

Sample Interactive Activity (Credit to high school teacher Melinda Christianson - her slides are for your education only and not to be used outside of this class or changed/used in any manner.) You may, however, use a version of this activity - because educators share materials.

Content Area: Selecting Topics

Purpose: Narrowing a Speech Topic

Introduction

This is an activity I use with my concurrent Intro to Public Speaking students after they brainstorm topics for their informative speech. My goal is to help them narrow down their topics so they have the right amount of breadth and depth to their speeches. Helping them do this now sets them up for success when researching and outlining. The video clip gets their attention as it is lively, animated, and a somewhat divisive topic. After discussing the video, I introduce the five steps of narrowing their speech topic. I give them an example of each step using the topic of law enforcement. When they work in partners or groups to try it out for themselves, they always come up with many different thesis statements, and it's very helpful for them to see just how many different topics can come from one big idea.

Procedure

- 1) Show video clip "A Brief History of the United States" from the film *Bowling For Columbine*. This clip illustrates how much information is missed when someone has a very broad topic and not enough time to talk about all of it in detail.
- 2) Quick Share: Talk to a partner about the video clip. What is the problem with having such a broad topic in a small time frame? (Talk about breadth and depth, and what gets missed when there is too much breadth and not enough depth.)
- 3) Intro to the five steps of narrowing a speech topic.
 - a) Step One: General Topic (from your personal inventory)
 - b) Step Two: Topic Area (based on audience analysis)
 - c) Step Three: General Purpose (to inform, persuade, or entertain)
 - d) Step Four: Specific Purpose (... about what?)
 - e) Step Five: Thesis Statement (one sentence summary of your speech)
- 4) Example of each step (see presentation link below).
- 5) Partner activity: Using the general topic of the Super Bowl, go through each step to end up with a specific thesis statement.
- 6) Share with the class - What did you come up with for each step? What was your thesis statement? Notice how many different topics can come from one big idea.
- 7) Exit Slip: Choose a possible topic for your next speech. Go through each step to come up with a possible thesis statement. Write each step on your exit slip.
- 8) For further information or assistance, watch the video on the last slide on your own. It gives more detail about narrowing your topic and starting your research.

Materials Needed:

Presentation: <https://goo.gl/c7hXo1> (includes both video links)

Handout: <https://goo.gl/7tbRBx> (use for step #5)

Suggestions:

It works well to use this assignment before students start writing their first “big” speech - in my case, their informative speech. The video clip may or may not be suitable for your class, so preview it before using. The exit slip is helpful in ensuring students know how to narrow their topics down.