

It's Under Discussion

Purpose

Students will brainstorm and discuss ideas for writing.

Materials

For the teacher: chalk, chalkboard

For the students: paper, pencils

Activity

A. Pre-Activity Discussion

1. Ask students if they have heard of a concept called *brainstorming*. Explain that this means thinking up lots of ideas about a specific topic.
2. Tell students that they are going to think of one-word topics for an informational piece. Explain to students that the topics have to be something that they are truly interested in or have wondered about and something that others might be interested in as well.
3. Ask students if they can think of things that interest people (e.g., things they hear or see on television, things that everyone needs to survive or to enjoy life, such as entertainment, etc.). Have students say the one-word topics out loud, and write the topics on the chalkboard.
4. Choose a topic to be in the middle of an idea web. Write it on a clean section of the chalkboard and draw a circle around it.
5. Explain to students that if you used a topic that was too broad, you would be writing for a very long time, and your piece would not have a clear focus. Tell them that you are going to make the topic a bit more specific.
6. Ask for suggestions on one-word ideas that are contained within the larger topic. Have students say their ideas out loud as they think of them. Write the answers on the chalkboard, draw circles around them, and connect them to the main topic.
7. Repeat this process with the new answers until the topics reach your desired degree of specificity. Formulate a question based on one of the most specific topics.

(continued)

EXTENDING
THE



ACTIVITY

Have students carry small journals with them for a week. Direct them to write down their ideas immediately when they hear or see something that they would like to know more about (one or more ideas per day). Have students research their favorite ideas for presentations.

INCORPORATING



TECHNOLOGY

Have students compare several Web sites appropriate for children. Have them consider the following: Where do Web site writers get their ideas for story topics? What do people seem to be curious about at this moment in time?

Standards Links
4.2.4, 4.5.6

Activity (continued)

B. Create Idea Webs

1. Give students paper and pencils and have them construct their own idea webs based on the topics that interest them the most.
2. After students have finished their idea webs, have them free write for three to five minutes, recording what they think they know about one of their most specific ideas and what they would like to learn about it. Encourage students to write without stopping to edit or check facts.
3. Have students work with a partner and discuss their topics.
4. Encourage listening partners to ask for more information or clarification and to discuss other ideas about the topic that come to mind when they hear the speaker.

C. Close the Activity

1. Have students take turns presenting their webs to the class, either by creating handouts they share with classmates or by demonstrating their webs on an overhead projector or on the chalkboard.
2. Allow classmates to suggest additions so that a student's writing topic would hold even more interest for readers.

Questions for Review

Basic Concepts and Processes

Determine students' understanding by asking the following questions:



How do you begin to think of ideas for an informational piece?



What characterizes a good topic for an informational piece?
