

Designing an online activity in English studies: group activity

Collection: Online teaching

Resource: Designing learning with new media

Learning outcomes

By the end of this activity participants will have developed the confidence to design engaging online activities that employ a range of pedagogical approaches and a variety of media types.

Introduction

The main point of this activity is to let the participants design a piece of interactive online learning based on their own context and resources. Firstly a digital artefact (e.g. an image, any primary or secondary source material, videoclips, audio podcasts, an online article or book review etc) is used to stimulate discussion around how to design an online activity. The group then design an online activity using a different digital artefact elected by themselves or the instructor.

*This activity could very easily follow another in this collection: 'Exploring new media and its potential in teaching' where the use of different kinds of media in teaching are explored.

The activity

1. Firstly select a couple of images (or other digital artefacts) from a collection of your choice either your own or one from an online collection (see links to copyright free image collections below) to work on with the group. One image will be used for practice initially and the second will be distributed to the class to work on in groups.

Here are some examples of the types of images that might be suitable for English Literature & Creative Writing audiences.

- A pre-Raphaelite painting could be an entry point into activities on pre-1840s narrative culture
- An image of a Medieval manuscript could be the start of an activity examining 14th century culture and society
- An image of an object or landscape (like the one below) could be the springboard for a Creative Writing task

* If there are laptops or computers to go round then a variation on the activity would be to let the participants themselves/ or in groups select a suitable resource.

** Yet another variation would be, as a pre-session activity within a VLE discussion forum, to ask participants to select a digital resource that they might use in their teaching this year and post it into the VLE. You could then select one to use with the whole class.

2. Once you have an image/artefact, display it on a PowerPoint slide or directly from the web so that the whole class can see it.
3. Ask the group to imagine they are going to incorporate this image/artefact into an online activity for a class they are teaching. How might they use that image/artefact to create a piece of engaging learning content? Things to consider might include:
 - What the teaching context is e.g. UG/PG, 1st/2nd/3rd year , specialist module or survey course?
 - What the learning outcomes will be? Why do you want the students to do this activity?
 - When the task is going to take place i.e. is it before, during or after the lecture or seminar? Is it connected to face-to-face work at all?
 - How long it will take to complete the task?
 - Will the students require any extra technology / skills / equipment?



2 | *This resource is part of a set of professional development resources for Higher Education English (including English Literature, English Language & Creative Writing) called 'The Pool'. The resources were developed by the English Subject Centre in 2011 as part of a JISC/HEA Open Educational Resources (OER) Project.*

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- What tools might you need to create the activity? (e.g. a discussion forum, a quiz, an animation?)
 - How the exercise will be delivered? e.g. via a VLE? On a mobile phone? Will you need the support of your institutional e-learning team?
 - How much information you will need to put into the instructions for the student and how might you structure those instructions?
 - What you could do to make the experience more engaging and interactive i.e. how could you enhance the effectiveness of it?
 - How will you evaluate whether the activity has been successful?
4. Capture the class ideas in a shared Google doc, Wiki or similar as the group make suggestions. The participants are actually building a piece of interactive online learning.
- * It might be a good idea to capture the thoughts of the group on a handout with headings corresponding to the questions above.
5. Explain to the group that they are now going to design an interactive online activity of their own in small groups. You could handout flipchart paper or ask them all to contribute to a wiki or shared doc used previously. Ask each group to consider how they might design a twenty minute activity around another digital artefact (supplied by you or selected by them).
6. Groups then present a summary of their idea to the whole class who may comment on it.
7. Alternatives to this structure could be:
- With a partner think about something you have done with your students over the last few weeks in your lectures, seminars or online. Then consider how you could turn that into an engaging and interactive online activity.
 - or participants could actually go away and design their online activity in a VLE as part of post-session homework, with a rationale for the choices made. These could then be presented or voted on by the rest of the class either online or at the next face-to-face session.

Example



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The damaged hulk of a children's toy in the aftermath of a fire could be the stimulus for a writing task (photo courtesy of Brett Lucas)

Links & References

- Copyright free online images are available from:
 - The [HumBox](#) Humanities OER Repository
 - [Flickr creative commons](#)
 - [JISC Advance guide to website images and online collections for educational purposes](#) - a comprehensive roundup of great resources for educators

Relationship to the Professional Standards Framework

- **Area of Activity 1:** Design and planning of learning activities and / or programmes of study.
- **Core Knowledge 2:** Appropriate methods for teaching and learning in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme
- **Core Knowledge 4:** The use of appropriate learning technologies

More information about the Professional Standards Framework can be obtained from the summary factsheet in the *Subject & Pedagogy* collection in HumBox.

<http://humbox.ac.uk/2731/>

Resources in the Online teaching Collection

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- Online teaching: introduction to the collection
- What are VLE's good for?: resource overview
 - What is a VLE and why use it?: group activity
 - What is a VLE and why use it?: individual activity
- The design of online activities in English Studies: resource overview
 - Evaluating online activities in English Studies: group activity
 - Evaluating online activities in English Studies: individual activity
- Designing learning with new media: resource overview
 - Exploring new media and its potential in teaching: group activity
 - Exploring new media and its potential in teaching: individual activity
 - **Designing an online activity in English Studies: group activity (*you are here)**
 - Designing an online activity in English Studies: individual activity
- Teaching with digital archives: resource overview
 - Teaching with digital archives: group activity
 - Teaching with digital archives: individual activity
- Online discussion in English Studies: resource overview
 - Should online discussion be assessed?: group activity
 - Should online discussion be assessed?: individual activity
- Workshopping online: resource overview
 - Designing an online Creative Writing workshop: group activity
 - Designing an online Creative Writing workshop: individual activity



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