

Lesson 2: The Role of an Expert

by Kim Irvine

Grade Level(s)

Grades 8-12

Lesson Overview

Students will take on the role of zombie pandemic researcher and expert. They have been contracted by their town to advise community leaders on how best to inform the community at large about the dangers of the zombie pandemic in the form of a press release. Using the texts introduced in Lesson 1, students will conduct their own research. Based on that research, students will develop a claim about what is the most pertinent information to release to the public. Since press releases are by nature brief, this writing will be limited to 250 words and crafted to fit within the parameters of an official press release form.

Learning Objectives

Students will read, discuss, collaborate, refine, and synthesize information from the texts and form a claim. Students will write an argumentation paper in the form of a press release from their perspective as an expert consultant researcher. The writing should be concise with the claim supported from the texts, including elaboration and citations.

Students will also generate questions for the interviews of the users. These questions along with all notes, vocabulary, and research should be written in their field research journals. (These can be any kind of notebooks.)

Preparation

- Keep students in the same heterogeneous groups of four.
- Maintain vocabulary list and zombie definition posted in the front of class. Be sure to add to these lists as new information arises.

Materials and Resources

- Computers (if possible)
- Student notebooks
- Press Release Form (available to download with this unit)

Activity 1: Argumentation Writing Assignment: Press Release (45 Minutes)

- Now that the class has defined “zombie” for the purposes of this exercise, inform the students that their role is changing. Now, they are experts on the zombie pandemic and have been asked by the leaders of the community to design a prototype to help ensure the survival of their town.
- In each group have students briefly review the summaries of the texts generated by their peers. (This was Activity Two from Lesson 1.) Have them make notes in their notebooks of specific facts they find interesting. Give all students access to all texts. This can be done electronically, or on paper.
- Have students use the provided texts to explore the ideas discussed in class. This is a short writing assignment. Each student will write a press release about a zombie pandemic and how it impacts their town. Students must form a claim about what is the most important information for their community and support their claim with evidence from the texts. They may focus on evacuation procedures, avoiding contracting the disease, or any other focus they discover through their research as long as all claims are backed up with valid evidence from the texts. Remind the students that this writing must not only be complete, but also extremely concise. They are limited to 250 words to get their claim, support, and elaboration across to the public. Use the “Press Release Form” provided.
- Have students share their press releases in their groups with the purpose of obtaining feedback from their peers. Give students an opportunity to revise based on that feedback.

Activity 2: Question Generation for Community Leaders (20 Minutes)

- Explain to the students that they will be interviewing a few members of the community that will be our “users.” These community leaders are charged with the responsibility of keeping the community safe. They each have unique perspectives and are highly trained for emergency situations. These experts will be available for questions from the students as they learn to empathize with the “users” to determine their needs and concerns for keeping the community safe in the event of a zombie pandemic. Remind students of their roles as zombie pandemic specialist researchers.
- In their groups, students will use their research to generate questions pertinent to protecting the community. They will practice interviewing techniques and listening skills through role-playing and cueing. In the next lesson, the collaborative groups will share out the best questions as the class collaborates as a whole to determine an agreed on list of questions and follow up questions.

Troubleshooting

- Make sure all technology is functioning and all texts are accessible to all students. If students are not practiced in the skill of peer reviewing, practice this procedure to avoid confusion.
- If students have not had practice with listening skills in the interviewing process, consider doing a quick skit of examples of good and poor interviewing. Extension: Use these two videos to model good and poor interviewing skills. Have a classroom discussion on what good and poor interviews look like.
 - Good Interviewing skills: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eNMTJTnrTQQ>
 - Poor interviewing skills: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U4UKwd0KExc>

Assessment

Quick journal activities for learning indicators focusing on the information gleaned from the texts and how students plan to incorporate them into their designs would be a great assessment of conceptual understanding.