**Into the Wild Socratic Seminar**

**What is a Socratic seminar?**
A Socratic seminar is based on the Socratic method of engaging in respectful patterns of dialogue with others in order to gain a deeper understanding of a text. It is meant to create discussion amongst peers and help students develop higher order thinking skills through discussion, questioning, and efforts to define concepts like truth, justice, and equality.

**Goals:**
- Engage in dialogue, not debate, about abstract concepts from the text
- Disagree respectively and politely with classmates
- Reason collectively and build upon each other’s thoughts and opinions
- Analyze a group discussion

**How does it work?**
You will be given a set of questions that you will research and answer using the specific text *Into the Wild* and your own thoughts and opinions on the topic.

The class will be split into two groups. Each group will participate in what is called the inner circle and the outer circle during the seminar.

*The inner circle*: The students in the inner circle will discuss the text and seminar questions. There will be one empty seat for anyone in the outer circle to come ask a question or add a comment to the discussion. The person must return to the outer circle once they are finished with their comment or question.

*Discussion Group*—Discuss the question(s) and use the text to support your answers. If you do not have a new point to say, it’s okay to summarize, or ask a question, or make a connection with your own life or something else you have read. Build off something that someone else said. If you have spoken a lot, try being silent or ask a question of someone you haven’t heard from.

*The outer circle*: The students in the outer circle will observe students in the inner circle as they discuss. They are engaged in analysis of the discussion itself.

*Observation Group*—Your role is essential. Getting better at discussion requires paying attention to the process. Your feedback will help the discussion get better next time. Each student in the outer circle will be assigned to observe the person directly in front of you in the inner circle. You are primarily an observer, but if you are just dying to say something, you may get up and move to the hot seat in the inner circle. Wait to be recognized, then add your comment and return to your observation seat in the outer circle.

*Facilitator*—The teacher acts as facilitator. But I will not call on students to speak; you call on each other. My task is to take notes on the dialogue, so my head will be down much of the time. Occasionally I will ask you to go around the circle and explore the meaning of something else you have brought up. I may also stop the discussion periodically and ask you to summarize what has been said. At the end of the discussion I will ask you to reflect on how the seminar went.
What do you need to do to prepare?

Before the seminar...
- Research the questions given to you by the teacher
- Create notes on the questions that will help you throughout the discussions
- Organize your thoughts, ideas, and opinions of the questions to guide you through the seminar

During the seminar...
- You do not need to raise your hand to talk
- You must speak AT LEAST 3 times to get full credit for the seminar
  - This must be academic, thought out, meaningful participation. Saying, “Ya I agree.” Will not get you full credit
- Use each other’s names as you speak
- Use “I” statements and messages
  - Example:
    - I disagree because...
    - I believe that...
- Wait until others have spoken before you speak again
- Speak to each other, don’t look at the facilitator
- Invite others to speak
  - Example:
    - Josh what do you think?
    - Damon, I saw your head nod, do you agree with me?
- Ask each other questions and follow up questions
  - Example:
    - Could you explain...
    - What do you think after hearing that?
    - I didn’t hear that, can you repeat it?
- Respect your classmates
- Be open to change your mind and opinion
- Build on other’s ideas
- Use the text to prove your point
- Make connections to your own life
- Listen to one another
- Remember that there may be quiet moments until another idea come up
- There is not one right answer

Observer: Outer Circle
- Write down the names of each person in the inner circle
- Every time someone speaks in the inner circle, put a tally next to their name
- Create feedback for the person in the inner circle who you sat directly behind
- At the end of the seminar, create a T Chart of what went well during the seminar, and what could have bettered the process
Grading Rubric for Seminar:

Symbols and their meaning:
 ✓+ Spoke and cited text
 ✓ Spoke
 0 Invited someone in/raised dialogue to a higher level
 ? Asked a good and relevant question
 - Negative behavior

3=Excellent  2=Good  1=Fair  0=Poor

Quality of contribution
 - 3-Student offers insightful comments that help generate further conversation
 - 2-Student responds in a logical and relevant manner
 - 1-Student offers comments that demonstrate some understanding of text

Ability to express ideas
 - 3-Student expresses and defends their ideas in a clear, concise, and organized manner
 - 2-Student expresses ideas clearly
 - 1-Student expresses ideas but is somewhat disorganized and unclear

Reference to text
 - 3-Student repeatedly cites evidence directly from the text that supports their ideas and opinions
 - 2-Student minimally cites from the text to support their ideas
 - 1-Student refers to the content of the text, but does not cite passages to support ideas

Appropriate response
 - 3-Student listens to other’s and develops their response in a clear, respectful manner
 - 2-Student comments reflect understanding of the text and ideas of others
 - 1-Student is reluctant to relate their comments to those of other students

Level of involvement
 - 3-Student is an active seminar participant whose involvement portrays a true understanding of the text and questions
 - 2-Student actively participates in the seminar
 - 1-Student minimally contributes to the discussions

Total points possible: 15
Socratic Seminar Questions

1. In a letter to Ronald Franz, McCandless wrote, “nothing is more damaging to the adventurous spirit within a man than a secure future. The very basic core of a man’s living spirit is his passion for adventure” (56). What did he mean by this? What Chris right? Why or why not?

2. Why are relationships between parents and their kids so rocky at times? Did Chris treat his family worse than other teenagers treat their parents? Are people greatly affected by their relationships with their parents?

3. One reader of Krakauer’s Outside magazine article claimed that Chris “lacked the requisite humility” to go into the wild and that he “commits big-time hubris” (72). Look up the words humility and hubris in the dictionary. What does the reader mean by saying this? Explain why you agree or disagree with this reader’s comment.

4. Was Chris McCandless’ death a foolish, pointless death? (71)

5. What are your overall impressions of Chris? Was he noble? Was he reckless? Was he selfish? Was he courageous? Was he crazy?

6. Was Chris McCandless a hero?

7. Do you think that companionship is a necessary thing that humans need?

8. Do you think that the American culture has defined what “normal” is and so our perception of Chris McCandless is skewed based on that?

9. Krakauer feared falling into a crevasse, “waiting for death to come, with nobody aware of how or where (he’d) met (his) end” (139). What is it to die alone? How do you think Chris felt in the final moments before his death?

10. How does the story of Chris McCandless and the concepts discussed in the story alter the way you think about your life, about your future, or about the idea of adventure? Has McCandless’ story changed your perception of how you want to live?