

WebQuests

'A WebQuest is an inquiry-oriented activity in which some or all of the information that learners interact with comes from resources on the internet' from

http://webquest.sdsu.edu/about_webquests.html

(Adapted from MLPSI)

What are WebQuests?

First developed in 1995 by Bernie Dodge with Tom March, the WebQuest has become a very useful educational tool. A WebQuest is a task based learning activity in which most or all of the information used by students is gleaned from the internet. Rather than having students aimlessly surf the internet, WebQuests are designed to use learners' time well, to focus on using information rather than looking for it and to support learners' thinking.

WebQuests are an ideal means of consolidating and enlivening work already covered in the language class. Students may for example engage in a WebQuest to go on a virtual gastronomic tour of selected regions in France. As well as fulfilling the objectives of the language class, students are also developing and enhancing their I.T skills, engaging in group work and higher order thinking skills.

How is a WebQuest structured?

A WebQuest must be structured to contain the following elements:

Introduction: outline the background to the activity, and what you want the students to know by the end of the activity

Task: Ensure that is motivating and do-able

Process: Provide a list of information sources eg. Hyperlinks, links to web documents etc. so as to focus the learners' attention and avoid them going 'off task'. Provide guidance on how the information gleaned is to be arranged and presented

Evaluation: How will you know that the students have been successful? A rubric is a useful way to assess what the children have learned.

Why use WebQuests?

There are many benefits to using WebQuests in the classroom:

Motivational: WebQuests take a central question or scenario that honestly needs answering or exploring. Motivation is further enhanced when teachers choose a topic that pupils are genuinely interested in.

Authenticity: The more authentic the task the more motivated the pupils will be to succeed. Students use the most up to date, real information in doing the WebQuest.

Co-operative learning: WebQuests promote co-operative learning and group work as students take on different roles and responsibilities within a group.

Promotion of higher level thinking: Students are engaged in enquiry, deduction, evaluation and other higher-order thinking skills.

Designing a WebQuest

STEP 1:

When designing a WebQuest it is firstly important to note:

- The topic to be covered
- The class level
- The aims of the WebQuest
- How the information will be presented by
 - o The teacher
 - o The students

It may be useful to begin with using just one website and giving the students a work-card with questions and links. This is relatively straightforward and should offer a more attainable task for the students.

STEP 2:

Get the students into 'role'. They could be going on holiday, giving advice to someone going on holiday, buying food in an online supermarket, finding train times; the possibilities are endless and very easily integrated across the primary curriculum.

STEP 3:

Present the task to the students: e.g. 'You are going to Paris for the weekend with your parents and you must get some information on Disneyland Paris'

STEP 4:

Ensure that the activity has step-by-step instructions on which site to use, where they should click etc.

Also, the students should know how they should present their work: in a PowerPoint, in a copybook, on a worksheet, workcard, poster etc.

Considerations

Many examples of WebQuests are available on the internet and may be adapted for your particular class/subject/ability level etc.

If you are using a 'pre-prepared' WebQuest, do ensure that the links are up to date and functional and that the task is engaging and suitable for your class level.

However, the best WebQuests are those that are designed by teachers themselves as they are aware of exactly what the students have covered and what objectives they would like the students to achieve.

Useful links

<http://webquest.org/index-resources.php>

A 'one stop shop' for everything WebQuest-related including links to video tutorials.