

Puzzles, not Pieces: Topic Selection (Day 1 of 5)

Summary

This is Day 1 of a 5 day unit teaching students strong research skills for a "white paper" style research paper (can be modified for any pro-con research assignment).

For the purpose of this assignment, the white paper is an argumentative piece which introduces a problem and argues a solution to that problem. In this team-taught lesson, students will begin the research process for their white paper. Beginning with an introduction-to-learning activity involving "Kairos" (explanation in Instructional Procedures), students will learn about timeliness of topics. After which, they will begin to explore possible topics while learning how even simple topics have more than just two "sides," and how many different points of view can be developed for any problem. For the purpose of this assignment, the white paper is an argumentative piece which introduces a problem and argues a solution to that problem.

In this team--taught unit of 5 lessons, students will learn that researching is not a linear process. They will use "pre-search" to help them test, adjust, or even abandon viable topics from their brainstorming. They will learn to narrow ideas to smaller, researchable concepts.

Main Core Tie

Secondary Library Media (6-12)

[Strand 2: Standard 1:](#)

Time Frame

1 class periods of 90 minutes each

Group Size

Large Groups

Life Skills

Thinking & Reasoning

Materials

This lesson requires computers or tablets for students to access UEN library resources. Librarian Teachers should have a computer and projector as well.

Background for Teachers

Kairos and other supplementary materials attached

Student Prior Knowledge

This unit follows an argumentative writing unit in which students will learn how to use claims and reasons to argue ideas. They will understand how audience awareness changes writing tone, style, and diction. Additionally, this unit follows an introductory lesson on White Papers to help students better understand the genre, as well as begin some basic topic brainstorming.

Intended Learning Outcomes

After being introduced to Kairos and experimenting with opposing viewpoints, students will demonstrate their understanding of strong topic selection by brainstorming a variety of potential research topics.

Students will be informally assessed at the beginning of the following class period via presenting and giving feedback on top potential topics.

Instructional Procedures

| Pacing | Instructional Sequence | Grouping Structure |
|------------|--|---|
| g | <p>Anticipatory Set:</p> <p>Provide students with the attached starter. Students will read about the “white & gold or blue & black” dress (or use any topic that was current, but is now dead) and guess where the different events fall on the provided lifecycle.</p> <p>This sheet should not be graded, and students can correct their work to use as notes later.</p> | |
| 5 - 10 | <p>Possible (accessible, fun) topics to discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Black and blue dress - Kony 2012 - Adele “Hello” - “The Day Beyonce turned Black” - Brexit (Google search) - Kanye/Kardashians - T Swift <p>Kairos and Lifecycle:</p> <p>Every topic goes through a lifecycle: birth, growth, maturity, plateau, decline, and death.</p> <p>Discuss how maturity is usually a better time to discuss a topic than plateau. Explain that it’s hard to get a word in edgewise when a topic is at plateau.</p> | Individual |
| 10 - 15 | <p>Use the white and gold dress to discuss what it’s like talking about a topic that’s already dead. Talk about considering purpose in conjunction with timeliness. If an topic is on decline, how should your purpose be different than if the topic were just reaching maturity?</p> <p>Review how purpose affects audience (from previous unit). If our purpose changes with the topic’s life cycle, how does that affect who are audience is?</p> | Lecture (teacher) |
| 5 - 8 | <p>Class Practice:</p> <p>Have students brainstorm issues that are at different points in the lifecycle to check their understanding</p> <p>Topic Exploration and Points of View:</p> | Whole group |
| 20 - 40 | <p>Students will be introduced to Gale Opposing Viewpoints and how to browse issues. Each pair is given an topic with a short explanation. First students will be asked to write their stance on the topic. Students are then given ten minutes to explore the topic -- finding at least three different perspectives. Give students a chance to share if they found anything that surprises them.</p> | Small Group (Librarian) |
| 10 - 15 | <p>Brainstorming:</p> <p>Provide students with a copy of the attached brainstorming worksheet.</p> <p>Both the Librarian and Teacher will walk around and aid students as they work on topic ideas.</p> | Individual (students may discuss ideas with neighbors as long as they stay on task) |
| 2 - 3 | <p>Wrap up Homework:</p> <p>Tell students they need to be prepared next time with their 3 favorite</p> | |

potential topics. Consider calling on students with strong/interesting/unique topic ideas to share with the class.

Extensions

At the beginning of the following period, students will participate in topic feedback "speed dating." Students will demonstrate their knowledge of topics and points of view by giving feedback to other students. The teacher and librarian will walk around during this time and listen to students' conversations to gauge learning.

Bibliography

Reviewed By Sarah Herron

Authors

[Catherine Bates](#)

[SARAH HERRON](#)

[Michelle Miles](#)