



CLASSROOM VIDEO • VIEWING GUIDE

TEACHING STRATEGY: USING JOURNALS AT THE BEGINNING AND END OF A LESSON

Overview

In this classroom video, history teacher Kevin Toro uses journals with his students at both the beginning and the end of a lesson. A journal is an important tool for helping students develop their ability to reflect, to critically examine their surroundings from multiple perspectives, and to make informed judgments about what they see and hear. Many students find that writing or drawing in a journal helps them process ideas, formulate questions, and retain information. Journals make learning visible by providing a safe, accessible space for

students to share thoughts, feelings, and uncertainties. In this way, journals are also an assessment tool: you can use them to better understand what your students know, what they are struggling to understand, and how their thinking has changed over time. Journals also help nurture classroom community and offer a way for you to build relationships with your students through reading and commenting on their journals. Frequent journal writing helps students become more fluent in expressing their ideas when writing or speaking.

Questions to Consider

1. At **0:13**, Mr. Toro describes a disconnect between students' writing and speaking in class. What is this disconnect, and why does it happen?
 2. At **0:40**, Mr. Toro says that his students "know that there are going to be outcomes that are going to be assessed." If you use journals, how have you assessed them? If you are planning to use journals in the future, how will they be assessed?
 3. At **3:22**, students have had the opportunity to return to their journals and revisit the prompt they considered at the beginning of the lesson. What seems to be the teacher's rationale for bookending the lesson with two opportunities for journaling? How has students' thinking moved from their initial journal entry to this one?
 4. How is journaling different from other kinds of writing that students do? How is journal writing a tool for thinking in this lesson?
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Featured

Kevin Toro

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Video Goals

- **Observe** how journals can be used at the beginning and end of a lesson to create space and time for student reflection, and to witness how student thinking "moves" over the span of a lesson.
- **Consider** how you might use journals in your own classroom.
- **See** the use of journals in action.

Lesson Resources

- [Teaching Strategy: Journals in a Facing History Classroom](#)