

## **Using the Internet to Stimulate Higher Order Thinking: Enter the Web Quest**

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### **\*\*What's All the Hype?\*\***

It seems as if educators are striving to get an Internet connection in their classroom these days. The most common rationale for this movement is to provide students passive access to valuable information. Traditionally, most schools have used libraries as a main source of access and still do.

More recently, schools have discovered the Internet as a source which obviously breaks away from traditionalism. The question remains: Does digital/electronic access to information make a difference in fostering higher order thinking?

### **\*\*Information as Interactive: The Quest for Knowledge\*\***

The Internet, unlike any other medium before it, is interactive and accessible to a great deal of people at once. It has the ability to provide endless amounts of information that can be used to motivate students to conduct investigations on any given topic. As an interactive tool for learning, teachers can use the Internet to stimulate creative thought and guide students to develop critical thinking in their "quest" for knowledge. But, how does a teacher tame the nature of the Internet to provide his/her students with a

beneficial learning environment?

### **\*\*The Nature of a Web Quest\*\***

One model approach for this dilemma is called a Web Quest developed in 1995 by Bernie Dodge of San Diego State University. Simply put, a Web Quest is an inquiry-based activity where students are given a task and provided with access to on-line resources to help them complete the task. It is an ideal way to deliver a lesson over the web. Web Quests are discovery learning tools; they are usually used to either begin or finish a unit of study.

When creating a Web Quest, it is beneficial to be able to make your own web pages. But, it is not necessary. Teachers have delivered fantastic Web Quests in hard copy format.

Over the last five years, the TeAch-nology.com staff has seen a great deal of Web Quests. Some are good, some are great, and some are not worth the time it takes to download. In this tutorial, we will examine the use of Web Quests and qualities of effective Web Quests.

### **\*\*Six Reasons Teachers To Use Web Quests:\*\***

1. To begin a unit as an anticipatory set (as per Madeline Hunter);
2. To conclude a unit as a summation;
3. As a collaborative activity in which students create a product (fostering cooperative learning);
4. To teach students how to be independent thinkers since most of the problems encountered in a Web Quest are real-world problems;

5. To increase competency in the use of technology; and
6. As a motivational technique to keep students on task. However, if it proves to be an inefficient method of learning for your particular students (for whatever reasons), don't use it!

### **\*\*Qualities of Effective Web Quests\*\***

The Beauty of Web Quests are their flexibility since they can be anything to anyone. This makes it hard to identify a typically effective Web Quest. Nonetheless, we have found that Web Quests that promote learning typically have 6 common attributes.

#### *1. Introduction:*

The introduction is a means of providing the students with background information that is intended to be a springboard for them to begin the process of inquiry. One way is to present a simulation that leads students to develop a product/service, evaluate a time period, give advice on a given issue, manage a business situation, engage in a debate, or tackle one of life's challenges.

#### *2. Task:*

Formulating challenging questions is the difficult part of developing an effective Web Quest. In most cases, a single question is posed that requires students to analyze a vast array of information. For example, "Compare the leadership styles of George Washington and George Bush," or "You just made a revolutionary invention, what steps would you take to insure that no one can steal your ideas for profit?"

#### *3. Process:*

In this section, the teacher leads the student through the task. The teacher offers advice on how to manage time, collect data, and provides strategies for working in group situations. Teachers sometimes label this section: learning objectives or advice. In some cases the section is replaced with a complete time line for the project.

#### *4. Resources:*

Students are provided with tools (usually web sites), or leads to tools that can help them complete the task. In order for this to be valuable, a teacher must thoroughly review each source. When deciding on sources consider the following: a. Only list sites that support the proper view for which you are aiming. For every site that explains how helpful the rain forest is, there are two sites to explain how bad it is. b. Make sure all the sites you choose are appropriate and do not link to any inappropriate sites. c. Make sure the source is credible. Anybody can create a web page. Try to use a commercial (.com), non-profit (.org), or educational organization (.edu) site. These sites have something to lose by providing you with poor content. d. Make sure the site is up to date.

#### *5. Evaluation:*

The outcome for Web Quests is usually a product, in most cases, in form of a written/oral report or multimedia presentation. An effective assessment tool to evaluate a product of a Web Quest is a rubric. Rubrics help make the teacher's expectations clear for students. Ideally, rubrics can be created collaboratively with students' input.

#### *6. Conclusion:*

Effective Web Quests have a built in mechanism for student reflections. To receive feedback, you can survey your students

about their experience, or have the students send you an e-mail sharing their thoughts.

**\*\*Where to find Web Quests:\*\***

For TeAch-nology.com's in-depth review of available Web Quest resources on the Internet go to this address:

[http://www.teach-nology.com/teachers/lesson\\_plans/computing/web\\_quests/](http://www.teach-nology.com/teachers/lesson_plans/computing/web_quests/)

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