

## SENTENCE STARTERS

### Prior Knowledge

- I already know that . . .
- This relates to . . .
- This reminds me of . . .

### Asking Questions

- I wonder why . . . ?
- What if . . . ?
- Why is it . . . ?

### Making Connections

- That's like in the book when . . .
- That reminds me of what we studied in history: . . .
- This is similar to when . . .
- I can relate to that because . . .

### Summarizing

- The main idea is . . .
- Everyone seems to think . . .
- The most important points are . . .

### Comparing

- \_\_\_\_\_ is like \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .
- Steinbeck and Obama are saying the same thing: . . .
- Steinbeck and Obama agree that \_\_\_\_\_ but I think \_\_\_\_\_ would not agree about \_\_\_\_\_, because . . .

### Clarifying/Revising

- What I mean is . . .
- Another way of saying this is . . .
- I didn't mean to imply \_\_\_\_\_ but . . .
- At first I thought \_\_\_\_\_ but then I realized \_\_\_\_\_ and now think . . .

### Reflecting and Relating

- In the end, I believe . . .
- I first thought \_\_\_\_\_ but now think \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .
- While I realize \_\_\_\_\_ I think \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .
- This is relevant to my life because . . .
- My conclusion at this point is that . . .

## Of Mice and Men Online Socratic Seminar: Am I My Brother's Keeper?

*Overview:* We have finished reading *Of Mice and Men* and will use this week to bring the inquiry (and the semester!) to a close. Instead of writing a paper or giving presentations, which we don't have time to do well, I thought we would combine writing and discussion by having a Socratic

Seminar online. In short, a Socratic Seminar asks students to consider a subject from different perspectives, asking questions that help them and their classmates to clarify and extend their thinking about the subject they are studying.

### Objectives

My intention is to use the discussion to:

- Learn how to post written responses to an online blog
- Consider a question from several different perspectives
- Pose questions to other students, the text, and the author that lead to new and deeper thinking about the subject
- Elaborate on your thinking through written discussion
- Make connections to the text, yourself, other texts, and the world
- Provide support for your ideas from the text or other reliable sources

### Grading

- Your grade on this assignment will be based on the quality of your participation in class and online, as well as the quality of your work as spelled out in the Objectives section above. This is equivalent to a major assignment, so do your very best.

### Step One

- Log on to the blog: <http://mrburkesfreshmen.blogspot.com>.
- Read the directions, including Barack Obama's remarks.
- Post a response to Obama's ideas and the question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" As part of your response, you need to connect these ideas to *Of Mice and Men* somehow, using examples from the text to develop and support your ideas. This should be a thoughtful, well-developed response, not just a couple of dashed-off sentences.

### Step Two

- Read most of the other responses from your classmates on the blog.
- Post *two questions* in response to other people's posts. These questions should invite people to clarify or defend their ideas. For example, you might ask, "What if everyone did what you suggest? What would be the effect of that?" or you might ask, "How would you relate that to George's relationship with Lennie?"

### Step Three

- *Respond* to at least *two* questions or postings.
- Your responses should be well developed. Use some of the sentence starters in the margin to help you get started if you are stuck.

### Step Four

- Read through most of the responses, jotting down notes about big and common ideas that appear throughout the different comments.
- Write a final commentary that ties together your own thoughts and those of others, but also adds one last idea, perhaps your final thought about this subject of "my brother's keeper."
- Include in this last comment new ideas or opinions you have about this subject and what led you to these new thoughts.