

Inquiry Mini-Lessons

Evaluating Possible Resources for Usefulness

Once students have selected the category of resource they will use (e.g., Websites, books, magazines, etc.), they need to understand how to evaluate the usefulness of the resource for their inquiry question.

Time: 20 minutes

Materials:

- a collection of different types of texts, including books, magazines, Websites, pictures, audio clips, DVDs (The specific texts will depend on the type of inquiry and the needs of your students.)

- chart paper and marker, or interactive whiteboard

Grouping: whole class and partners

Procedure:

1. Remind students that once they have chosen the type of resource they want to use, they will have to evaluate which specific resources in that category are really helpful as they investigate their inquiry question.

Once we have selected the type of resource we will use, we need to ask ourselves, “How will I know which of these magazines (books, DVDs, Websites, etc.) will be most helpful for my investigation?”
2. Share your inquiry question with the class, e.g., “How we can help everyone to have clean water?” Have students brainstorm the types of words you might expect to find when you are researching this question (e.g., *dirty, poison, drinking, clean, polluted*).
3. Tell students that you have decided to use books as your main resource and select several books from the class collection. (Include at least one that has nothing to do with water and the environment). In turn, choose one of the books, read the title aloud, and turn to the index and table of contents and search for several of the words the students have brainstormed. Write the title of the book on chart paper or interactive whiteboard and jot down what you find in the table of contents and in the index.

First, I will look at the table of contents and then in the index at the back of the book to see if I can find any of the words we’ve listed, such as “drinking” and “polluted.” Then I’m going to make a few notes about what I find.
4. Ask students to decide which of the books would be more useful in researching this inquiry question and ask them to give evidence for their selection(s).
5. Tell students you have now decided to use an Internet search as your main resource. Search several of the brainstormed words, and have students discuss how complex or useful the search results are.
6. With the students, make a checklist on chart paper of what they might look for in a useful resource. Possible criteria include:
 - It contains words related to my topic.
 - The information is easy to find.
 - Pictures are related to my topic.

- It has a table of contents, index, glossary, headings, or diagrams with labels that will help me to find information in text.
 - There are not too many extra facts.
 - I can read the information.
 - It makes sense to me.
7. Ask students to think about their own inquiry questions, and brainstorm words they might expect to use in their investigation.
 8. Invite students to choose a resource and to evaluate it using their brainstormed evaluation checklist.

Teaching Tip: Students may need practice over several sessions to evaluate resources from the range in the classroom collection. If several students have similar inquiry questions, this could be an opportunity for some partner sharing.