

12 Ways to Incorporate Global Issues into Your Classroom

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As usual, the world is in crisis. Ecological catastrophes, wars, corruption scandals, financial melt-downs, and politicians with bad hair. Do we keep our classrooms insulated from these issues or do we incorporate them? For those inclined to the latter, here are some ways to do this.

1. Show & Tell *Show and Tell* can be used with students above Beginner levels. For homework, students find an article or topical piece and present it to their classmates. Provide guidance by showing them how to do it and by getting them to pick out new words and phrases that they learned from the article. As a scaffold, ask them to focus on 6 questions (who, where, when, what, why, how).

2. Time Line Many stories are long-running sequences. Get students to research their roots of and create a *Time Line*. Keep the format open: the Time Line could be illustrated, horizontal, vertical or anything students choose. Two examples that worked well as Time Lines are Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and the FIFA corruption scandal.

3. News you can use Rather than only use big stories about disasters and scandals, get students to choose articles on lifestyle topics. For example, they can read about health, personal finance, travel and new technology, then discuss which advice or insights they'd use in their daily lives.

4. Photo speculation Cut out photos – the more, the better – from the week's newspapers. Have students speculate about what's going on. Get them to match the photos to headlines, then choose an article to read. One teacher, Renée Watson, created jigsaw puzzles of the faces of 5 African Americans killed by the police. The students did the puzzles before Watson elicited what they knew about the men. Then the class read about and discussed the killings.

5. Teach-in Teach-ins are a way to inform would-be activists of an issue at stake. Invite an expert to class to talk about an issue. Make sure the students are prepared with key vocabulary and questions. One example: a friend came to my class and spoke about her 6-month sailing trip and what she'd learned about the pollution of the oceans. The discussion veered from pollution to how to survive while cooped up in an 8 x 12 foot cabin. The main thing was that students were motivated to listen and interact.

6. Gallery walk Gallery walks work well with photo exhibitions. If there are any in your area, take students along. What did they like and dislike? Why? What topics are present? What did they learn about the artist/photographer? I once took students to an exhibition of photos by Sebastião Salgado. They were blown away, as was I, and we ended up

developing a global issues map based on the places and people that Salgado had photographed.

7. Editorial Have students focus on a topic of their choice and write an editorial or 'think piece'. Work in stages: show a model, highlight the structure, and point out useful phrases. If necessary, help students to brainstorm the issues pertaining to the topic.

8. Cartoon captions Collect topical cartoons. Blank out the captions and get students to create their own. First, ask the students what the cartoons are about and do an example. Then have students work in groups. Finally, get them working alone.

9. Readers' Theater *Readers' Theater* involves developing and performing scripts based on something students have read. No props, sets or costumes are required. Students read a text and, in groups, turn it into a theater piece with dialog, characters and movement. Some kind of conflict is essential. To prepare, students need to know what a script looks like, how to read expressively and use 'the stage'. One group of learners enacted the tale of the Chilean miners trapped underground in 2010. Another staged a mock trial after a celebrity murder case.

10. Problem/Solution poster or Cause/Effect chart For visually oriented students, posters and charts are motivating and immediate. A basic kind is a T-chart with columns that match problems and solutions or causes and effects. Posters and charts can take any form: clouds, trees; the only limit is our imagination. After showing some examples, have students create their own chart or poster for a news story or issue.

11. News sources comparison High level students can compare the treatment of a news story by different newspapers or media outlets. Which words are used in both reports? How do the articles differ? Think about tone, length, detail, point of view, and language. A Venn diagram is a good tool for showing similarities and differences.

12. News article transformation An interesting exercise is to get students to change the genre or length of the article or rewrite the story from the protagonist's perspective (e.g., *I* instead of *she*). This requires higher-order processing and sub- skills such as synthesizing, adapting and extending.

How do *you* incorporate global issues into your classroom? Do you have any activities to share?

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