Blogging With Photovoice: Sharing Pictures in an Integrated Classroom

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Grade Band: 9-12
Estimated Lesson Time: Five 50-minute sessions

Overview
Photovoice is a technique that has participants take photos in response to a prompt, reflect on the meaning behind three of their photos, and share the photos to find common themes. It is an ideal strategy for all forms of classrooms, from those with only severely learning disabled and cognitively impaired students to integrated classes. In this lesson, students are given a prompt, take photographs in response to it, post reflections on a blog, and search for commonalties while relating the pictures back to characters in texts they have read. It can be used as a prewriting activity for essays or other assignments.

Student Objectives
Students will
- Connect their own experiences to various texts using both images and words
- Increase knowledge and real-world technical skills by using blogging technology to post images, thoughts, and reflections
- Explore an abstract concept visually by taking pictures that represent it
- Analyze their own images by determining which pictures best represent the abstract concept and writing about their choices
- Analyze the work of their peers by posting responses to a blog that make connections between the photos
- Connect the photos they have taken and reflected on to characters in texts they have read as a class by responding to questions and writing an essay

Resources
Classroom Resources
Computers with Internet access
LCD projector (optional)
Digital or disposable cameras
Handouts
Letter to Parents
Blogging Instruction Sheet
Photovoice Project Instructions
Picture Selection Sheet
Picture Description Sheet
Rubrics
Picture and Blog Entry Rubric
Blog Use Rubric
Courage Essay Rubric
Web Resources
Blogger or Live Journal

From http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view_printers.asp?id=1064
Instructional Plan

Preparation

1. This lesson should come at the end of a unit or semester, during which time students have completed a required reading list. The final project is to respond to a prompt about an abstract concept (e.g., truth or freedom) by taking photos, posting them to a blog, and then writing an essay that relates back to the texts. This lesson uses What is courage? as an example of a prompt. The list that follows includes potential texts for students to read. All readings should be finished before this prewriting activity is started:

**Short Stories**
- “The Lottery” by Shirley Jackson
- “Harrison Bergeron” by Kurt Vonnegut
- “The Tell-Tale Heart” by Edgar Allan Poe
- “A Brief Moment in the Life of Angus Bethune” by Chris Crutcher
- “Amigo Brothers” by Piri Thomas
- “Shaving” by Leslie Norris
- “Thank you, M’am” by Langston Hughes

**Books**
- Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck (Penguin, 2002)

2. Check your school’s Internet policy to ensure that you and your students can view and post to a blog and to find out what websites are preferable for you to use.

3. If you do not have classroom computers with Internet access, reserve four 60-minute sessions in your school’s computer lab (see Sessions 1 and 3 through 5). Arrange to use an LCD projector during Sessions 1, 4, and 5 if possible.

4. If you do not already have a classroom blog, create one that allows pictures to be uploaded and responses given. LiveJournal and Blogger are free resources you can use to do this. Before the lesson begins, post your own pictures responding to the prompt for the students to respond to during Session 1. Give each picture a title, explain why you chose it, and write about how it represents courage for you. Make sure that you include both strong and weak examples.

5. Send home the Letter to Parents and the Photovoice Project Instructions explaining the assignment and making sure that all students have permission to use the blog you have created. This letter can also help you make certain that all students have access to a camera (see Step 5).

6. Arrange for all students to have access to a camera, preferably at the same time. If necessary, buy disposable cameras for students who may not have access to a camera or arrange to borrow some digital cameras and have students complete the prewriting assignment in staggered groups. You might try to find a store that is willing to donate either disposable cameras or developing to cut your cost.

7. Depending on the knowledge level of your students, you may want to teach a quick lesson about blogging that covers what a blog is, how students post to a blog, and what kinds of posts are and are not appropriate. You may also want to print and copy the Blogging Instruction Sheet for students or you can create your own. The Blogging Instruction Sheet uses Blogger as an example.
and the sign-in link will depend on whether or not you created the blog using your Google account or not. Students can use the e-mail address with which you set up your account and your password to access the blog.

8. Make a copy of the Photovoice Project Instructions, the Picture and Blog Entry Rubric, the Picture Description Sheet, and the Picture Selection Sheet for each student in your class.

**Instruction and Activities**

**Session 1: Introduction of Photovoice Prewriting Activity**

Ideally you should start this session on a Friday to give students time over the weekend to take pictures.

1. Hand out the Photovoice Project Instructions and review.

2. Have students spend five minutes brainstorming and writing about what images come to mind when they think of the word courage. You might ask them to use the following prompts:
   - What is courage?
   - What does courage look like?
   - How do you know if someone is courageous?
   - When have you been courageous?

3. Have students move to the computers. Hand out the Blogging Instruction Sheet. If possible, use an LCD projector to walk students through setting up their accounts and show them how to access the blog.

4. Have students look at your postings on the blog. Ask them to consider what courage looks like in each image and why they think the picture was chosen. Distribute the Picture and Blog Entry Rubric and have students use it to rate the pictures you have posted; tell them they should be prepared to explain their rating.

**Homework (due a week before Session 2):** Students should take at least 10 pictures that represent courage and turn them in to you.

**Session 2: Choosing Pictures**

Have all photographs due to you at least a week before you intend to start Session 2. If students are using digital cameras, they can bring you the pictures on a USB drive or CD or they can e-mail them to you. You should print off copies of their pictures; programs like PowerPoint allow you to print a collection of thumbnail images on one page. If students are using disposable cameras, have them turn in the cameras to you so you can get the images both printed and on a CD.

1. Give students the prints of their pictures and the Picture Selection Sheet. Students should fill out the handout and select the three photos that they best think answer or best describe what courage is based on their responses.

2. Once students have selected their pictures, pass out the Picture Description Sheet. Tell students that this will help them organize their thinking about what they will post on the blog regarding the photos they have chosen. Have them fill out the sheet.

3. Have students turn in their pictures and Picture Description Sheets to you at the end of the session. Note: Look at the pictures and responses before Session 3 and offer assistance as necessary to students who are struggling with the assignment.
**Session 3: Posting to the Blog**
Before this session begins, upload students’ pictures to the blog. Make each student a separate post so that all of their pictures are on the same page.

1. Hand back the Picture Description Sheets. Have students log on to the blog. Model how to input the information from the sheets to the blog. If you have commented on their work or made edits, make it clear that you expect them to respond as they are working.

2. Students should copy verbatim what they wrote on their sheets or edit or expand on their own text. Circulate while students are working to offer assistance as needed.

**Session 4: Reviewing the Posts**
Have students log on to the blog and review each other’s pictures and descriptions. They should post responses to a number of pictures that you specify (which will vary according to the size of your class and the amount of time you have available). Before students post, discuss what the responses should contain. (You may want to model some responses using the LCD projector.) Each post should contain a statement of agreement/disagreement with the picture description and a rationale for the statement. The response should also refer to other students’ pictures. Ideally posts will reflect on commonalities and differences between the pictures and will also deepen discussion of the concepts being explored.

**Session 5: Response Questions**
Before this session, read through all students’ posts to make sure the responses are appropriate and to determine who is still struggling with the concept of courage. Post follow-up questions that are designed to help students start pulling together their thoughts about the concept you have explored while also tying the concept back to their reading during the semester or unit (see Preparation, Step 1). If your students have been exploring courage, follow-up questions might include:
- What characteristics does courage have?
- Considering the books and stories we read this semester, what character do you think is the most courageous and why?

You might also want to list the titles of readings and their main characters on the board for easy reference.

1. Have students log on to the blog and post answers to the follow-up questions.
2. Bring the group back together. Using an LCD projector, have students look together at the posts. Work together to make a list that shows how the various characters throughout the stories demonstrated courage.

**Essay Assignment:**
Students should now be ready to write about the abstract concept they have been exploring. One option is to have them write an essay in which they choose one character from a book or story they have read and give three specific ways the character showed courage and what courage means to that character. (The Essay Map tool might be useful in helping students plan for this kind of assignment.) Have students refer back to the list you generated in Session 5, Step 2, for specific details to include in their essay. Some students may need to return to the blog postings for further help.

**Extensions**
Various other prompts for Photovoice blogging or an essay assignment include:
Choose a picture of a person or people and write about courage from the perspective of one person in

TCXG 464/Thompson
Unit Plan Sample for Analysis
Choose a picture of a person or people. Which character from our reading do you associate this person with? Why? What characteristics do you think they share?

Have students design their own blog for the character they chose to write their essay on. They can post entries from the point of view of the character.

Post students’ essays on the blog and then have them respond to the essays from the perspective of a character from their reading. They should write in the first person.

**From Theory to Practice (Annotated Bibliography)**


Electronic discussions, when combined with face-to-face interactions, can facilitate community building and allow students to have control over the topics they are discussing and to work together to construct meanings and make connections.

Online discussions that do not occur in real time “are interactive, like discussions, but thoughtful, like written discourse” (p. 652).


Using the Photovoice strategy, participants engage in critical reflection. It provides a unique way for participants to identify and represent their communities visually.
