

Take Note of That!
Six Traits: Ideas and Content Lesson

Developed by: Jan Bryan, Ed. D., AlphaSmart, Inc.

Grade level: Intermediate grades – High School

Content areas: English Language Arts
Six Traits Writing – Developing Ideas and Content

Invitation: Ideas and content are the heart of the message. In the same way, details are the heart of ideas and content. This lesson focuses on developing ideas and content, one of the six traits of outstanding writing.

Assessment: Students develop observation skills as they examine microscopic images and note details.

Technology tools

Dana by AlphaSmart or Dana Wireless
Printer
Computer
AlphaWord software
PiCo Map <http://www.goknow.com>

Internet sites:

Learn about Six Traits writing from the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory
<http://www.nwrel.org/assessment/scoring.asp?odelay=3&d=1&r=1#definition>

Browse educational resources at the Smithsonian.
<http://www.smithsonianeducation.org>

Observe a topical map of Mars from the Smithsonian
<http://www.si.edu/research/Mars/fig2.htm>

Additional resources:

Traditional science text resources
Hand held microscopes
Alphabet City (Stephen T. Johnson, Kristin Gilson (Eds.))

National Standards for Students

National Educational Technology Standards

- Understand basic concepts and operations
- Practice responsible use
- Use technology tools to enhance learning, collaborate, publish and promote creativity.
- Use telecommunications and a variety of media and formats to communicate.
- Locate, evaluate and share information

National Science Teachers Association

- Science as inquiry
- Physical science
- Science and technology

National Council of Teachers of English

- Employ a wide range of writing strategies
- Apply knowledge of language structure and conventions
- Conduct research
- Use technological and information resources
- Participate in literacy communities

For a detailed explanation of NETS for Students visit: http://cnets.iste.org/students/s_stands.html

Learn more about NCTE Standards at: <http://www.ncte.org/about/over/standards/110846.htm>

For a detailed explanation of NSTA Standards for Students visit: <http://books.nap.edu/html/nses/6a.html>

Step-by-Step

Step 1: Preparation

Study the six traits of writing. Several sites offer resources and teaching ideas. The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory offers extensive resources for the six traits. Access their site at <http://www.nwrel.org/assessment/departement.asp?d=1>.

Search images online to find extreme magnification images of insects, minerals, amoeba, etc. The Smithsonian Institution online is an excellent resource of quality images. Visit <http://www.smithsonianeducation.org> to learn more.

If you have access to handheld microscopes, use these to collect images.

Step 2: Observation

Students power on Dana and launch AlphaWord. As they observe projected images, or images located in traditional science resources, such as textbooks and journals, they record observations. Guide observations with open ended questions such as, “What do you notice that someone might overlook if they were not observing carefully?” and “What do you see that is extraordinary or unusual?” and “What piques your interest?”

Step 3: Share observations

Students name and save AlphaWord documents. Beam observations and compare.

Step 4: Share with another

Launch AlphaWord and open a new document. Students share their noted observations with varied intended audiences. For example, describe the image as if the student were writing to a musician or a journalist, etc. Beam to share narratives and note how the ideas and content of the writing changed when the interest and characteristics of the intended reader changed.

Step 5: Making the familiar strange

Share the book, Alphabet City, Johnson and Gilson, Eds. (This book features photography of everyday objects in an urban setting, such as a manhole cover or park bench, and finds each letter of the alphabet suggested by the shapes of the objects photographed.) Challenge students to take Dana's outside and find letters of the alphabet in the immediate surroundings. Students write descriptive sentences explaining where to find each letter. Beam and send students to find each other's letters. If digital cameras are available, students could photograph objects, write text with Dana and create an alphabet book for primary grades.