

Brainstorming Topic Ideas

Lesson #13

Focus Question: What personal or societal issues do you think would be interesting topics for a documentary video?

Objectives:

- Students will recognize societal and personal issues that are of interest and importance to them.
- Students will be able to use critical thinking, analysis, and prioritizing skills in order to brainstorm documentary topics.

Materials /Equipment:

- Newsprint and Markers

Preparation for Lesson:

VIEW “BRAINSTORMING TOPIC IDEAS” ON THE TEACHER DVD (3 MIN)



Notice how the teacher structures and facilitates the student brainstorming process whereby they generate a diverse list of topics that are of immediate relevance to them. She refrains from valuing particular topics over others. This process ensures that students will be invested in the selected topic and sets the stage for a sense of ownership over the final production. Later in the lesson, all students are actively engaged in another brainstorming process, this time thinking and writing about select topics through a graffiti board activity. This process enables students to have simultaneous written dialogues in a way that would not be possible with a full class discussion.

Warm Up:

JOURNAL ENTRY: WHAT ISSUES CONCERN YOU? (5 MIN)

Respond to the following questions:

*What issues or are of greatest concern to you right now?
(Issues might include things that affect people your age, societal issues, world issues, etc.)*

What issues or topics do you want to know more about?

What do you think other people would be interested in learning about?

Lesson:

1. BRAINSTORM TOPICS (15-20 MIN)

- Explain to students that they will be choosing one topic for their group documentary.
- Ask students to read over their lists and underline three issues they feel are the most important and/or most interesting.
- To create a combined list on newsprint or blackboard of possible documentary topics, have students share their top three issues with the entire class.
- Let students look at the ideas for a few moments silently to get a sense of what was brainstormed, and to see if all suggested topics are clear.
- Students may then ask their classmates for clarification regarding any issues written on the newsprint. (Remember, their goal is to understand each issue, not to critique what other students have suggested). Some of the topics might need to be rephrased, expanded or condensed.

In this lesson students will begin the process of choosing the topic for their group documentary. Depending on the time frame and goals of your project, you may choose either to allow students to brainstorm all potential topics or you might provide them with an overarching theme. It is essential that students do most of the brainstorming so that the project is student-centered and they feel invested in the project. Even if your goal is to have the students produce a documentary about a specific topic, make sure they develop their own focus or perspective on that topic.

Students should only be writing, not talking, during the Graffiti Board activity. Encourage them to dialogue with each other through writing, responding to each other's notes with additional comments or questions on the newsprint. This means that a student should go back to the same board several times during this activity.

If you have additional time for this project, you can spend the next one or more sessions having students conduct street interviews using several of the potential topics. This will allow them to gauge public opinion and interest in the topics and give them practice for future street interviews. If you decide to do this, skip ahead to the *Street Interview* set of lessons.

Lesson 13 Meets Standards:

Language Arts
NYS Standard 1

NCTE Standard 3
NCTE Standard 8
NCTE Standard 11
NCTE Standard 12

Technology
NETS Standard 5

- Combine related points if necessary and read through the entire list.
- To narrow the class list down to three or four topics by asking students to vote once for the topic they are most interested in pursuing.
- At this point you may decide to have students research the potential topics on the Internet (as seen in the video clip). This will provide them with more information for the following activity.

2. GRAFFITI BOARD TOPIC DEVELOPMENT (20-25 MIN)

- As in the video clip, engage students in the lesson by asking a few of them to write the top topics at the top of separate sheets of newsprint (one topic per sheet) and hang them around the room with enough space in between so that they can cluster around each sheet without crowding.
- Give each student a marker and ask them to move around the classroom and write their response on each newsprint to any or all of the following four questions for the topics posted:

Why would this topic make a good documentary?

What questions would you like this documentary to answer?

Who would you interview for this documentary?

What do you want the documentary to be about?

Share (5 min):

Bring the class back together and ask for volunteers to read aloud the various postings on each of the graffiti sheets. Ask students who they think might be interested in watching a documentary on these topics.

Journal:

Of the topics we selected, which one are you most interested in pursuing for the documentary? Why do you think this would make a good documentary? How have your topic ideas changed during this class?