

Part 2: Empathy

In this module, students explore the connection between a broad news topic and local community needs. The lesson provides a range of issues and directions to investigate so that the class can choose one that is particularly meaningful to them. In the ECG mission, students develop their understanding by honing in on a single character.



Choose Your Topic

Overview

In this lesson, you will choose the topic and develop the guiding question/problem statement for your Emerging Citizens Game and supporting curricular activities. The game and supporting activities will help students to develop the necessary media literacy skills for each stage of the game and for the culminating "Implementation" stage, in which they plan and implement action to impact the school community and broader media landscape.

The curriculum includes rich supporting materials for focusing on the Ferguson controversy as a topic, as well as some resources for addressing other current topics that are connected to social media and lend themselves to a wide range of community interventions. You are also welcome to choose a different topic, or to work with students to research and identify local needs, and build a game around these. A good topic has resonance locally and in communities elsewhere -- perhaps even around the world.

Time

Two class periods.

Resources Needed

A computer or tablet device for each group of 2-3 students.

Learning Goals

- Explore the connection between large-scale news topics and local community needs.
- Learn to approach a topic through questioning.
- Use tools such as internet research, social media, and textual analysis to explore local and national/global issues.
- Explore life experiences that are different from students' own.
- Recognize the value of personal experience as a form of knowing.

Guide for conceptual scaffolding

Before diving into a particular news topic, students will need introductory reflection activities to surface their relevant prior experience, preconceptions, and potential misconceptions. This will not only motivate them to engage but help them to develop mental schemas for understanding the new content. These activities are included for the Ferguson example.

Option 1: Ferguson

The conflict is so current that there are many curated lists of resources for learning about the issue, as well as lesson plans and educator reflections about addressing this topic sensitively and constructively in your classroom. The best starting point for educators comes from *Facing History and Ourselves*: www.facingtoday.facinghistory.org/talking-to-students-about-ferguson/ The activities here lead students to develop questions for further inquiry, and this can serve as the specific question or problem statement that drives the game and subsequent lessons. These activities help students develop a question that links challenges faced by their community and other communities. Questions can be very open, such as “How can we reduce stereotyping and its destructive effects in our school, neighborhood, and city?” or more narrow, such as “How can we build trust between local law enforcement and the communities they serve?” Driving questions can be more provocative as well, depending on the needs of the classroom and school.

Option 2: Another curated, scaffolded topic

If you do not want to cover Ferguson but would like a pre-selected topic with an existing set of resources, text that frames the issue, and suggested activities, you may find it helpful to consult the case studies from the Salzburg Institute. These case studies introduce students to wide-ranging examples of social media used to achieve civic goals such as creating a civil rights campaign or sharing real-time data to monitor elections or city infrastructure.

You may need to survey your students’ knowledge and attitudes about the subject matter and design a reflection activity before diving into the academic research. Students should then read and respond to the case narrative, supplemented by some teacher-generated comprehension questions. Students then complete the activities for each module of the curriculum with a focus on the topic and resources available in the chosen case study. For the curriculum’s “Pitch” module, use the activities described in the “Exercises” tab in each Salzburg case study. These activities are high-level and flexible but may require additional scaffolding based on student needs. The Analysis questions will likely be too abstract for secondary students but can be included at the teacher’s discretion. Here are the recommended case studies:

- Domestic and international use of social media to advocate for LGBT rights and support the development of LGBT individuals:
 - Finding a Voice Through Social Media: The LGBT Community
www.salzburg.umd.edu/unesco/social-media-and-lgbt-community

- Use of SMS-based communication systems in the developing world for sharing real-time data about human rights abuses and other pressing needs:
 - Mobile Media and Citizenship in Underdeveloped Democracies: The Tool in Our Pockets www.salzburg.umd.edu/lessons/mobile-media-and-citizenship

Option 3: Develop your own topic

If you'd prefer instead to start by identifying local challenges and pressing needs in your school community, use activities from Project MASH (alpha.projectmash.org), a website designed to help students and teachers bridge formal and informal learning. Within this website, search for these activities:

- Get Glocal
alpha.projectmash.org/experience/get-glocal
- Youth Resource Community Map
alpha.projectmash.org/experience/youth-resource-community-map
- One School Problem at a Time
alpha.projectmash.org/experience/one-school-problem-time

Mission 1: Empathy

This challenge gets players to think through the problem/issue from a different perspective. Players are asked to use storytelling genre forms to convey the cause and effects.



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Empathy Challenge

You will be creating a character that would be influenced or affected by this problem/issue. Write a one paragraph bio about them. Then, ask an open ended question about that character and what would happen in their future, or place that character in a scenario that the other team will then be tasked to flesh out.



Write your Challenge here:

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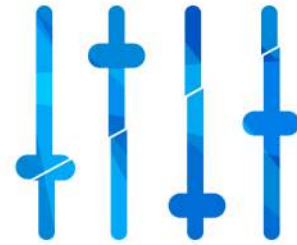
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Persuasive Letter



Imagine a person, concept, organization, or thing and frame your answer / response in the form of a formal written argument. This should look and feel like a creative essay, but with the same structure as a persuasive letter.

Media Remix



Curate, remix, and comment on existing content to create your response. You are free to cut up magazines and newspaper articles to create a physical collage, or if you have access to technology, mash up photos, tweets, videos, etc. to create a digital collage.

Storyboarding



Create a series of images with comments or captions that help the reader understand your story. Your storyboard should look like a simple comic strip, with images (drawn pictures, real photos, etc.) and text captions.

Act it Out



Take on the role of another person or idea and present the material through impersonation or dramatization. This can take the form of a short play, an extended monologue (like a speech or lecture), a dance, a song, or a combination! Be creative!

Empathy

Did the presenting team show:

Who is affected by this problem?

How they are affected?

Why they think it happens?

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