

## **Socratic Seminar on Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Third Inaugural Address**

### Instructional Model: Socratic Seminar

Students will participate in a structured discussion about the values raised in the given text. The text chosen is FDR's Third Inaugural Address, given on January 20, 1941, in which he discusses the importance of and need to maintain democracy in the United States.

### Overview:

In 1941, the United States was trying desperately to stay out of WWII. The memory of WWI was still fresh in the minds of the nation and the citizens were not eager to enter into another world conflict. FDR was struggling to maintain a high morale among the nation's people while debating what the best action was regarding the call for help coming from the allied forces. His central question of the vitality of democracy hints at the coming call to arms that the United States would answer in order to protect the democracies of Europe through the Lend Lease Act. This Socratic seminar allows students to discuss the concept of democracy and proper citizenship from their own viewpoints, that of FDR, and the United States of the 1940's. It will enable students to use higher order thinking while practicing cooperative discussion centered around the central question, **"Why does FDR feel democracy is vital to America's past, present, and future?"**

### Rationale:

The concepts of democracy and freedom are two of the main values that as social studies teachers we must help our students figure out how to best express. Looking at the speeches of great men like FDR and examining them within the context of the times helps students establish their own viewpoints of the importance of democracy and citizenship.

### Objectives:

- Academic
  - Understand the importance of FDR's 3<sup>rd</sup> inaugural speech
  - Comprehend the forces at work around the world that led to America's involvement in WWII
  - Articulate the concepts of democracy and freedom

- Intellectual
  - Analyze the text in order to find deeper knowledge and understanding
  - Engage in a thoughtful discussion about an important text
  - Transfer ideas into writing for an assessment
- Social
  - Listen and take turns in a discussion
  - Build on other students' ideas

*Wisconsin Model Academic Standards*

B.8.5 Use historical evidence to determine and support a position about important political values, such as freedom, democracy, equality, or justice, and express the position coherently

B.8.6 Analyze important political values such as freedom, democracy, equality, and justice embodied in documents such as the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Bill of Rights

C.8.1 Identify and explain democracy's basic principles, including individual rights, responsibility for the common good, equal opportunity, equal protection of the laws, freedom of speech, justice, and majority rule with protection for minority rights

Grade Level

This Socratic Seminar is designed for students in eighth grade. It is meant for this grade because World War II is discussed in eighth grade and the text is appropriate for comprehension at this level.

Course

This lesson is designed for use in a U.S. History class. This could be used most appropriately at the beginning of a unit on World War II, but could also be used in a Political Science or Citizenship Unit.

Time

The approximate time for this Socratic Seminar will be two class periods. On day one, the seminar will be introduced and students will have time to read the text and complete the ticket for participation. The seminar itself will take place on the second day, but can go on to a third day if the discussion is of high quality and lengthy. The debriefing will take 15-30 minutes. Students will be expected to complete a culminating activity as homework from the final day.

Materials

- Copies for each student of

- FDR's Third Inaugural Address
- Ticket for Socratic Seminar
- Seminar Analysis Sheet
- Culminating Activity Scoring Rubric
- Cardstock and markers for each student to make name cards
- "Questions for Discussion" for teacher

### **Procedure for Socratic Seminar:**

#### *1) Introduction*

- This Socratic Seminar activity would take place within a larger study of Pearl Harbor and the US entrance into WWII. A lesson of background information including the aggression in Europe at the time as well as the United States theory of isolationism.
- **Day 1:**
  - Students are given the speech to read during class time and the ticket to complete. Students should be encouraged to read the text carefully and look for meaning "in-between the lines" as well as the overall meaning of the address, while thinking about deeper meaning and possible questions raised by the text. Encourage students to read the text more than once.
  - Along with reading the text before discussion, students are required to complete a 'ticket' in order to participate in the seminar. If a student does not have a completed ticket on the day of the seminar, they will not be able to participate in the discussion. The ticket for this discussion requires students to summarize the role of the citizen throughout American history, and the role of democracy throughout American history (see attached "Ticket for Socratic Seminar").
  - Introduce students to the Socratic Seminar procedure by going over the following guidelines:
    - Explain to students that we will be having a whole class discussion about the ideals found in FDR's Third Inaugural Speech.
    - In this type of discussion students will not raise their hands to speak.
    - Only one student will speak at a time and all other students are expected to listen respectfully.
    - Students will need to support comments made with evidence from the text. This is why it is important to read the text carefully.
    - Students will be expected to build on or challenge the ideas of others, RESPECTFULLY.

- Stress to students that this is not a debate, it is a discussion and that everyone's ideas are welcome as long as they can be supported.

- **Day 2: Discussion**

The morning of the discussion, arrange the desks in a circle so that each student can see everyone else in the classroom. By rearranging the room you are making the environment more conducive to communication and ensuring that everyone feels on a level playing ground.

- As the students enter the classroom check off that they have their admission ticket and have each student make a name card for his or herself.
- Instruct the students to clear their desk except for their annotated text, admission ticket, and a notebook for taking notes (optional).
- Have each student make a name tag to place on their desk.
- If a student does not have their ticket, they should be given an alternate task such as
  - Keep track of who speaks and how often
  - List/Summarize key ideas that are discussed
  - Count the number of times that students build on each others' ideas and how many disagreements occur.
- The teacher should then join the circle and introduce the discussion goals (posted in the room either on the board or overhead):
  - Seek to develop a deeper understanding of the text-have a good conversation about the values, issues and ideas in the text.
  - Actively Listen and build on or react to others points.
- Review with students the guidelines of the discussion from the previous day.
- Allow 5-7 minutes of review time so that students can reactivate their knowledge and schemas of the text.
- Post on the board and then state the focus question **“Why does FDR feel democracy is vital to America’s past, present, and future?”**
- Give students time to think about the question, formulate ideas and respond.
- Remind students to refer to the text using the paragraph numbers so that classmates can follow along and respond appropriately.
- Let the discussion lead itself, but if it needs redirecting refer to the attached “Questions for Discussion”.
- Be sure to ask the following questions throughout the discussion
  - Where did you find that in the text?
  - How do you know that?
  - How does what “x” said relate to what “y” said?
- As you guide the discussion watch for students who seem reluctant or too shy to participate. Call on them and see what they have to contribute, but use discretion.

- Monitor the time so that the discussion lasts about 30 minutes so that there is time for debriefing.
- Before ending the discussion ask if anyone has anything to add so that everyone has a chance to participate. Participation is the key to a successful seminar.
- If nothing further needs to be discussed, close the discussion portion of the seminar and move on to the debriefing portion of the seminar.
- **Debrief**
  - Explain the process of debriefing to the students.
  - We will be assessing if we have or have not met the objectives for this seminar.
  - Distribute the Seminar Analysis sheets to students (see attached) and have them rate themselves on the examples given.
  - After all students have completed the analysis either asking every student or asking students at random, one or all of the following three questions:
    - What is something you have learned or understand better because of this seminar?
    - What did we do well?
    - How well did we listen?
    - What can we improve for our next seminar?
  - Allow students to pass on all or some of the questions if they prefer.
  - Every student should be allowed to share, so once you have gone around the circle, open up the forum for any other comments.
  - This discussion needs to be limited to comments about the seminar itself, not discussion about the text.
- **Culminating Activity/ Assessment**
  - Students need to react to FDR's address in a 1-2 page response that answers the following questions:
    - Do you agree, disagree, or both?
    - What do you believe is your current role as a citizen?
    - Will your role change in the future? If so, how? If not, why not?
    - What would FDR say about your opinion?
  - Student response papers will be assessed using the attached rubric.

# Franklin D. Roosevelt

## Third Inaugural Address

Monday, January 20, 1941



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The only chief executive to serve more than two terms, President Roosevelt took office for the third time as Europe and Asia engaged in war. The oath of office was administered by Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes on the East Portico of the Capitol. The Roosevelts hosted a reception for several thousand visitors at the White House later that day.

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ON each national day of inauguration since 1789, the people have renewed their sense of dedication <sup>1</sup>  
to the United States.

In Washington's day the task of the people was to create and weld together a nation. <sup>2</sup>

In Lincoln's day the task of the people was to preserve that Nation from disruption from within. <sup>3</sup>

In this day the task of the people is to save that Nation and its institutions from disruption from <sup>4</sup>  
without.

To us there has come a time, in the midst of swift happenings, to pause for a moment and take <sup>5</sup>  
stock—to recall what our place in history has been, and to rediscover what we are and what we may  
be. If we do not, we risk the real peril of inaction.

Lives of nations are determined not by the count of years, but by the lifetime of the human spirit. 6  
The life of a man is three-score years and ten: a little more, a little less. The life of a nation is the fullness of the measure of its will to live.

There are men who doubt this. There are men who believe that democracy, as a form of 7  
Government and a frame of life, is limited or measured by a kind of mystical and artificial fate that, for some unexplained reason, tyranny and slavery have become the surging wave of the future—and that freedom is an ebbing tide.

But we Americans know that this is not true. 8

Eight years ago, when the life of this Republic seemed frozen by a fatalistic terror, we proved that 9  
this is not true. We were in the midst of shock—but we acted. We acted quickly, boldly, decisively.

These later years have been living years—fruitful years for the people of this democracy. For they 10  
have brought to us greater security and, I hope, a better understanding that life's ideals are to be measured in other than material things.

Most vital to our present and our future is this experience of a democracy which successfully 11  
survived crisis at home; put away many evil things; built new structures on enduring lines; and, through it all, maintained the fact of its democracy.

For action has been taken within the three-way framework of the Constitution of the United States. 12  
The coordinate branches of the Government continue freely to function. The Bill of Rights remains inviolate. The freedom of elections is wholly maintained. Prophets of the downfall of American democracy have seen their dire predictions come to naught.

Democracy is not dying. 13

We know it because we have seen it revive—and grow. 14

We know it cannot die—because it is built on the unhampered initiative of individual men and 15  
women joined together in a common enterprise—an enterprise undertaken and carried through by the free expression of a free majority.

We know it because democracy alone, of all forms of government, enlists the full force of men's 16  
enlightened will.

We know it because democracy alone has constructed an unlimited civilization capable of infinite 17  
progress in the improvement of human life.

We know it because, if we look below the surface, we sense it still spreading on every continent— 18  
for it is the most humane, the most advanced, and in the end the most unconquerable of all forms of

human society.

A nation, like a person, has a body—a body that must be fed and clothed and housed, invigorated and rested, in a manner that measures up to the objectives of our time. 19

A nation, like a person, has a mind—a mind that must be kept informed and alert, that must know itself, that understands the hopes and the needs of its neighbors—all the other nations that live within the narrowing circle of the world. 20

And a nation, like a person, has something deeper, something more permanent, something larger than the sum of all its parts. It is that something which matters most to its future—which calls forth the most sacred guarding of its present. 21

It is a thing for which we find it difficult—even impossible—to hit upon a single, simple word. 22

And yet we all understand what it is—the spirit—the faith of America. It is the product of centuries. It was born in the multitudes of those who came from many lands—some of high degree, but mostly plain people, who sought here, early and late, to find freedom more freely. 23

The democratic aspiration is no mere recent phase in human history. It is human history. It permeated the ancient life of early peoples. It blazed anew in the middle ages. It was written in Magna Charta. 24

In the Americas its impact has been irresistible. America has been the New World in all tongues, to all peoples, not because this continent was a new-found land, but because all those who came here believed they could create upon this continent a new life—a life that should be new in freedom. 25

Its vitality was written into our own Mayflower Compact, into the Declaration of Independence, into the Constitution of the United States, into the Gettysburg Address. 26

Those who first came here to carry out the longings of their spirit, and the millions who followed, and the stock that sprang from them—all have moved forward constantly and consistently toward an ideal which in itself has gained stature and clarity with each generation. 27

The hopes of the Republic cannot forever tolerate either undeserved poverty or self-serving wealth. 28

We know that we still have far to go; that we must more greatly build the security and the opportunity and the knowledge of every citizen, in the measure justified by the resources and the capacity of the land. 29

But it is not enough to achieve these purposes alone. It is not enough to clothe and feed the body of this Nation, and instruct and inform its mind. For there is also the spirit. And of the three, the 30



greatest is the spirit.

Without the body and the mind, as all men know, the Nation could not live. 31

But if the spirit of America were killed, even though the Nation's body and mind, constricted in an alien world, lived on, the America we know would have perished. 32

That spirit—that faith—speaks to us in our daily lives in ways often unnoticed, because they seem so obvious. It speaks to us here in the Capital of the Nation. It speaks to us through the processes of governing in the sovereignties of 48 States. It speaks to us in our counties, in our cities, in our towns, and in our villages. It speaks to us from the other nations of the hemisphere, and from those across the seas—the enslaved, as well as the free. Sometimes we fail to hear or heed these voices of freedom because to us the privilege of our freedom is such an old, old story. 33

The destiny of America was proclaimed in words of prophecy spoken by our first President in his first inaugural in 1789—words almost directed, it would seem, to this year of 1941: "The preservation of the sacred fire of liberty and the destiny of the republican model of government are justly considered ... deeply,... finally, staked on the experiment intrusted to the hands of the American people." 34

If we lose that sacred fire—if we let it be smothered with doubt and fear—then we shall reject the destiny which Washington strove so valiantly and so triumphantly to establish. The preservation of the spirit and faith of the Nation does, and will, furnish the highest justification for every sacrifice that we may make in the cause of national defense. 35

In the face of great perils never before encountered, our strong purpose is to protect and to perpetuate the integrity of democracy. 36

For this we muster the spirit of America, and the faith of America. 37

We do not retreat. We are not content to stand still. As Americans, we go forward, in the service of our country, by the will of God. 38

From <http://www.bartleby.com/124/pres51.html>

## Rubric for Writing Response

**1 = Weak      2 = Moderately Weak      3 = Average      4 = Moderately Strong      5 = Strong**

1. The student clearly expresses an opinion.

**1      2      3      4      5**

2. The student clearly outlines what his/her opinion is based upon.

**1      2      3      4      5**

3. The student supports his/her opinion with evidence from the text/discussion.

**1      2      3      4      5**

4. The student addresses contradictory opinions and evidence.

**1      2      3      4      5**

5. Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are correct.

**1      2      3      4      5**

**Total Points/Grade** \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Seminar Analysis

### Positive Behaviors

*Rate yourself on a scale of 1-5. 1=poor, 5=excellent*

\_\_\_\_\_ I read the text prior to the seminar.

\_\_\_\_\_ I thoroughly and thoughtfully prepared my ticket prior to the seminar.

\_\_\_\_\_ My comments were well thought-out.

\_\_\_\_\_ I listened to others share their opinions.

\_\_\_\_\_ I built on what was said before me.

\_\_\_\_\_ I referred to the text to back up my comments.

\_\_\_\_\_ I was respectful of other opinions.

### Negative Behaviors

*Rate yourself on a scale of 0-4. 0=never, 4=almost always*

\_\_\_\_\_ I interrupted others.

\_\_\_\_\_ I acted inappropriately.

\_\_\_\_\_ I talked off topic.

\_\_\_\_\_ I talked too much or not at all.

\_\_\_\_\_ I did not pay attention to the speaker.

What is the best idea you heard in this seminar?

## Questions for Discussion

1. Why has the democracy of the United States been able to survive for so many years?
2. What can “kill” democracy?
3. What is the spirit of America?
4. What is the faith of America?
5. Are the spirit of America and the faith of America the same thing or different?
6. How does the spirit of America speak to citizens?
7. Why is America the only country mentioned as having the destiny of preserving the republican model of government?
8. How do people muster the American spirit?
9. Why should Americans reflect on their place in history?
10. If some men doubt that a nation’s life is measured by the fullness of the measure of its will to live, what are other ways a nation’s life can be measured?
11. How can a nation keep democracy alive?
12. What are the body and mind of the nation?
13. What is America’s purpose?

Ticket for Socratic Seminar

*Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Third Inaugural Address*

*What has been the role of the  
**Citizen**  
throughout American history?*

*What has been the role of  
**Democracy**  
throughout American history?*