

Chalk: The Tools & Tales of Teachers

Overview:

Everyone is curious about the lives of teachers. In this lesson students watch the film “Chalk,” which chronicles the stories of teachers. They will interview teachers, write journal diary entries, and create a presentation about the personal, local, and national issues that impact the world of teachers.

Grade Level: 9-12

Subject:

English

Learning Objectives:

Students will do the following:

- ∞ Conduct interviews
- ∞ Analyze data
- ∞ Construct charts
- ∞ Engage in small-group and whole-group discussion
- ∞ Write in journals
- ∞ Conduct Internet research
- ∞ Create a class presentation

Learning Activities

Building Background

Activity One: Teacher Stories

The purpose of this activity is to help students investigate teacher stories by conducting interviews.

1. Read the following excerpt aloud to your students:

Chalk—A Breakthrough in Teacher Films

Movies about teachers generally adhere to a certain formula. A beleaguered new teacher is overwhelmed by appalling student behavior. The teacher comes to the brink of giving up but finally

has a small but meaningful breakthrough with one or more students. The teacher decides to succeed at all costs, even if it means giving up a personal life. The renewed effort works—a frenzy of bonding and learning ensues. The teacher is a hero! The students will go on to great things! Music swells. The End.

Ask your class to brainstorm a list of movies that feature teachers.

2. Ask your students to brainstorm a list of challenges that they think teachers face. Record students' responses.
3. Have the students conduct interviews of a minimum of three teachers about their experiences in the classroom, the reasons why they became teachers, and the challenges they face in their classrooms. Students may work individually, in pairs or in small groups to conduct their interviews.
4. Provide time for the students to share their interview research with their classmates. Lead a class discussion about the students' findings.

Activity Two: View the Film

1. Have the students watch the film "Chalk," which is a mockumentary that chronicles the lives of teachers in a fictional high school.
2. Discuss students' responses to the film.

Steps for Learning

Activity One: Team Music

The purpose of this activity is to help students compare their teacher interviews with the film.

1. Divide the class into small groups. Ask each group to create a chart comparing the experiences and challenges the teachers they interviewed faced and the experiences and challenges of the teachers portrayed in the film.
2. Invite each group to share its work with the class. Discuss the differences and similarities in each group's presentation.

Activity Two: This Is What I Really Think

1. Ask your students to choose a character from "Chalk" and write an imaginary journal entry from the perspective of that person.
2. Provide time for students to share their journal entries with the class. Discuss the issues raised in the students' work.

Activity Three: Learn About Teaching

1. Divide the class into small groups. Ask each group to conduct research on teacher challenges. Tell the students that they may choose a personal issue, a local issue, or a national issue that impacts teachers' lives. You may wish to provide students with the following resources to begin their research:

- ∞ <http://www.teacherscount.org/education-news/>
- ∞ <http://www.teacherscount.org/honoring/browse.php>

2. Ask each group to create a presentation to share with the entire class.

Extension Activities

Create a Space for Stories

1. Create a class website to share students' thoughts and research about the world of teachers.

National Education Standards

www.mcrel.org

READING

Standard 7.

Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/standardDetails.asp?subjectID=7&standardID=7>

Level IV (Grades 9-12)

1. Uses reading skills and strategies to understand a variety of informational texts (e.g., textbooks, biographical sketches, letters, diaries, directions, procedures, magazines, essays, primary source historical documents, editorials, news stories, periodicals, catalogs, job-related materials, schedules, speeches, memoranda, public documents, maps)

WRITING

Standard 4.

Gathers and uses information for research purposes

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/standardDetails.asp?subjectID=7&standardID=4>

2. Uses a variety of print and electronic sources to gather information for research topics (e.g., news sources such as magazines, radio, television, newspapers; government publications; microfiche; telephone information services; databases; field studies; speeches; technical documents; periodicals; Internet)

3. Uses a variety of primary sources to gather information for research topics

WORKING WITH OTHERS

Standard 1.

Contributes to the overall effort of a group

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/Benchmark.asp?SubjectID=22&StandardID=1>

Level IV (Grade K-12)