

PDF - WEBQUEST : USING INTERNET RESOURCES FOR COOPERATIVE INQUIRY - researchcub.info

AS THE SPEED, reliability, and availability of the Internet improve, teachers are beginning to reap the advantages of this vast repository of information for social studies teaching and learning. Risinger and Braun have argued that the growth of the Internet will affect the social studies more than any other subject area. (1) Teachers may at last be able to engage students in the inquiry learning that was so cumbersome before the advent of nearly instant access to digitized documents, photographs, music, art, and databases. These advantages, however, must be weighed against the potential pitfalls of the Internet as an instructional resource. The presence of inappropriate and offensive material on the Internet suggests the need for "lifeguards" as students surf into cyberspace. (2) A WebQuest may be defined as an inquiry-oriented activity in which most or all of the information used by learners is drawn from the Internet. (3) The WebQuest approach offers access to online primary sources, a structure for evaluating those sources, and teacher supervision in identifying appropriate and relevant content. The teacher selects websites and then creates a web page that guides the students through five stages—Introduction, Task, Process, Evaluation, and Conclusion—as follows:

- \* Introduction: provides key background information and should motivate students with an intriguing question or problem.
- \* Task: describes the final product expected of the students. The final product may be as elaborate as an oral presentation using PowerPoint, or as basic as a poster depicting the students' findings.
- \* Process: gives step-by-step instructions for completing the task, as well as the list of resources needed to complete each step. Students are provided with links to Internet resources selected by the teacher, as well as a list of additional off-line sources needed to complete the task. WebQuest resources might include government or educational websites, online searchable databases, e-mail addresses of experts, and sources physically available in the classroom.
- \* Evaluation: explains how learners will be assessed on their final product.
- \* Conclusion: summarizes the main goals of the activity and encourages additional investigations on related topics.

The following is one example of a WebQuest in use by elementary students. Exploring Ancient Egypt in Cyberspace Sixth grade students at Machesney Elementary School near Rockford, Illinois, recently engaged in a WebQuest study of Ancient Egypt. After planning the structure of the activity, we used a WebQuest template to create a web page describing each stage of the project. (4) In the introduction to our WebQuest, students were told that they would be traveling back in time between 2000 and 5000 years to the land that we know as Egypt. We posed questions such as, "What do you think we will see?" "How will the people communicate with one another?" "What will their daily lives be like?" and "What kinds of scientific advances will they be working on that will still be around today?" The task we posed for the students was to gather information about Ancient Egypt to be placed in a Time Traveler's Guidebook. Each student created a guidebook that included three entries for each of the learning stations they visited. The learning stations included (1) the Land and Time, (2) Daily Life, (3) People and Culture, (4) Arts, (5) Science and Technology, and (6) Mummies and Pyramids. Students selected the information to include in the guidebooks based on what they thought would be most

important for a traveler in Ancient Egypt to know. The guidebooks consisted of pocket pages that allowed students to insert cards with drawings and descriptions of significant facts. The process section of our WebQuest guided students through six learning stations over a two-week period. Teams of five or six students worked at a new station each day.

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