

Will Your Neighborhood Survive the Zombie Apocalypse?

by Kim Irvine

Students will be designing a prototype that helps ensure the survival of their community in the event of a zombie pandemic apocalypse.

Through engaging in this challenge, students will learn...

This unit is designed to help students authentically engage in problem solving, research, brainstorming, prototype design, speaking and listening skills, writing, reading, and presentation skills. The core standards and skills covered are listed below. Students will examine and analyze the impact of a zombie apocalypse in their town. Students will interview people in their community to promote creative thinking to solve problems. The learning objectives will be centered on how to respond to a disaster by maximizing survival for the community.



Kim in her classroom

These lessons can be used for any grade from 8th grade up to 12th grade. Skills listed are general and can be focused for specific grade levels as needed for differentiation and grade appropriateness.

Standards Addressed

Reading Standards

Reading: Literature Standard 1 - Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

Reading: Informational Text Standard 1 - Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

Reading: Informational Text Standard 3 - Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

Reading: Informational Text Standard 4 - Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10).

Reading: Informational Text Standard 7 - Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

Writing Standards

Writing Standard 1 - Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

Writing Standard 6 - Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

Writing Standard 7 - Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Writing Standard 9 - Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Writing Standard 10 - Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes.

Language Standards

Language Standard 1 - Demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Language Standard 2 - Demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Speaking and Listening Standards

Speaking and Listening Standard 1 – (b) Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed. c. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives. (d) Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

Speaking and Listening Standard 2 - Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

Speaking and Listening Standard 4 - Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, and alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

Speaking and Listening Standard 5 - Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

Speaking and Listening Standard 6 - Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Lesson 1: Why the Zombie Apocalypse?

Students will be introduced to the design space by reading primary source documents from government entities that use the concept of a zombie apocalypse for disaster training. Students will also be introduced to other differentiated texts for close reading and research. Interviewing and questioning skills will be explored and reinforced. Students will begin to craft questions implementing the information gleaned from their research and collaborative discussions.

Lesson 2: Taking on the Role of an Expert

Students will be taking on the role of zombie pandemic researcher and expert. They have been contracted by their town to advise the community leaders how best to inform the community at large about the dangers of the zombie pandemic in the form of a press release.

Lesson 3: Collaborative Questioning

In learning teams, students will interview several community leaders as “users” who need design thinking to ensure the survival of their community in the event of a zombie apocalypse.

Lesson 4: Prototype Development

In learning teams, students will synthesize information gleaned from reading, research, feedback, collaboration, and the community leaders to design a prototype.