

Lesson 2.2: Interviewing: The Art of Asking Questions

Subjects

Journalism, Language Arts, Social Studies

Estimated Time

One 45-minute class period

Grade Level

Upper Elementary Middle and High School

Materials

Make copies of the [worksheet](#) for each team. Note that there are 8 different case studies. Each team gets one case study to work on collaboratively.

Overview

By generating news story ideas from their own life, students learn how news develops from people's natural curiosity about the people, places, events and situations of daily life.

Warm Up Activity

Ask students: What's your favorite scary movie? or When do you feel really afraid?

Explain to students that the interview process can seem intimidating, but today's lesson will give them the tools they need to be successful.

Explain to students that part of a reporter's job is to interview people they don't know for stories. *Ask: Have you ever called someone you didn't know? What did you like and dislike about it?*

Students share stories of their experiences, if they have them.

Cold-calling is the practice of calling someone you don't know to get information from them.

Ask: Why might cold-calling seem scary or uncomfortable for some people?

Students generate reasons and share their feelings. Acknowledge these fears. Learning to make cold calls takes practice. People get better at it with practice.

Main Activity

Practice Cold-Call Interviewing

Go over the following instructions with students:

In this role-playing activity, students are divided the class into groups of three. They get a worksheet that provides a scenario with a hypothetical reporter and source. Two team members role-play an interview while the third team member, the evaluator, offers coaching and suggestions as they practice.

Pass out copies of the worksheet so that each team receives one of the eight different cases. One person will be the journalist, one will be the source, and the third person will serve as an evaluator for both participants. Read aloud the directions and encourage students to work together as a team to generate ideas and practice role-playing.

Because some students are pretending to be experts and others are pretending to be journalists, give students the opportunity to use the Internet to gather information to make their role-playing more credible. This will also help to make their performances less silly and more realistic. Encourage them to use creativity and imagination along with good research to create a strong cold-calling simulation.

Time to Practice

Before beginning, review the advice provided on the worksheet for both the journalist and source. Make sure students can explain in their own words why this advice makes sense and encourage them to make notes of their own that is relevant to the topic they are interviewing about or are the interviewee.

Monitor students as they work and answer any questions they may have. Encourage them to practice a couple of times so they're comfortable. For advanced learners, you may want to encourage the source to vary their answers at each rehearsal, so that the reporter really has to think on their feet!

Time for Performance

Each team performs their cold calls. Encourage evaluators from other teams to offer "warm" and "cool" feedback. Warm feedback is positive and acknowledges strengths. Cool feedback offers comments and suggestions to help the learner reflect and improve.

Leaving a Message

If you call a source and they are not available you might have to leave a message. In this message you should identify yourself, your school or affiliation, your reason for calling and a way for your source to contact you. See Worksheet B for a script template.

Reflect

Ask: What did you learn from working on this project? What did you like best about it? What did you dislike and why?

Ask: How might cold-calling be useful in your life right now? In the future?

Emailing, Tweeting and other forms of communication

Students might not be calling their sources, they might reach out via email or Twitter. Have students practice composing an email to an expert. Give them the following writing prompt:

You are doing a story about water quality in your community. You would like to interview the head of the water authority. You've gone [to the website](#) and found the contact. What do you do next?

Have the students work in pairs to compose an email introducing themselves and requesting an interview. Have students read their emails out loud and offer warm and cool feedback.

Have the students look up their mayor's Twitter feed. Ask them how they would send out a tweet to ask the mayor for an interview. Have them check their own Twitter feeds to see whether there is any embarrassing content. If so, have the class brainstorm options (they could send the mayor a tweet

through their news organizations official Twitter handle). This is also an opportunity to have the students reflect on the language they use, the pictures they post and the image their social media profiles project of them. These profiles will follow them into adulthood and their future careers. This is a great "life lesson" about creating an online identity that will help them rather than haunt them in the future.

Standards

Common Core

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7.4 Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with pertinent descriptions, facts, details, and examples; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7.5 Include multimedia components and visual displays in presentations to clarify claims and findings and emphasize salient points.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. (See grade 7 Language standards 1 and 3 here for specific expectations.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.4 Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.5 Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. (See grade 8 Language standards 1 and 3 here for specific expectations.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.5 Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. (See grades 9–10 Language standards 1 and 3 here for specific expectations.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.5 Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. (See grades 11–12 Language standards 1 and 3 here for specific expectations.)

ISTE

ISTE: Media Concepts, 1.0 Students will demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively through oral, written, and visual expression.