A WebQuest About WebQuests
Middle School / High School Version
by Bernie Dodge

Introduction

Since early in 1995, teachers everywhere have learned how to use the web well by adopting the WebQuest format to create inquiry-oriented lessons. But what exactly is a WebQuest? What does it feel like to do one? How do you know a good one when you see it? In the space of 90 minutes, you're going to grapple with these questions and more.

The Task

To develop great WebQuests, you need to develop a thorough understanding of the different possibilities open to you as you create web-based lessons. One way for you to get there is to critically analyze a number of webquest examples and discuss them from multiple perspectives. That's your task in this exercise.

By the end of this lesson, you and your group will answer these questions:

1. Which two of example WebQuests listed below are the best ones? Why?
2. Which two are the worst? Why?
3. What do best and worst mean to you?

Resources

Here are the sites you'll be analyzing:

- [Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?](#) - Analyze several paths to success
- [Gallery of Art-i-Facts](#) - Design an art museum wing and select non-Western art to fill it
- [Conflict Yellowstone Wolves](#) - Take a stand on the reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone
- [The Gilded Age](#) - Create a documentary on this historical period
- [Extra, Extra... Read All About It](#) - Analyze the world of the Great Gatsby

The Process
1. First, each participant will have a hard copy of the worksheet. To answer the questions given above, you'll break into groups of four. Within the group, each of you will take on one of the following roles:

**The Efficiency Expert:** You value time a great deal. You believe that too much time is wasted in today's classrooms on unfocused activity and learners not knowing what they should be doing at a given moment. To you, a good WebQuest is one that delivers the most learning bang for the buck. If it's a short, unambitious activity that teaches a small thing well, then you like it. If it's a longterm activity, it had better deliver a deep understanding of the topic it covers, in your view.

**The Affiliator:** To you, the best learning activities are those in which students learn to work together. WebQuests that force collaboration and create a need for discussion and consensus are the best in your view. If a WebQuest could be done by a student working alone, it leaves you cold.

**The Altitudinist:** Higher level thinking is everything to you. There's too much emphasis on factual recall in schools today. The only justification for bringing technology into schools is if it opens up the possibility that students will have to analyze information, synthesize multiple perspectives, and take a stance on the merits of something. You also value sites that allow for some creative expression on the part of the learner.

**The Technophile:** You love this internet thang. To you, the best WebQuest is one that makes the best use of the technology of the Web. If a WebQuest has attractive colors, animated gifs, and lots of links to interesting sites, you love it. If it makes minimal use of the Web, you'd rather use a worksheet.

2.

3. Individually, you'll examine each of the sites on the list of resources and use the worksheet to jot down some notes of your opinions of each from the perspective of your role. You'll need to examine each site fairly quickly. Don't spend more than 10 minutes on any one site.

4. When everyone in the group has seen all the sites, it's time to get together to answer the questions. One way to proceed would be to go around and poll each team member for the best two and worst two from their perspective. Pay attention to each of the other perspectives, even if at first you think you might disagree with them.

5. There will probably not be unanimous agreement, so the next step is to talk together to hammer out a compromise consensus about your team's nominations for best and worst. Pool your perspectives and see if you can agree on what's best for the learner.

6. One person in each group should open up SimpleText or Inspiration to record the group's thoughts.
7. When debriefing time is called, use this file to speak from as you report your results to the whole class. Do you think the other groups will agree with your conclusions?

**Conclusion**

 Ideally, this exercise will provide you with a larger pool of ideas to work with on your final project. The best WebQuest is yet to be written. It might be yours!

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