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Final Version

Developing an independent questioning mind in art

Using the five w's.

5xWs

Developing an independent questioning mind

The Five Ws, also known as the “Five Ws and H”, is a concept used in journalism, research and in any basic investigation or interrogation of evidence. Most consider this approach as fundamental when examining any new learning situation. It is a formula for developing speculative thinking and establishing all we can deduce from the evidence we have (text, stories, images, sound, film, conversation etc). The maxim of the Five Ws (and one H) is that any analysis of basic facts and information is only complete, when we can answer a checklist of six questions, each of which comprises an interrogative word:

Who? What? Where? When? Why? & How?

The principle underlying the maxim is that each question should elicit a factual answer — facts that are necessary to include for a report or when new learning can be considered complete. Importantly, none of these questions can be answered with a simple “yes” or “no”. This approach ‘models’ simple, good thinking and it is important for children to develop a disposition of self questioning starting with this set.

The technique uses basic question generating prompts provided by the English language. The method is useful at any level from a formal checklist to complete informality.

For example:

- For informal ‘rough-book’ use as a quick-aide checklist, as a private checklist to keep in mind when in an on going discussion, as quick points scribbled down in a lesson, to generate further questions for yourself or to raise in the lesson with your group/whole class.
- To generate data-gathering questions in any subject, during the early stages of problem solving when you are gathering data, the checklist can be useful either as an informal or systematic way of generating lists of question that you can try to find answers for.
- To generate idea-provoking questions, whilst brain-storming, brain-writing or some other such similar technique, the checklist could be used as a source of thought provoking questions to help build on existing ideas.
- To generate criteria, the checklist could help in generating criteria for evaluating options.
- To check plans, the checklist is a useful tool for planning implementation strategies.

Adding **IWWM** – In What Way Might

NB: The 5xWs and How ‘question words’ owe their strength to their fundamental place in the English language, and can conceal some of the assets of nature that our language copes less well with. The responses to these questions in the checklist may usually be facts, rather than conclusions. Although they may be speculations from emerging evidence or as a hypothesis forms. You may well need to link these questions to Blooms Taxonomy if you want to achieve the correct level of challenge or use IWWM.

- For example, the answer to ‘Who does X?’ in a History lesson context, the answer could be ‘King ...’. To use this answer in a problem-solving or conclusion finding context you may have to take this to another level of challenge.
- For example ‘OK – if King ... does X, in what way might we conclude this was a wise action by him and his court?’
- This ‘in what way might’ (**IWWM**) stage is crucial if the facts are to come alive, engage all students in the thinking and contribute to an effective, creative thinking process.

Questions	Examples of Conclusions and Hypothesis
Who ... ?	I think it could be ... or If that person is ..., it must be ...
What ... ?	It could be ... or It is likely that ... happens next.
Why ... ?	Because ... or If ... is so, then it must be that ...
When ... ?	Judging by ... it probably is ... or ... tells me it must be ...
Where ... ?	This looks like ... or By the surroundings it must be ...
How ... ?	I would think it is ... or Because ..., this probably led to ...
In What Way Might ... ?	I conclude that ... or All the evidence would suggest that ...

Art

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