Using Facebook to Teach Inference

Saskatchewan School Library Association

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SASKATCHEWAN SCHOOL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

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This assignment aimed to have students practice the skill of making inferences using social networking tools familiar to them. Because Facebook is blocked in our school division, I created templates for students to fill in rather than have them create actual profiles.

Process

After reading a dystopian/post-apocalyptic novel, students were asked to create a Facebook page for one of the characters. As a group we talked about the typical content of a Facebook page (status updates, games, photos, interests, friends, relationship status), what information is generally posted (status updates) and the reasons that someone might post (to share, to brag, to complain, to explain, to rant).

We also discussed the style and tone of a status update. How do emoticons and acronyms like OMG or LOL help communication? How can they hinder it? What is the effect of a post all in upper case letters? What about the impact of multiple exclamation marks? We discussed the difference between a direct statement and "vaguebooking" - an unclear status update which prompts friends to ask more.

As we began the assignment, we also talked about who would be included in a character's circle of friends and what they might value enough to post photographs.

Students were then given a graphic organizer to help organize their wall posts. They identified an event and then had to write a corresponding wall post. This helped them focus on the quality of the status updates rather than become focused on the design of the account.

After students completed their organizer, they transferred their information into the PowerPoint template.

Students enjoyed this assignment and the quality of the inferences they made were high. Their familiarity with the "genre" of Facebook aided them in understanding character.

Assignment

Dystopian Facebook

As part of the character study, you will need to create a Facebook page for one of the characters in your novel. It most likely makes sense to choose one section of the book for creating updates rather than from the entire novel.

You will need to:

- Have 15-20 wall posts including status updates, events, etc. You should connect to events in the novel.
- You should assume the style and voice of the character. Focus your updates on the motivations and inner voices of the character.
- You will also need to complete the profile of the character and find a profile picture.
- You may use the templates provided or create one of your own.
- Instead of a date, use the page or chapter that you're drawing from

Status Updates/Wall posting (15 marks)	All status updates and wall postings are informative and clarify events, motivations and relationships. Responses from "friends" are also in character	Some status updates are vague or do not clearly illustrate events in the novel.	Most status updates are vague or do not clearly illustrate events in the novel.
Pictures (5 marks)	All pictures are relevant and appropriate. Creativity and careful selection is evident.	Some pictures are relevant and appropriate	Most pictures are irrelevant and inappropriate.
Character Info (10 marks)	Character info is informative and creative and correct. Insight into character's life is evident.	Character info is correct	Character info is incorrect.
Effort (5 marks)	Profile is comprehensive and creative. Goes above and beyond the assignment as described.	Profile meets requirements.	Page does not meet requirements

Rubric adapted from: https://kreftenglish.wikispaces.com/Dorian+Gray+Facebook+page+Assignment

Examples of unclear wall posts:

Harrison Bergeron I'm so hungry

Harrison Bergeron I'm so bored

Harrison Bergeron wishes it would stop raining.

Harrison Bergeron can't stand the buzzing in his ears. When is this going to stop???? Pg 5

Examples of good wall posts:

Harrison Bergeron thinks the lead ballerina must be pretty cute under that mask. I wonder if she can see past my red clown nose? Pg6

George Bergeron – Harrison, you need to... Actually I forget what you need. Nevermind.

Examples are based on the character of Harrison Bergeron in a short story of the same name written by Kurt Vonnegut.

Wall post organizer

Status updates, relationship status changes, name changes, groups joined, posts from other people, likes, comments on status updates etc. Once you have all your wall posts complete, create the order of the events with the most recent first and oldest last.

Order	Event and page	Wall Post
2	Harrison is in jail (page 1)	Harrison can't believe he is in jail. I'm smarter and stronger than these guards. I know I can get out.
1	Harrison breaks out of jail. (doesn't say)	Harrison is a free man. Not even chains and weights can keep me down.

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Facebook template

The templates for Facebook were created on PowerPoint slides. Please find them attached to this issue of The Medium, Winter 2011. Also included is an example of a profile based on The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins done by Julian Strait, a grade 10 student.