

Gallery Walk Teaching Strategy

Rationale

During a Gallery Walk, students explore multiple texts or images that are placed around the room. Teachers often use this strategy as a way to have students examine multiple historical documents. Because this strategy requires students to physically move around the room, it can be especially engaging to kinesthetic learners.

Procedure

Step one: Select sources

Select the sources (e.g. excerpts, images, documents, and/or student work) you will be using for the gallery walk. You could also have students, individually or in small groups, select the sources for the gallery walk.

Step two: Organize sources around the classroom

Texts should be displayed “gallery-style” - in a way that allows students to disperse themselves around the room, with several students clustering around a particular source. Sources can be hung on walls or placed on tables. The most important factor is that the sources are spread far enough apart to reduce significant crowding.

Step three: Instruct students on how to walk through the gallery

Viewing instructions will depend on your goals for the activity. If the purpose of the gallery walk is to introduce students to new material, you might want them to take informal notes as they walk around the room. If the purpose of the gallery walk is for students to take away particular information, utilize a graphic organizer like the Library of Congress Analysis Tool for students to complete as they view the “exhibit” that is on display. Students can take a gallery walk on their own or with a partner. You can also have them travel in small groups, announcing when groups should move to the next piece in the exhibit. Students should be encouraged to disperse themselves around the room. When too many students cluster around one source, it not only makes it difficult for students to view the source, but it also increases the likelihood of off-task behavior.

Minimum standards met by this strategy:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-12.1 Key Ideas and Details: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources (connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole, 11-12th).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-12.2 Key Ideas and Details: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text (and makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas, 11-12th).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-12.6 Craft and Structure: Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (6-8th). Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts (9-10th). Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence (11-12th).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-12.9 Research to Build and Present Knowledge: Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6-12.1 Comprehension and Collaboration: Engage (initiate and participate, 9-12th) effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6-12 topics and texts (and issues, 9-12th), building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly (and persuasively, 9-12th).

IL State Standard

- 16. A- Apply the skills of historical analysis and interpretation.
- 16. B- Understand the development of significant political events.

Variations

Pass Back Analysis

As suggested by a TPS High School Teacher, Gregory Vaughn, a Pass Back Analysis allows students to “group” by rows and “passing back” the source after analysis rather than having students physically move to another source. This strategy allows students to build on the analysis and thinking with their peers without moving around the classroom. This modification is helpful when a teacher faces physical space constraints of a classroom.

Bell Ringer Analysis

Do you teach two or more sections of the same class and have a tough time adding in an analysis exercise for every unit? A TPS Middle School Teacher, Keith Kinder, suggests having each class add a layer of observations, reflections and questions about a primary source(s) as a bell ringer activity. On the next day, each class can read all student responses made from each section of a class to kick off a discussion on the topic/theme under study.

Consider a strategy that allows students to collaborate and think deeply but without speaking.

Big Paper - Building a Silent Conversation

Rationale

This discussion strategy uses writing and silence as tools to help students explore a topic in-depth. Having a written conversation with peers slows down students' thinking process and gives them an opportunity to focus on the views of others. This strategy also creates a visual record of students' thoughts and questions that can be referred to later in a course. Using the Big Paper strategy can help engage shy students who are not as likely to participate in a verbal discussion. After using this strategy several times, students' comfort, confidence, and skill with this method increases.

Procedure

Step one: Preparation

First, you will need to select the primary sources that students will respond to. Groups can be given the same source for discussion, but more often they are given different sources related to the same theme. This activity works best when students are working in pairs or triads. Make sure that all students have a pen or marker. Some teachers have students use different colored markers to make it easier to see the back-and-forth flow of a conversation. Each group also needs a “big paper” (typically a sheet of poster paper) that can fit a written conversation and added comments. In the middle of the page, tape the primary source that will be used to spark the students' discussion.

Step two: The Importance of Silence

Inform the class that this activity will be completed in silence. All communication is done in writing. Students should be told that they will have time to speak in pairs and in the large groups later. Go over all of the instructions at the beginning so that they do not ask questions during the activity. Also, before the activity starts, the teacher should ask students if they have questions, to minimize the chance that students will interrupt the silence once it has begun. You can also remind students of their task as they begin each new step.

Step three: Comment on Your Big Paper

Each group receives a Big Paper and each student a marker or pen. The groups read the primary source in silence to notice observations, reflections and questions. After students have read, they are to comment on the source, and ask questions of each other in writing on the Big Paper. The written conversation must relate to the primary source. If someone in the group writes a question, another member of the group should address the question by writing on the big paper. Students can draw lines connecting a comment to a particular question. Make sure students know that more than one of them can write on the big paper at the same time. The teacher can determine the length of this step, but it should be at least 15 minutes.

Step four: Comment on Other Big Papers

Still working in silence, the students leave their partner and walk around reading the other Big Papers. Students bring their marker or pen with them and can write comments or further questions for thought on other Big Papers. Again, the teacher can determine the length of time for this step based on the number of Big Papers and his/her knowledge of the students.

Step five: Return to Your Own Big Paper

Silence is broken. The pairs rejoin back at their own Big Paper. They should look at any comments written by others. Now they can have a free, verbal conversation about the text, their own comments, what they read on other papers, and comments their fellow students wrote back to them. At this point, you might ask students to take out their journals and identify a question or comment that stands out to them at this moment.

Step six: Class Discussion

Finally, debrief the process with the large group. The conversation can begin with a simple prompt such as, "What did you learn from doing this activity?" This is the time to delve deeper into the content and use ideas on the Big Papers to bring out the students' thoughts. The discussion can also touch upon the importance and difficulty of staying silent and the level of comfort with this activity.

Resource:

Gallery Walk and Big Paper Strategies were influenced by and modified from:
Facing History and Ourselves, Educator Resources- Teaching Strategies,
<https://www.facinghistory.org/for-educators/educator-resources/teaching-strategies/>

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