

Real Life Information Gathering- a “Little Scientist”
Lesson Plan
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Genre/Activity Questions: When we think of ourselves as “writing researchers,” this often means shifting our idea of research beyond the collection of secondary source information. How do we collect information or data in other situations and how can these be applied to the concept of writing research?

Scaffolding: The name for this activity comes from a former student of mine, who was shocked to discover that books from the library and google searches were not a part of our research until very far into the unit. She said she felt like a little scientist, discovering information for herself, and so I called the activity I did with class to talk about real world research by the name she gave. Thus, this activity is useful in talking about research as a real world activity of finding out information, something students do each day.

Considerations: This activity takes at least 120 minutes and thus is likely a two day activity.

Objective: Identify types of primary research, including interviewing and gathering empirical evidence. Consider analysis of texts as a research avenue, identifying how and why use of popular texts could be appropriate resources.

Homework Due Today (note, not needed for activity): Project Planning—Describe your project plans at length, organizing your ideas and presenting them in a document that utilizes formatting for ease of reading (as is important in the “proposal” genre. Provide detail about the following: 1) exactly what you’ll produce and why you’ve chosen this genre; 2) what topic you’ll explore and why it is socially/personally significant; 3) what tools and technology you’ll need to create the project; 4) what research you plan to do (being as specific as possible in terms of what kinds of sources you plan to use, as well as any you’ve already collected); 5) the context of your genre (considering the questions in the genres in context handout. **Please bring a paper copy of this assignment to class.**

Method

Part I: First Person Research (30 min)

- Each person decides on something about which they are an expert and writes it on an index card. Then they switch the card with someone. (5 min)
- The students create a “mini-interview” ... five questions about that topic. (5 min)
- Students then take turns asking the questions and answering them (10 min per person)

Part II: Primary Text Analysis (20 min)

- Then, continuing as pairs, decide on six “primary texts” that are relate to each of these two topics. (10 min)
 - First, find three pop culture texts (movies, books, television, plays) that would be relevant to each topics.
 - Second, find three genres that you would want to analyze in order to successfully understand the topic.
 - Share (if time permits)!

Part III: Real World Research (30-45 min)

- Ask students to get in 4-5 groups, then decide on a problem they face in everyday life... something fun like “should I buy a nook or a kindle” or “if I want to take a roller coaster road trip, what cities should I visit” or “what tastefully yet cute Halloween costume could I choose if I want to be a Disney character”
- Groups then switch topics with each other, so each group is looking at a problem they did not devise.
- Students then have 20 minutes (or longer if time permits) to find a solution to that problem online... doing some “real world” research. They then have 2-3 minutes to present the solution to the class. They must also keep a log of each step in the process, including what the searched, what they found, where that led them, etc.
- Spend some time discussing these in terms of how the information was gathered and how this constitutes “research.”

Final Discussion: Take some time to discuss all three kinds of research that were done here, how they relate, how they differ from expected, etc.