



Socratic Seminar: *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*
Gwen Romero, Wasatch Range Writing Project

Summary:

Students discuss key topics/observations about the work.

Objectives:

- Engage in meaningful discourse.
- Analyze and evaluate multiple perspectives on a work of literature to achieve stronger insights.
- Practice forming and articulating ideas based on textual evidence and personal observations.
- Practice effective listening and speaking skills.

Context:

ELA Grades 6 through 12: RL1, RL6, W1, W9, SL1, SL3, SL4

Materials:

- Pre-Seminar Guide*
- Seminar Response Form*

*In-class, I photocopy these two-sided; online, I upload as one PDF or WordDoc.

I have online/virtual students attend virtually during one of the sections having this discussion (remember to orient camera and microphone so virtual students can interact with peers).

- **In-class:** Pens/pencils.
- **Online/virtual:** Upload template to class platform.

Time Span:

One class session, approximately 45 to 60 minutes.



Procedures:

The day *before* the seminar (last day sharing journal entries/finishing book)

Distribute Pre-Seminar Guide, review with class, and allow time for students to add observations/details.

The day of the seminar

- ➔ Arrange desks into two circles—an inner circle and an outer circle for a large class—or into one circle for a smaller class.
- ➔ For virtual students, I orient the microphone and camera to give them the view of being in the circle.
- Distribute/review the Seminar Response Form.
- **For a large class** (25+), divide the class into 2 groups. Group 1 forms the inner circle and begins the discussion. Group 2 forms the outer circle and observes/takes notes for the first round. **For a smaller class**, one circle usually works better to keep discussion flowing.
- Set expectations:
 1. This is a discussion, not a debate; maintain proper tone even when disagreeing with someone.
 2. Everyone is expected to contribute to the discussion* by initiating a topic, adding an example, clarifying a detail, or adding a perspective.
- Open discussion** with one of the Teacher Topics. Have students discuss and move through topics for approximately one-third of the class time for a large class, then rotate the inner and outer circles for the next third of the class time. For a smaller class, move through topics for two-thirds of the class time.
- The final third of class time is for final thoughts/comments/observations and for students to complete the Evaluation and turn in guides.

*More students naturally participate if they have time before the discussion to note some observations, hence the pre-seminar guide the day before.

**If this is your first Seminar with a class, I recommend joining the circle for the first part to model appropriate comments and responses and to engage students. Then, I turn it over to the students, sometimes with a designated leader to continue the discussion. I monitor the group, especially to make sure everyone is participating and that no one is monopolizing discussion (“Thank you for your insights. We haven’t heard from _____ yet.”)

Follow-up and Extensions:

- (See additional lessons.)
- Mini-research project (cross-curricular)
- T.E.D. style talk (cross-curricular)



Rationale:

Students need to practice articulating their ideas and supporting those ideas with textual evidence. They also develop a deeper understanding of a particular work and the culture/era/people that work depicts when they engage in meaningful discussion with others.

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Your Name:

Socratic Seminar: *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*
Pre-Seminar Guide

Note your thoughts/observations on each of the topics below; include specific details from the book for support.

Teacher Topics

1. What was most surprising/compelling about the middle and the end of the book in comparison to the beginning of the book?

2. Where did you see some essential similarities and differences between yourself/our culture and William Kamkwamba/his culture? Consider the drought situations in each and other aspects.

3. In Kamkwamba's experience, air/wind is both the thing that brought devastation to his people (drought) and that brought hope to them (electricity). How did the book add to your understanding of the relationship between people and nature?

Now note 3 topics for discussion of your own: thoughts, observations, questions that you would like to know what others think. Remember to include specific details from the book for support and to clarify your topic for the class.

Your Topics

- 1.

- 2.

- 3.



Your Name:

Socratic Seminar Response Form: *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*

Complete each section during the seminar. #1 & #2 include comments that you would add.

<p>#1 Notes/observations/thoughts from Round 1.</p>	<p>#2 Notes/observations/thoughts from Round 2.</p>
<p>#3 Additional insights/observations; things that you had not noticed/considered before the discussion.</p>	<p>#4: Evaluation</p> <p>Who did particularly well articulating & supporting his/her thoughts/ideas? How so?</p> <p>What are two skills/techniques that <i>you</i> can work on to be more effective in discussion?</p>