assigning seats. (pre-class)
4. Check tickets. 3-5 minutes
   ○ Students will complete their While You Wait activity at this time.
     ○ While You Wait: Tell your neighbor what you would have done if you were FDR.
5. Quickly assign duties to those who have not completed their tickets. 3-5 minutes
   ○ Students who have not completed their tickets will be required to observe the seminar and record who speaks and how often they speak. The more students there are to do this, the easier it will be, as they will be assigned certain classmates to keep track of, rather than the entire class. Students will not be informed of this requirement unless necessary—I do not want them to think they can opt out of their homework because there will be something to do the day of the seminar.
   ○ Students will also be required to write down any questions they have during the seminar. Just before the debriefing, they will be given a chance to ask these questions.
   ○ These students will still be required to complete an exit ticket.
6. Remind students our purpose it to better understand FDR’s Fireside Chat. 1 minute
7. Review format, norms and discussion phrases. 4 minutes
8. Show students slideshow of FDR and Pearl Harbor. This includes parts of the actual Fireside Chat. 4 minutes
9. Questions 20-25 minutes
   • Begin with opening question. Allow students to answer, reminding them of norms as necessary.
• Proceed with core questions listed above.
• Should the need arise, such as in the case of a topical digression or puzzled silence, steer discussion back toward text.
• Allow students who did not complete their ticket to ask any questions they may have.

**Post-Seminar and Debrief:**  13-23 minutes

• Once the seminar is over, ask students if we accomplished our purpose—do we better understand this Fireside Chat?
• Give students my opinion of the seminar—I hope and expect to be able to congratulate them for their efforts.
• Play more of the actual chat from the following website: [http://millercenter.org/scripps/archive/speeches/detail/3325](http://millercenter.org/scripps/archive/speeches/detail/3325)
• Give students an opportunity to share their “last word” about this seminar and/or Fireside Chat. This is to be with the same neighbor with whom they conducted the *While You Wait*. Those students who did not complete an entrance ticket will be partnered for this activity.
• Allow students to work on their Exit Ticket if there is time remaining.

**Resources:**

• Excerpts from FDR's Fireside Chat: *War with Japan;* December 9, 1941
• Seminar ticket
• Words You Might Not Know
• Name cards
• Whiteboard, dry erase markers & eraser
• FDR & Pearl Harbor slideshow
• Computer, LCD projector & screen
• Seminar Questions
• FDR audio
  ◦ [http://millercenter.org/scripps/archive/speeches/detail/3325](http://millercenter.org/scripps/archive/speeches/detail/3325)
• Exit tickets

**Differentiation:**

This lesson is differentiated for a variety of different learners. First, it is based upon a readable text, thereby benefiting those who learn well by reading. Second, speaking is an essential part of this lesson. Therefore, those who learn best by verbal communication will also benefit from this Socratic seminar. In order to accommodate my visual and auditory learners, I have also incorporated pictures and audio. Given this myriad of sources, I believe that my students will be interested and motivated to learn and participate in this lesson.

Also, I have designed this lesson so as to allow students to prepare for the seminar to the greatest degree possible. They will both be given the text and time to read it the day before the seminar. They will also be able to take the text home and be expected to complete a ticket as homework the night before the seminar. Furthermore, they will have knowledge of the seminar and how to properly converse during it several days in advance, along with refreshers the day of the lesson. Most importantly, I have chosen not to grade the actual discussion. All of these
things have been done in order to help students feel comfortable with the idea of a Socratic seminar, in the hopes that they will be more apt to participate.

For students who are particularly anxious about a class-wide discussion, I will make available the seminar questions a few days beforehand, in an attempt to alleviate their concerns and help them feel more confident about their contributions to said seminar.

Adaptations:

This lesson has been designed with a gifted class in mind. However, it can be adapted to meet the needs of those with IEPs. For one, less text can be used or the text can be read to said students. Instead of having one large class discussion, a fishbowl arrangement could be used or the class could be broken into two smaller groups, and, with the help of an aid or special educator, both groups could carry on separate discussions.

Given the nature of the language, I have revised and edited part of the text so as to make it more reader-friendly for seventh graders. However, I have tried to preserve some of the original language so as to expose my students to more advanced speech. In order to aid their understanding of it, I have provided a vocabulary sheet, entitled *Words You Might Not Know*. This, along with text excerpts and tickets will be available in a larger font for those who need it.

Reflection:

Though this lesson took an inordinate amount of time to write, I am, for the most part, happy with it. I am excited to begin with the pictures of FDR and Pearl Harbor wreckage and look forward to observing my students reactions to these images, as I expect they will foment a deeper understanding of the past within my 7th graders. I am also extremely excited to play a portion of the actual Fireside Chat at the end of the lesson! Again, I think that it will capture my students' attention and provide an excellent link to the past!

However, I do have some concerns. First, I fear that perhaps my text is too long and that my tickets are too ambitious. To combat this latter concern, I am prepared to drop a few questions as time dictates during the seminar (thereby also shortening the exit ticket). Another concern is that conducting a Socratic seminar with 28 gifted students may provide a little more chaos than I would care to deal with. In this case, I would consider switching to a fishbowl, or some other, arrangement.

As for other potential issues, such as verbose or silent students and a derailed discussion, I am not terribly concerned. For those students who are too wordy, I intend to thank them for their contributions and promptly ask for more students' opinions. If the child continues to try to dominate the discussion, I will make sure to explain afterward and in private that it is wonderful s/he has so much to say, but it is necessary to allow others a chance to speak—they have opinions, too. The student would then be reminded of this the next time we have a Socratic seminar.

Since the discussion itself is not graded, it is okay for students to be silent. The purpose is to help students develop discussion skills and sometimes the best skill one can have in a discussion is to listen. Because the exit ticket consists of all the same questions posed during the seminar, those silent students, in a way, will be contributing to the discussion. Furthermore, they will have an opportunity to show what they learned by listening.

Finally, if the discussion becomes completely derailed, one short sentence should return my students to the text at hand: “OK guys, let’s get back to FDR and the things he said to America after we were attacked by Japan.”
Appendix A

War With Japan
Franklin Delano Roosevelt
December 9, 1941

My fellow Americans:

1. The Japanese have treacherously violated the . . . peace between us. Many American soldiers and sailors have been killed by enemy action. American ships have been sunk; American airplanes have been destroyed. . . . No honest person, today or a thousand years hence, will be able to suppress a sense of indignation and horror at the treachery committed by the military dictators of Japan. . . .

2. The course that Japan has followed for the past ten years in Asia has paralleled the course of Hitler and Mussolini in Europe and in Africa. . . . [And now] all the continents of the world, and all the oceans, are . . . considered by the Axis . . . [to be] one gigantic battlefield.

3. We are now in this war. We are all in it—all the way. Every single man, woman and child is a partner in the most tremendous undertaking of our American history. We must share together the bad news and the good news, the defeats and the victories—the changing fortunes of war.

4. The casualty lists of these first few days will undoubtedly be large. I deeply feel the anxiety of all of the families of the men in our armed forces and the relatives of people in cities which have been bombed. I can only give them my solemn promise that they will get news just as quickly as possible. . . .

5. Most earnestly I urge my countrymen to reject all rumors. . . . Many rumors and reports which we now hear originate . . . with enemy sources. . . . This is an old trick of propaganda. . . . It must be remembered by [all] of us that our free and rapid communication . . . must be greatly restricted in wartime. It is not possible to receive full and speedy and accurate reports from distant areas of combat. . . .

6. There will be delays in officially confirming or denying reports of [troop] operations, but we will not hide facts from the country if we know the facts and if the enemy will not be aided by their disclosure. . . . If you feel that your Government is not disclosing enough of the truth, you have every right to say so. But [if you do not have] all the facts . . . you have no right in the ethics of patriotism to deal out unconfirmed reports in such a way as to make people believe that they are gospel truth. . . .

7. We know also that Germany and Japan are conducting their military and naval operations in accordance with a joint plan. That plan considers all peoples and nations which are not helping the Axis powers as common enemies of [all] of the Axis powers.

8. The true goal we seek is far above and beyond the ugly field of battle. When we resort to force, as now we must, we are determined that this force shall be directed toward ultimate good as well as against immediate evil. We Americans are not destroyers—we are builders. . . .
And in the difficult hours of this day—through dark days that may be yet to come—we will know that the vast majority of the members of the human race are on our side. Many of them are fighting with us. All of them are praying for us. But, in representing our cause, we represent theirs as well—our hope and their hope for liberty under God.

Text excerpted from:
Appendix B
Seminar Ticket

Name_______________________________________________

Text:  *On the War with Japan*
       FDR Fireside Chat
       December 9, 1941

Directions:  Answer these questions as best you can.  The paragraphs in the text have been numbered so that some answers are easier to find.  Use the back of this sheet if you need to.

1. What specific attack does FDR reference in paragraph 1?

2. Which two countries does FDR compare Japan to?

3. In paragraph 5, what does FDR want the American people to reject?  Why?

4. What do you think paragraph 6 means?

5. What is the relationship between Germany and Japan?  See paragraph 7 if you need help.

6. Why do you think it is necessary for FDR to have this Fireside Chat with the American people?
Appendix C
Exit Ticket

Name_______________________________________________

Text:  *On the War with Japan*
      FDR Fireside Chat
      December 9, 1941

Directions: Answer these questions to the best of your ability. Most of the questions are the same as the ones I asked during our seminar. If we were unable to discuss one of these questions during the seminar, you are not responsible for answering it. In this instance, I will tell you which ones may skipped. You may refer to the text and any notes you took during the seminar. Please use complete sentences.

1. What did you think of the seminar?

2. In paragraph 3, what does FDR mean when he says, "We are now in this war. We are all in it—all the way. Every single man, woman and child is a partner in the most tremendous undertaking of our American history"?

3. Why does he call this "the most tremendous undertaking of our American history"?

4. What does paragraph 4 tell us about FDR? In other words, what kind of a person do you think he was, based on what he said here?

5. In paragraph 6, why does FDR say "If you feel that your Government is not disclosing enough of the truth, you have every right to say so"?
6. In the same paragraph, what does FDR mean by "you have no right in the ethics of patriotism to deal out unconfirmed reports in such a way as to make people believe they are the gospel truth"?

7. FDR asked Congress to declare war on Japan on December 8, 1941, but he did not ask for a declaration of war on Germany. Why not?

8. In paragraph 8, what does FDR mean by "We Americans are not destroyers--we are builders"?

9. Why do you think it was necessary for FDR to have this Fireside Chat with the American people?
Appendix D
Words You Might Not Know

Anxiety—nervousness, worry

Disclosure—to tell or expose something

Ethics—the rules of conduct or a moral code

Gospel Truth—an unquestionably true statement or fact

Hence—yet to come

Indignation—strong displeasure at something considered unjust, offensive or insulting

Majority—the greater part or number

Paralleled—the same as

Sacred—something special or reserved

Suppress—keep in; does not express

Treacherous—deceptive, untrustworthy, or unreliable

Vast—big