

Socratic Seminar Rubric

	Exemplary	Proficient	Partially Proficient	Developing	Comments
Analysis and Reasoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly references text to support reasoning. • Demonstrates thoughtful consideration of the topic. • Provides relevant and insightful comments, makes new connections. • Demonstrates exceptionally logical and organized thinking. • Moves the discussion to a deeper level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occasionally references text to support reasoning. • Demonstrates consideration of the topic. • Provides relevant comments. • Thinking is clear and organized. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rarely references text, may reference text incorrectly. • Demonstrates awareness of the topic but little reflection on it. • Comments are mostly relevant. • Thinking is mostly clear and organized. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not reference text. • Demonstrates little or no consideration of the topic. • Comments are off-topic or irrelevant. • Thinking is confused, disorganized, or stays at a very superficial level. 	
Discussion Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaks loudly and clearly. • Stays on topic and brings discussion back on topic if necessary. • Talks directly to other students (rather than the teacher). • Stays focused on the discussion. • Invites other people into the discussion. • Shares 'air time' equally with others. • References the remarks of others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaks at an appropriate level to be heard. • Stays on topic and focused on the discussion. • Aware of sharing 'air time' with others and may invite them into the conversation. • May occasionally direct comments to teacher. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly speaks at an appropriate level but may need to be coached. • Sometimes strays from topic. • Occasionally dominates the conversation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannot be heard, or may dominate the conversation. • Demonstrates inappropriate discussion skills. 	
Civility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listens to others respectfully by making eye contact with the speaker and waiting their turn to speak. • Remarks are polite and demonstrate a high level of concern for the feelings of others. • Addresses others in a civil manner, using a collegial and friendly tone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listens to others respectfully. • Uses appropriate language and tone. • Remarks demonstrate a concern for the feelings of others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listens to others respectfully, but may not always look at the speaker or may sometimes interrupt. • Remarks demonstrate an awareness of feelings of others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be distracted or not focused on the conversation. • Interrupts frequently. • Remarks demonstrate little awareness or sensitivity to the feelings of others. • Uses an aggressive, threatening, or otherwise inappropriate tone. 	

Rubric for Evaluating Classroom Discussions

	Exemplary	Proficient	Partially Proficient	Developing
Recognizes and Understands Multiple Perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beyond recognition and understanding, student is able to empathize with others' perspectives. Student's own thinking becomes more complex and thorough with added perspectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student demonstrates recognition and understanding of multiple perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student recognizes and understands some alternate perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student struggles to reflect and paraphrase alternate perspectives accurately.
Participates in a Civil and Democratic Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beyond meeting discussion guidelines, student is a discussion leader, soliciting others' viewpoints and enforcing discussion guidelines in a respectful manner. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meets all discussion guidelines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meets some discussion guidelines, but some areas need development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Several areas of discussion guidelines need development.
Communicates Ideas Using Supporting Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student states ideas with relevant supporting evidence from several of the following: content presented in class, experience, legitimate sources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student states ideas with relevant supporting evidence from content presented in class, experience, or legitimate sources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student sometimes states ideas using relevant supporting evidence from content presented in class, experience, or legitimate sources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student rarely or never states ideas using relevant supporting evidence from content presented in class, experience, or legitimate sources.
Demonstrates Understanding and Application of Science Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student consistently uses ample content vocabulary appropriately. Scientific statements are factual and thorough. Student is able to apply scientific concepts through examples and integration, even to areas outside the original content. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student uses content vocabulary appropriately. Scientific statements are factual. Student applies scientific concepts accurately through examples and integration of different concepts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student is at times able to use vocabulary appropriately. Some facts are incorrect. Student shows limited ability to apply scientific concepts through examples and integration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student rarely uses vocabulary appropriately. Facts are often incorrect. Student struggles to apply scientific concepts through examples and integration.
Identifies Ethical Processes and Theories Used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student is able to correctly relate one's own and others' perspectives to schools of ethical thought and frameworks or reasoning tools used to arrive at the various perspectives. Student demonstrates clear understanding of stakeholders, values, and issues, as well as the alternate decisions that may be made according to the various parties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student demonstrates use of ethical frameworks and reasoning tools in arriving at perspective. Student correctly identifies perspective to schools of ethical thought. Student demonstrates clear understanding of stakeholders, values, and issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student demonstrates some use of ethical frameworks and reasoning tools in arriving at perspective. Student makes limited connections between personal perspective and schools of ethical thought. Student demonstrates limited understanding of stakeholders, values, and issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student arrives at a perspective without the use of any framework or reasoning tool. Student is unable to relate personal perspective to the schools of ethical thought. Student is often unable to identify stakeholders, values, or issues.

COMMENTS:

DISCUSSION GUIDELINES:

- Student's tone of voice and body posture implies discourse and discussion rather than a debate or competition.
- Student acknowledges and respects different viewpoints.
- Student tries to resolve conflicts that arise in a manner that retains everyone's dignity.
- Student advocates for own voice, as well as treats others' voices with equal importance.
- Student does not interrupt others.
- Student does not dominate the conversation.
- Student critiques ideas rather than people.
- Student is attentive.
- Student contributes to enforcing above rules when appropriate.

*Developed by Rosetta Lee, Seattle Girls School, Seattle, Washington,
in collaboration with 'Ethics in the Science Classroom' teachers*

Sample Policy Recommendation Letter Assignment

“On August 9, 2001, at 9:00 p.m. EDT, the President announced his decision to allow Federal funds to be used for research on existing human embryonic stem cell lines as long as prior to his announcement (1) the derivation process (which commences with the removal of the inner cell mass from the blastocyst) had already been initiated and (2) the embryo from which the stem cell line was derived no longer had the possibility of development as a human being.”

-National Institutes of Health

Unfortunately, these stem cell lines have several limitations. Initially this policy covered sixty stem cell lines. Only 22 of these lines are now available for research using federal funding but recent studies have shown they cannot be used in human treatments. A team of researchers from the University of California has found that the approved lines are contaminated by mouse feeder cells that were used to grow them. This would lead the human immune system to attack the cells, making them unusable in any future treatments. Researchers cannot use federal funds to derive new uncontaminated lines due to the August 2001 policy.

Your assignment is to write a letter, addressed to the President, with your recommendations toward the current policies that restrict federal funding for embryonic stem cell research. In your letter, clearly state whether you support the current policy or you believe there need to be changes to it (and what those changes should be). Support your reasoning and cite any sources used.

TASK: Write a policy recommendation letter containing the following:

Pre-write: Use the decision-making model to organize your ideas.

1. Describe the ethical dilemma surrounding stem cell research.
2. Clearly explain your recommendation(s) concerning funding and regulations to address the ethical dilemma.
3. Provide two supporting ethical arguments.
4. Provide two supporting scientific arguments.
5. Cite your sources.
6. Conclude your letter by thanking the recipient for their time.

Length: The paper should not be longer than 3 pages, 12pt font, 1.5 line spacing.

Use the evaluation rubric for additional guidelines for meeting criteria.

Recommendation Letter Due Date:

Policy Recommendation Letter Evaluation

	Exemplary	Proficient	Partially Proficient	Developing	Comments
Recognizes and Understands Multiple Perspectives	Student's own thinking becomes more complex and thorough with added perspectives.	Student demonstrates recognition and understanding of multiple perspectives.	Student recognizes and understands some alternate perspectives.	Student struggles to reflect and paraphrase alternate perspectives accurately.	
Communicates Ideas Using Supporting Evidence	2 Ethical arguments are provided. Student states ideas with relevant supporting evidence from several of the following: content presented in class, experience, legitimate sources that are cited in the body of the letter and works cited (at least 2 sources).	2 Ethical arguments are provided. Student states ideas with supporting evidence from content presented in class, experience, or legitimate sources cited in the body of the letter and works cited (at least 2 sources).	Fewer than 2 ethical arguments. Student sometimes states ideas using relevant supporting evidence from content presented in class, experience, or legitimate sources.	Fewer than 2 ethical arguments. Student rarely or never states ideas using relevant supporting evidence from content presented in class, experience, or legitimate sources.	
Demonstrates Understanding and Application of Science Content	2 Science arguments provided. Student consistently uses ample content vocabulary appropriately. Scientific statements are factual and thorough. Student is able to apply scientific concepts through examples and integration, even to areas outside the original content.	2 Science arguments provided. Student uses content vocabulary appropriately. Scientific statements are factual. Student applies scientific concepts accurately through examples and integration of different concepts.	Fewer than 2 Science arguments provided. Student is at times able to use vocabulary appropriately. Some facts are incorrect. Student shows limited ability to apply scientific concepts through examples and integration.	Fewer than 2 Science arguments provided. Student rarely uses vocabulary appropriately. Facts are often incorrect. Student struggles to apply scientific concepts through examples and integration.	

Student Handout

	Exemplary	Proficient	Partially Proficient	Developing	Comments
Identifies and Addresses Ethical Dilemma	Student correctly identifies dilemma and clearly explains major viewpoints surrounding debate. Recommendations for policy show thoughtful reasoning incorporating both scientific and ethical ideas.	Student correctly identifies dilemma and can express some understanding of viewpoints. Recommendations for policy show thoughtful reasoning, incorporating both scientific and ethical theories.	Student shows limited understanding of dilemma and viewpoints surrounding debate. Recommendations for policy are poorly connected to scientific and ethical ideas.	Student incorrectly identifies dilemma and has not shown understanding of viewpoints surrounding debate. Recommendations are not clearly connected to scientific and ethical arguments.	
Timeliness and Thoroughness / Grammar and Spelling	Student met all deadlines. Work meets all guidelines. In-class time is always used efficiently and thoughtfully. Evidence also demonstrates much time spent outside of class in writing and improving. No mistakes are made with sentence structure, grammar, and spelling.	Student met all deadlines. Work meets all guidelines. In-class time is often used efficiently and thoughtfully. It is clear that additional time outside of class was spent. Few grammar and spelling errors.	Student met some deadlines. Work meets some guidelines. In-class time is sometimes used efficiently and thoughtfully. Work reflects some time spent outside of class. Few to many grammar and spelling mistakes.	Student did not meet either deadlines. Work meets only a few of the guidelines. In-class time is rarely used efficiently and thoughtfully. Work reflects little time spent outside of class. Many spelling and grammar mistakes.	

Assignment and rubric contributed by Jamie Cooke, Mercer Island High School, Mercer Island, WA

Letter to the Editor Writing Guide

Background

A Letter to the Editor is a short essay that expresses a writer's views on a topic and tries to persuade others to accept or understand that view based on logical arguments. It is an effective way of participating in the dialogue surrounding an issue in the media.

Your Letter to the Editor will provide you a chance to demonstrate your understanding of the issues surrounding the use of animals in research and allow you to present your opinions in a well-reasoned and thoughtful way. Your Letter should build upon the conclusions you come to as a result of completing the Ethical Decision-Making Model.

You will not be graded on your opinion, but rather on how well you support your points and present your case. Your message will be influenced by the vocabulary that you use and by the way your letter is presented, so these will also contribute to your score. Be sure to check your final draft against the checklist for the Letter to the Editor requirements.

Writing the Letter

- 1 Write a single sentence that sums up your position (sometimes called your thesis statement).
This sentence will often contain the words should or should not. Make the statement as specific as possible. Explain what should be done, who should do it, and any other particulars that will clarify your position. If possible, your statement should suggest a particular course of action to address the issue.
2. Identify the basic BIOETHICAL PRINCIPLES involved and describe HOW they relate to your position.
3. Using the information from your Ethical Decision-Making Model, develop reasons that will support your position. How convincing your position is depends largely on the reasons you choose to support it.
 - a. Your Letter to the Editor should have at least THREE reasons, each with its own paragraph.
 - b. Each reason should be clearly DIFFERENT from the other.
 - c. Each reason should RELATE directly to the position statement.
 - d. Each reason should also have some EXAMPLES or EVIDENCE (facts, statistics) behind it.
 - e. Do your reasons:
Help support a good general rule for people to follow in similar situations?
Help support or develop the character traits we value most as individuals?
Respond to the individual needs of those involved and consider relationships among individuals?
Respect the rights and dignity of all involved?
Produce the most good and do the least harm?
- 4 Pick what you believe to be your opponent's strongest arguments and be sure to address each of those opposing reasons with evidence. Counter them in either a separate paragraph or as part of a preceding paragraph.
5. Conclude the letter in a way that ties things together. You may want to end your letter with a suggestion of some kind of action that the reader should take.
6. Consider the Following:
 - a. Put your full name, address, phone number, and email at the top of the letter so that the newspaper can contact you.
 - b. Identify by headline and date of publication any reference to a letter or article published previously.
 - c. Address your opponents' arguments instead of attacking your opponents personally.
 - d. Incorporate personal experience to your letter only if it is relevant.

Letter to the Editor Checklist

IDEAS and REASONING

- Clearly states position.
- Clearly defines Bioethical principle(s) involved.
- Describes relationship of bioethical principle(s) to position.
- Clearly states a minimum of 3 reasons.
- Clearly differentiates each reason from the other.
- Directly relates each reason to the position statement. Each reason is relevant.
- Provides credible examples and evidence for each reason.
- Analyzes and evaluates opponent's position.
- Provides effective closing statement.

LOGIC and ORGANIZATION

- Overall format is similar to the following:
 - Position statement and description of bioethical principles involved.
 - Reason 1 – Evidence/Examples
 - Reason 2 – Evidence/Examples
 - Reason 3 – Evidence/Examples
 - (Opponents' position addressed, either as separate paragraph or part of a preceding one)
 - Closing and/or Call to Action
- Sequence of the writing builds to a high point (has momentum)
- Smooth transitions

WRITING

- Voice: personal voice, aware of audience
- Vocabulary: strong, natural, and avoids repetition and clichés
- Sentence fluency: writing flows, sentence lengths are varied
- Conventions: accurate spelling, grammar, and evidence of proofreading

PRESENTATION

- Appropriate letter format: name and contact information, date, and signature
- Appropriate use of fonts (10 or 12 point, Arial, Helvetica, Times, or similar)
- Standard 1 inch margins
- Presentation enhances the writer's message.

SCORING GUIDE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

<p align="center">5 STRONG Shows control and skill in this trait; many strengths present.</p>	<p align="center">4 COMPETENT Strengths outweigh the weaknesses; a small amount of revision is needed.</p>	<p align="center">3 DEVELOPING Strengths and need for revision are about equal.</p>	<p align="center">2 EMERGING Need for revision outweighs strengths.</p>	<p align="center">1 NOT YET A bare beginning; writer not yet showing any control.</p>	<p align="center">SCORE</p>
<p>Ideas and Reasoning Clearly states position.</p>					<p align="center">____X1 =</p>
<p>Clearly defines Bioethical principle(s) involved.</p>					<p align="center">____X5 =</p>
<p>Clearly states a minimum of 3 reasons. Provides credible examples and evidence for each reason.</p>					<p align="center">____X5 =</p>
<p>Analyzes and evaluates opponent's position.</p>					<p align="center">____X1 =</p>
<p>Directly relates each reason to the position statement. Each reason is relevant. Provides effective closing statement.</p>					<p align="center">____X5 =</p>

<p>Logic and Organization Follows overall suggestion for organization. Effective and logical sequence, good pacing, and smooth transitions. Builds to a high point, has momentum. Sense of resolution.</p>						<p>____X1 =</p>
<p>Sentence Fluency, Word Choice, Voice Natural sentences with a variety of lengths and structures. No run-ons. Strong vocabulary used. Word choice is natural, not forced. Minimal use of repetition, clichés, or abstract language. Awareness of audience Commitment, involvement, and conviction conveyed. Text is lively, personal, and individual.</p>						<p>____X1 =</p>
<p>Conventions and Presentation Accurate spelling, punctuation, capitals, paragraphs, grammar. Readable to a wide audience. Evidence of proofreading. The form and presentation enhance the writer's message. The presentation is consistent with a letter format. Appropriate use of fonts and font sizes, margins, spacing.</p>						<p>____X1 =</p>
<p>TOTAL SCORE</p>						<p>/100</p>

Modified with permission from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Portland, Oregon: 6+1 Traits™ of Analytic Writing