

Bridging the Gap for ELL Students in the Academic Classroom

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Incorporating thematic instruction and teaching with Big Questions enables all ELL students to participate in active learning. Differentiation, hands on activities, and models will be provided for all ELL students (K to 12) to have success in the classroom and all literacy tasks on NJASK, GEPA, and HSPA tests.

Reasons to Organize Curriculum around Themes Based on Big Questions

- Students see the big picture so they can make sense of English language instruction.
- Content areas (math, science, social studies, literature) are interrelated.
- Vocabulary is repeated naturally as it appears in different content area studies.
- Through themes based on big questions, teachers can connect curriculum to students' lives. This makes curriculum more
- interesting.
- Because the curriculum makes sense, English language learners are more fully engaged and experience more success.
- Since themes deal with universal human topics, all students can be involved, and lessons and activities can be adjusted to different levels of English language proficiency.

What is a Thematic Unit?

According to www.funderstanding.com - "Thematic instruction is the organization of a curriculum around macro "themes." Thematic instruction integrates basic disciplines like reading, math, and science with the exploration of a broad subject, such as communities, rain forests, river basins, the use of energy, and so on."

Ten Key Reasons to Use Thematic Units

1. Increases Effective Use of Computers and Technology
2. Compacts the Curriculum
3. Demonstrates the Interdisciplinary Nature of Learning
4. Increases Student Interest in Learning and Time Engaged
5. Expands your Assessment Strategies
6. Utilizes Collaborative and Cooperative Learning
7. Focuses the Learner on the Mastery of Objectives
8. Integrates Word Processing Skills into Creative Activities
9. Models for Students the Resources Used in Research
10. Can Safely Control Web Access for Students

This Thematic Unit Model is based on those found in Chapter 13, "Literature and the Curriculum: A Thematic Approach," of *Legacies: Using Children's Literature in the Classroom* by Liz Rothlein and Anita Meyer Meinbach. HarperCollins College Publishers, 1996.

Component Parts of this Thematic Unit:

1. **Theme.** Select an appropriate theme reflecting text topics (curriculum), student interests, experiences, issues, or problems.
2. **Grade Level Appropriateness**
3. **Focus.** Develop a one-sentence focus statement that summarizes the direction and intent of the unit.
4. **Objectives.** Identify three or four specific objectives you wish students to master by the completion of the unit. These can be tied to state and county objectives and competencies.
5. **Materials and Resources.** It is advantageous to determine all the necessary materials and resources after the unit has been written. The way, you avoid limiting yourself to a few familiar items.
 - a. **Printed Resources.** newspapers, pamphlets, notices, travel guides, junk mail, journals, diaries, letters, maps, advertisements, brochures, flyers, encyclopedias, dictionaries, magazines, booklets, professional journals.
 - b. **Computer and CD-ROM Resources.** Educational software, reference works, educational games and simulations related to curriculum, and CD-ROM adaptations of literature.
 - c. **Internet Resources.**
 - d. **Audio/Visual Resources.** videos, films, filmstrips, movies, slide programs, or overhead transparencies. Records, audio tapes, books and tapes, and CD's.
 - e. **Community Resources.**
 1. guest speakers
 2. field trips
 - f. **Instructional Television Resources**
 1. ETV
 2. Cable
 - g. **Literature Resources**
 1. fiction
 2. non-fiction
 3. poetry
6. **General Activities.** Develop activities you wish to use throughout the unit. For the most part, these activities will be broad-based, covering the range of curricular areas and reflecting elements of a literature-based program.
7. **Discussion Questions.** Include a variety of open-ended questions that help students think about the topic in varied and divergent ways.
8. **Literature Selections.** See Materials and Resources above. Select books related to the topic of each thematic unit. For literature selection you may wish to develop a pre-reading activity, a variety of cross-curricular learning activities, and open-ended discussion questions. Select books from a variety of genres.

9. **Culminating Activity.** The culminating activity is a project or activity that engages students in meaningful summarization of their discoveries and leads to new ideas, understandings, and connections.
10. **Evaluation.** Devise appropriate means of evaluating student progress throughout the unit. Avoid relying on formal pencil and paper tests; select criteria to measure growth. Use conferences, logs, and student journal writing as well.
11. **Related Works of Literature.** Select books that relate to the theme and make these available for independent reading and reading aloud.

Strategies for Using Writing across the Content Areas

- K-W-L, K-W-L Plus, B-K-W-L-Q
- Skimming and Scanning (Comprehension)
- List-Group-Label
- Book Pass
- Text Structures and Supports
- Developing Questions for Reading: Concept Ladder
- Word Study: Developing Content Vocabulary
- Book in a Day
- Word Study: How to Learn Content Vocabulary Through Context (Other ways to study vocabulary...visual)
- Admit Slip: Establishing a Purpose for Reading
- Anticipating Content: Here and Now, Predict-O-Gram, Story Impressions
- Anticipation Guide

Support and Monitor Comprehension

- Reciprocal Teaching (Comprehension)
- DR-TA (Directed Reading-Thinking Activity)
- Learning Logs
- Compare/Contrast: Discovering Patterns
- Questions Game (Comprehension/Discussion)
- QAR (Question-Answer Relationship)
- Academic Notebooks: Writing to Learn

Evaluate, Extend, and Transfer Content Knowledge

- RAFT Writing (Role, Audience, Format, Topic)
- Text Highlighting
- Graphic Displays to Organize Information (KWL, Compare and Contrast, Cause and Effect, etc.)
- Test-Taking Strategies
- GIST (Generating Interactions Between Schemata and Texts) (Comprehension) (Summarizing)
- Homework (What is meaningful?)
- Exit Slips

Double Entry Journal

Divide a sheet of paper in half. On the left side, copy a quotation or passage from the text. On the right side of the paper, you may respond, question, make personal connections, evaluate, reflect, analyze and interpret. In other words, the left column is for note taking from the text and the right column is for your own note making.

Problem Solution Journal

Identify a problem, brainstorm possible alternatives, choose a probable solution, anticipate stumbling blocks, and propose arguments while writing in favor of a proposed solution.

Meta-cognitive Journal

Divide a paper in half. On the left side of the paper, record "What I learned." On the right side of the paper, record "How I came to learn it."

Synthesis Journal

Divide your paper into sections. Record "What I did", "What I Learned", and "How I Can Use It."

Speculation About Effects Journal

Divide paper in half. On the left side, record "What happened." On the right side, record "What might/ should happen as a result of this."

Reflective Journal

Divide paper into sections. Record "What happened," "How I felt," and "What I learned," or "What I did," "What I learned," "What questions do I still have," "What surprises did I experience," and "Overall Response."

Resources

http://www.educ.wsu.edu/esl/Thematic_Units.html

great thematic units

<http://atozteacherstuff.com/Themes/index.shtml>

great list of thematic units

http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/curry/class/edis/590s4/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=569&Itemid=45

great resources and lessons k to 12

<http://coe.sdsu.edu/people/jmora/Pages/4X4Guidelines.htm>

wonderful guidelines for planning ESL thematic units and activities by level of language learners

<http://www.nvo.com/ecnewsletter/thematicunits/>

lots of links for Thematic Units

<http://www.coe.unt.edu/patterson/4870/strategies.htm>

GREAT FOR ACTIVITIES AND QAR OTHER STRATEGIES

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=227

Read Write think and QAR grades 3 to 5

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=232

QAR lesson grades 6 to 8 great strategy for teaching Open Ended Response

http://www.eastsideliteracy.org/tutorsupport/RW/RW_QAR.htm

great for QAR ACTIVITY AND HANDOUT

http://www.stedwards.edu/educ/minus/read4343/LessonPlans/elem_sci.htm

GREAT SCIENCE LESSON TO USE FOR DEMONSTRATION

<http://www.readinglady.com/mosaic/tools/tools.htm#powerpoint>

AWESOME POWER POINTS FOR MANY READING WRITING

STRATEGIES...QUESTIONING SKILLS, TEACHING VOCABULARY

<http://www.readinglady.com/mosaic/tools/tools.htm#2>

AWESOME LESSON PLANS

<http://www.readinglady.com/mosaic/tools/tools.htm#3>

GREAT REPORTING FORMS

<http://www.literacymatters.org/content/readandwrite/question.htm>

guidelines for content area literacy

http://www.writingfix.com/WAC/Writing_Across_Curriculum_RAFTS_Math.htm

creating RAFTS in the content area

<http://www.geocities.com/writingprocess/rafts.htm>

great models for RAFTS plus doing them interactively as well

<http://www.ops.org/reading/concepts.html>

teaching vocabulary using concepts (grids, semantic features)

<http://edweb.sdsu.edu/people/bdodge/scaffold/Compare.html>

great example for content vocabulary using Compare and contrast

<http://www.palmbeach.k12.fl.us/MULTICULTURAL/>

strategies that can be used for differentiated strategies to reach all learners and increase

reading, writing, vocabulary effectiveness

<http://www.readinglady.com/mosaic/tools/tools.htm>

awesome power points to help introduce reading and questioning strategies

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/accountability/testing/briefs/archives/vol6no11.pdf>

open ended story sample and questions

<http://www.u-46.org/roadmap/dyncat.cfm?catid=138>

awesome: QAR, Frayer Vocabulary models, KWL, BKWL, etc. strategies for

ELL...Expository Text, other comprehension, vocabulary, In Spanish, too!!!

Script for "The Grasshopper and the Ants" Reader's Theatre

