Purpose
The purpose of the Socratic Seminar is not to arrive at a "correct" answer or interpretation. Instead, through skillful questioning, knowledge and understanding are constructed by learners themselves as they move between the different levels of Bloom's taxonomy. The Socratic Method involves questions, answers, and reflection, all leading to a deeper understanding.

Benefit
This technique promotes a balanced, open-minded consideration of ideas and issues rather than a debate. Through such a process it also requires them to process through each level of Bloom's taxonomy.

During the assessment process students at all levels learn a significant amount, while demonstrating understanding of concepts taught. The teacher holistically, accurately and effectively assesses student understanding.

Materials
- copies of the handout -- Questions About Questions
- copies of the assignment
- copies of the handout -- Socratic Seminar Tracking Grid and Self-Assessment
- extra cardstock for name plates

Directions
Day 1: (one or two days before the seminar is to be held)
Step 1:
Walk students through the seminar process so that they understand what they're preparing for

Step 2:
Hand out the Questions About Questions sheet and review it with the students (demonstrate some questions)

Step 3:
Explain to the students their assignment and how they are to prepare for the seminar. Hand out the assignment and allow them to start working on it in class. (Help them with their questions as they begin to work.)
Step 4:
Before the bell rings, tell the students that if they do not come prepared to class for the seminar that they will not participate and that there will be another assignment for them (one less desirable).

Day 2:
Seminar Set-up:
Step 1:
Students circle their desks. They bring the following with them: typed essay, blank paper, pen, the text, their name written in big, dark, clear letters on a cardstock nametag that sits facing the rest of the group.

Step 2:
Visit each desk to ensure that the essay is complete and all other supplies are present. Those not prepared are not allowed to participate.

Step 3:
Hand out the student tracking guide and review the direction for the seminar and how to use it.

Step 4:
As the teacher set yourself outside of the circle and do not continue to conversation, but listens and notes student contribution according to assessment goals.

Seminar Execution:
Step 1:
The first question is presented to the group. If a student presents the question they do not contribute until other students have begun discussing.

Step 2:
When Students have contributions to make to the conversation, they jump in. If students begin talking over each other, you as the teach can help maintain order, however students address each other and not the instructor.

Step 3:
The assessment continues with students discussing the question asked. The conversation will naturally flow from one issue to another.

Step 4:
When the question is dead or the discussion turns boring another question is presented for students to discuss.

Step 5:
While students are talking, the teacher is taking shorthand notes about the student's contribution.

Step 6:
End the seminar about 15 minutes before class gets out.
Step 7:
Students briefly answer one teacher-prepared question followed by the two last wrap-up questions: What did you notice about this seminar? What did you notice about your own participation in this seminar?

Step 8:
Collect all typed essays and three wrap-up questions

Assessment
The grading for a Socratic Seminar is holistic. After instructor-set standards are established according to assessment objectives, each student comment is rated. Cumulative ratings are used to assign a final letter grade.

Step 1:
Establish a method of shorthand notation that works for instructor objective

Example: Focus on these four (4) areas:

- **Analysis/Thoughtfulness** - Is the comment original? Does it show analysis of the text? Is the comment "below the surface?"
- **Reference to text** - Do they refer the rest of the group to specific information in the text?
- **Text to self/world/text connections** - Do they accurately apply the concept in question to areas outside of the content area?
- **Reference to others’ comments** - Do they show that they listen to their peers, evaluate their comments, then challenge or build off of them? (“I agree with Sarah” doesn’t count.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Student Name</th>
<th>A-</th>
<th>John Doe</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>Jane Doe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Connections</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>+++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>++V</td>
<td>-V</td>
<td>-V</td>
<td>+++</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 2:
Use +,√, and - to indicate the students degree of competence in any category

Step 3:
When a student has participated to the degree that you can accurately assess them, note a grade for them, then turn your focus to the remaining students. If at the end of the seminar the instructor is still somewhat unsure of student understanding refer to the typed essay they brought with them and their three wrap-up questions. Grading done!
Expansion

The questions used in the seminar can either be produced by the teacher or the students. Also, always have the option of a written test. This is the alternative assignment for the students that do not come to class prepared, but can also be provided to the students who know they will not talk in front of the class.

Attached

copies of the handout -- Questions About Questions
copies of the assignment
copies of the handout -- Socratic Seminar Tracking Grid and Self-Assessment