

Grade 8: Unit 7

Freakonomics: Whole Class Book Seminars

Seminar 2: Whole Class Book

What Does Success Look Like?

Scholar analyze the authors' argument that "cheating is a primordial economic act" (page 21). They examine the power of incentives and economic motivations for cheating.

Seminar 2: *Freakonomics*: Chapter 1 (pages 15–50)

Do Now — 10 minutes

- Play classical or jazz music to establish a calm work environment.
- Scholars revise their Exit Tickets from yesterday's seminar based on the feedback you gave them.

Launch — 2 minutes

- Review the big ideas from the at-home reading by having scholars quickly discuss the following question: What do the authors mean by "the hidden side of everything" (page 13)? Then build excitement for today's close reading and discussion.

Read and Discuss 1 — 20 minutes

Read:

- **Read Aloud (10 minutes):** Chapter 1, pages 15–22 (end at the line break “... coaching duties”)

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: Why did the fine implemented by the Israeli day-care center backfire? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: What does the Chicago study reveal about the power of incentives?

Read and Discuss 2 — 20 minutes

Independent Reading (15 minutes):

- Chapter 1, pages 22–50 (start at the line break)

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: How does the account of Feldman and his bagel business support the authors’ argument? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: Based on Chapter 1, what factors does an economist consider when creating an effective incentive scheme?

Exit Ticket — 8 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- According to Levitt and Dubner, why do people behave dishonestly? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Homework

- Read *Freakonomics*, Chapter 2 (pages 51–83).

Seminar 3: Whole Class Book

What Does Success Look Like?

Scholars analyze the authors’ argument about “the raw power of information” (page 62). They examine how individuals, including real estate agents and KKK members, use information to their advantage.

Seminar 3: *Freakonomics*: Chapter 2 (pages 51–83)

Do Now — 10 minutes

- Play classical or jazz music to establish a calm work environment.
- Scholars revise their Exit Tickets from yesterday's seminar based on the feedback you gave them.

Launch — 2 minutes

- Review the big ideas from the at-home reading by having scholars quickly discuss the following question: How has the Internet impacted "information asymmetry" (page 64)? Then build excitement for today's close reading and discussion.

Close Read — 20 minutes

Read:

- **Play Audiobook (Chapter 3, 16:05–22:19):** Chapter 2, pages 59–62 (start at "Kennedy was supremely frustrated ..." and stop at the line break "... advantage disappears")

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: Why was Kennedy's radio campaign his most effective tactic in fighting the KKK? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: What does this story reveal about the power of information?

Discuss — 20 minutes

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: How do real estate agents use information asymmetry? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- Scholars discuss the following questions as a whole class: Why did the authors include the data on common real estate ad terms? To what extent did discrimination influence voting on *The Weakest Link*?
- Extension: What is the connection between real estate ads and dating profiles?

Exit Ticket — 8 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- According to the authors, how is the Ku Klux Klan like a group of real estate agents? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Homework

- Read *Freakonomics*, Chapter 3 (pages 85–113).

Seminar 4: Whole Class Book

What Does Success Look Like?

Scholars use the authors' case study on drug dealers to explain how conventional wisdom is created and why it can be so hard to budge.

Seminar 4: *Freakonomics*: Chapter 3 (pages 85–113)

Do Now — 10 minutes

- Play classical or jazz music to establish a calm work environment.
- Scholars revise their Exit Tickets from yesterday's seminar based on the feedback you gave them.

Launch — 2 minutes

- Review the big ideas from the at-home reading by having scholars quickly discuss the following question: How are gang members in the Black Disciples like “burger flippers” at McDonald's (page 100)? Then build excitement for today's close reading and discussion.

Close Read — 20 minutes

Read:

- **Read Aloud (10 minutes):** Chapter 3, pages 85–89 (stop at the line break “... secrets of their trade”)

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: How does information become “conventional wisdom” (page 86)? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: What are some recent examples of conventional wisdom that are present in the media?

Discuss — 20 minutes

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: According to the case study, how does the reality of crack dealing differ from its portrayal in the media? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- Scholars discuss the following questions as a whole class: What were the overall findings of Venkatesh's study? Statistically, most drug dealers actually do live at home with their mothers: What are the reasons for this? Why are incentives important in maintaining gang membership?
- If scholars nailed the previous questions, ask: Why is conventional wisdom a powerful tool for advertisers?

Exit Ticket — 8 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- Why is conventional wisdom so hard to budge? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Homework

- Read *Freakonomics*, Chapter 4 (pages 115–129).

Seminar 5: Whole Class Book

What Does Success Look Like?

Scholars begin analyzing the authors' explanation for the drop in the American crime rate in the 1990s. They explain how the authors use economics to debunk a series of false explanations for this phenomenon.

Seminar 5: *Freakonomics*: Chapter 4 (pages 115–129)

Do Now — 10 minutes

- Play classical or jazz music to establish a calm work environment.
- Scholars revise their Exit Tickets from yesterday's seminar based on the feedback you gave them.

Launch — 2 minutes

- Review the big ideas from the at-home reading by having scholars quickly discuss the following question: To what extent did Bill Bratton affect the crime rate in New York City? Then build excitement for today's close reading and discussion.

Close Read — 20 minutes

Read:

- **Play Audiobook (Chapter 5, 00:00–08:54):** Chapter 4, pages 115–119 (stop at the line break "... newspaper mention")

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: What were the implications of Nicolae Ceausescu's abortion ban in Romania? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: Why did the authors include this story?

Discuss — 20 minutes

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: What influenced the popular opinion on the drop in crime? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- Scholars discuss the following questions as a whole class: How did the economy affect the crime rate? How did increased reliance on prisons affect the crime rate? How did innovative policing strategies affect the crime rate?
- If scholars nailed the previous questions, ask: Why are “innovative policing strategies” the most frequently cited explanation for the drop in crime?

Exit Ticket — 8 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- How does Levitt debunk, or disprove, false explanations for the drop in crime? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Homework

- Read *Freakonomics*, Chapter 4 (pages 129–145).

Seminar 6: Whole Class Book

What Does Success Look Like?

Scholars continue analyzing the authors’ explanation for the unanticipated drop in crime in the United States in the 1990s. They explain the authors’ claim that legalized abortion caused the decline.

Seminar 6: *Freakonomics*: Chapter 4 (pages 129–145)

Do Now — 10 minutes

- Play classical or jazz music to establish a calm work environment.
- Scholars revise their Exit Tickets from yesterday’s seminar based on the feedback you gave them.

Launch — 2 minutes

- Review the big ideas from the at-home reading by having scholars quickly discuss the following question: To what extent did tougher gun laws affect the crime rate in the 1990s? Then build excitement for today’s close reading and discussion.

Close Read — 20 minutes

Read:

- **Read Aloud (10 minutes):** Chapter 4, pages 129–133

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: How did new gun initiatives affect the crime rate? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: Why is Lott's hypothesis on guns intriguing?

Discuss — 20 minutes

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: How do changes in demographics impact crime rates? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- Scholars discuss the following questions as a whole class: What is the significance of the Supreme Court's ruling in *Roe v. Wade*? How do the authors connect the abortion issue in Romania with the crime rate in America? How did Levitt test the effect of abortion on crime?
- If scholars nailed the previous questions, ask: Why wasn't the abortion-crime link proposed earlier?

Exit Ticket — 8 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- Why did legalized abortion lead to less crime? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Homework

- Read *Freakonomics*, Chapter 5 (pages 147–179).

Seminar 7: Whole Class Book

What Does Success Look Like?

Scholars evaluate common myths about parenting and children's achievement. They examine the authors' perspective on how parenting influences kids' outcomes.

Seminar 7: *Freakonomics*: Chapter 5 (pages 147–179)

Do Now — 10 minutes

- Play classical or jazz music to establish a calm work environment.
- Scholars revise their Exit Tickets from yesterday's seminar based on the feedback you gave them.

Launch — 2 minutes

- Review the big ideas from the at-home reading by having scholars quickly discuss the following question: How has school choice helped our understanding of the gaps in test

performance between black and white children? Then build excitement for today's close reading and discussion.

Close Read — 20 minutes

Read:

- **Play Audiobook (Chapter 6, 30:13–41:34):** Chapter 5, pages 162–168 (stop after "... and in comparable schools")

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: Why do the authors claim that "the bad-school/good-school gap" is more significant than the "black-white test score gap" (167)? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: Why is the data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study particularly rich?

Discuss — 20 minutes

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: Why do parents believe "parenting experts"? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- Scholars discuss the following questions as a whole class: Why was Judith Rich Harris's book considered a "bombshell" (page 155)? Why is the CPS lottery "a wonderful means of measuring just how much school choice — or, really, a better school — truly matters" (page 159)? What did the CPS data reveal? According to the authors, why does it matter that "the child has many books in his home" while it doesn't matter that "the child's parents read to him nearly every day" (page 175)?
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: Why is the question of how much parents matter "terribly complicated" (page 156)?

Exit Ticket — 8 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- According to the authors, how does parenting influence kids' outcomes? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Homework

- Read *Freakonomics*, Chapter 6 and Epilogue (pages 181–211).

Seminar 8: Whole Class Book

What Does Success Look Like?

Scholars evaluate how race and socioeconomic status impact the names that parents choose for their children. Scholars analyze connections between names and life outcomes.

Seminar 8: *Freakonomics*: Chapter 6 and Epilogue (pages 181–211)

Do Now — 10 minutes

- Play classical or jazz music to establish a calm work environment.
- Scholars revise their Exit Tickets from yesterday's seminar based on the feedback you gave them.

Launch — 2 minutes

- Review the big ideas from the at-home reading by having scholars quickly discuss the following question: What influence does socioeconomic status have on names? Then build excitement for today's close reading and discussion.

Close Read — 20 minutes

Read:

- **Read Aloud (10 minutes):** Chapter 6, pages 186–190

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: According to the authors, why do some parents give their children distinctively “black” or “white” names? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: What are the implications of having a “very white name or a very black name” (page 189)?

Discuss — 20 minutes

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: Why did the authors include the anecdotes about Winner, Loser, Temptress, and Amcher? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- Scholars discuss the following questions as a whole class: Why will a boy named Jake typically grow up to make more money and gain more education than a boy named DeShawn? What is behind the claim that the name DeShawn “is an indicator — not a cause” of a particular outcome (page 192)? According to the California names data, how does socioeconomic status impact the names that parents give their children?
- If scholars nailed the previous questions, ask: How does a name migrate through a population?

Exit Ticket — 8 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- Based on Chapter 6, how are names related to life outcomes? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.