

Grade 7 Language Arts
Brainstorming Topics for Process Writing
Step Up

Goal

- For students to select and narrow down topics for writing activities in the classroom.
- SCO 8: Students will be expected to use writing and other forms of representation to explore, clarify, and reflect on their thoughts, feelings, experiences, and learning; and to use their imaginations.
 - Process Writing

Relevant SR Resources

- Student Resource: Step Up – Develop Ideas

Materials Required

- Smartboard software (available at www.smarttech.com, downloaded and installed onto computer)
- Access to Smartboard

Handouts (instructions for teachers as well as information for students)

- Copy of lesson shared or online
- Steps given to teacher on how to use the Smartboard lesson in their classroom.
- Thought Web handouts – one per student

Rationale:

Students are active, social learners. By taking part in the brainstorming activity, they are given an opportunity to voice their own ideas and suggestions as well as encourage others to suggest ideas. Showing students how to narrow down broader topics will allow for a wonderful scaffolding opportunity, since students will then be able to take their own ideas and narrow them in for themselves.

STEPS:

Step 1: Be prepared

- Open copy of Smartboard software with lesson.

Step 2: Accessing Prior Knowledge

- Teacher should have already introduced processes of writing and the selection of topics – brainstorming for young people at this age should be an act of second nature. However, there is always a difficulty in narrowing down broad topics in order to focus your writing activity. The idea behind choosing a topic and narrowing it down is located in the “Step Up” Unit.
- Remind students that ideas can be gathered from a variety of places; from groups, by asking friends, looking at images, generating random words, etc.

Step 3: Show students the steps to narrowing down a topic through brainstorming

- Point out that page #1 on the Smartboard allows for students to randomly select a broad topic for students to examine as a topic for a piece of writing (or any other activity which requires topic selection). Step One (1) of the Brainstorming asks you to select a Broad Topic which students can then work from to narrow down their topic choice. One of the easiest ways is to select randomly from four main aspects of a young person’s life.

Step 4: Spin the Wheel on the Narrower Topic.

- Ask a student to come forward and click (or tap) on the spinning wheel to have the wheel spin to pick a Broad Topic.
- Once you have spun the topic wheel for the Broad Topic, you then select the SB Page located on the side of the Smartboard Display. Each page is numbered according to its place on the Broad Topic Wheel.

Step 5: Group Brainstorming for Narrowed Topics

- Now that you have narrowed down the topics that students have to select from, ask the group to come up with ideas of topics related directly with your Topic. For example, You may have had the following situation:
 - Broad Topic Wheel spins and selects “SCHOOL”
 - You have gone to Page 9 and spun the Wheel for the School Broad Topic.
 - The Topic of “School Rules” has come up on the wheel.
 - Click onto the next page on the side of the Smartboard lesson to start a brainstorming list of narrow topics. You should get students to volunteer ideas and then allow them to come forward and write their own suggestions onto a line on the screen page.
 - Ask the entire class to come up with topics related to the topic of “School Rules”. You may get items such as: dress code; cell phones; music players; laptops; lateness; missing a test; homework; swearing; fighting; theft; or bullying.

Step 6: Getting Students on Task

- By rolling the dice on the bottom of the page (ask a student to tap on each die to have it 'roll'), you can now select different aspects of "School Rules" for students to work on with their Thought Web Handout sheet.
- Line one has been left as 'blank' since rolling two dice will never allow for the selection of topic # 1.
 - * Variation # 1: You can have each student come forward and tap the dice to select their own topic. This allows each student a chance to use the Smartboard, as well as some variety in the essay work, and students cannot complain about their topics, since they had the chance to 'tap' for themselves.
 - Variation # 2: If your students are in small groups or rows, you can assign each group a random topic before they roll the dice. Give a sense of thrill to the selection, as well as allowing for some collaborative work among small groups of students.
- Pass out the thought web handouts which you have copied for each student. Ask them to write the narrowed down topic on the top of their thought web, along with their name, and begin to complete the webs with ideas, thoughts or information which they know about the topic.
- By putting SmartBoard page # 11 on the screen, you can remind students that they can look at the 5W+H idea for suggestions on their narrowed down topic.

Step 7: Following Through

- From here, the students take their thought webs and continue on with the writing. The timeline, steps and processes are covered throughout the rest of your lessons as appropriate.

Step 8: Follow Up

- Ask students to raise their hands in the air if they enjoyed randomly selecting the topics for their essays. Ask specifically if it helps those who have trouble making up their minds on what topic to cover. Students can raise their fingers in the air either as a 1-Yes / 2-No, or on a scale of 1-5 on how they felt about using this method to randomly make selections. A quick glance will tell you if this worked for your class or not.

Alternate Opportunities

- For teachers without a Smartboard in their rooms, a very similar activity can be hosted utilizing alternate approaches.

- Medium Technology: Smartboard software, installed on your computer, can still be used without the board itself. By projecting on the wall or screen, students can click on the spinning wheels or dice using the mouse.
 - Low Technology: Having a set of dice in your classroom would allow you to put numbered, brainstormed ideas up on the whiteboard. A roll of the dice by each student allows each to have some input into the selection of their topics.
- The spinning wheels can be easily changed, edited and adapted for other topics. Random generation of topics works well for lots of subjects and could be used for picking a variety of items in class.

Thought Web Organizer

