

ASNE LESSON PLAN FORMAT

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Title: Getting the Details, Asking the Right Questions: Locker Exam

- I. Overview and rationale:** I find that many of my first year journalism students tend to ask interviewees the same generic question (and thus receive the same generic answers regardless of who is interviewed.) Another thing that these newbies need to understand is the difference between open ended and close ended questions. I was inspired by ___'s Car Raid lesson plan, but found that logistics and liability would not allow us to venture out into the school's parking lot during the school day. Therefore, I thought that presenting lockers to the students and having them note fine details about what the owner stored there (or I planted there) would work better for my situation. This multi-faceted lesson plan is designed to help students use details to develop open ended, viable interview questions.
- II. Goals for understanding:** Students will show the importance of observation when approaching an interviewee; Students will plan and devise questions relative to the observations they have conducted re: interviewee possessions and style; Students will contact and interview based on observations; Students will demonstrate understanding of open ended questions and their value over close ended questions; Students will write and share articles about their subjects using their interviews.
- III. Essential Questions:** What is the importance of detail and prior investigation when developing interview questions? What is the value of open ended questions and how can these be developed prior to the interviewing process? How can high school students become more comfortable and confident in approaching an interviewee?
- IV. Critical Engagement Questions:** Why is it essential for interviewers to be fully prepared when approaching their subjects? Whose responsibility is it to report accurately? Have you ever felt that interviewees are not fully answering your questions because they find your questions boring? How can you as a student become a better, more confident reporter?
- V. Overview and Timeline:** For this lesson plan to be effective, teachers should coordinate most components early, choosing to use either a cooperative student's locker (be sure to preview to approve appropriateness and that there are enough items/organization of interest) OR a locker that has been set up for the scene.

Activity 1 (One 45 minute class)

Students should read and make notes on Scanlon's article "How journalists can become better writers." This will provide a context and a "jumping off point" to activity 1.

Begin the class with a brief discussion of the article. Which of Scanlon's points resonated? Which did you find most relevant? Bring the discussion to open ended vs. close ended questions. Discuss the value of preparing for an interview to AVOID getting stuck with boring and/or one word answers.

Lead the discussion toward the topic of preparing questions that are thoughtful and thought provoking prior to the interview. What if you have to develop questions regarding a person you know little about? What if you could research into this person's space prior to the task? What details would you find helpful and relevant to developing questions?

Give each student and handout and explain that they have the opportunity now to explore a locker and seek details that would spark open ended questions for a future interview with the owner.

Take students to view locker. Larger classes might benefit from more than one locker subject.

Return to class. Discuss observations. Formulate questions. Complete Steps 1-2 of handout. Have students share questions and offer feedback. Advise students that the owner will be in our class tomorrow for his interview. I have a class of 12 students, so I would divide them into groups of three and allow the last few minutes of class for them to collaborate on combining their questions for maximum benefits.

Activity 2 (One 45 minute class)

The owner of the locker is IN CLASS and ready to be interviewed! Interviewers and audience should take copious notes and photographs for upcoming article. Complete Steps 3-4 of handout.

Once interviews are completed, students should begin writing their articles using only their interview results and locker observations. Each student is responsible for an article of 450-550 words with at least 1 picture and/or one video compilation.

VI. Assessment:

Formative assessment may include: completion of handout; participation in class discussions; participation in interview process.

Summative assessment would include the written article and accompanying graphic.

References:

Scanlon, Chip. "How journalists can become better writers." *Poynter*. 4 Mar. 2013. Web. 9 July 2013.

<www.poynter.org>.

Wiederspohn, Elizabeth. "Car Raid! Preparing for an Interview." Web. 5 July 2013. <www.hsj.org>.

Materials attached:

1. Notes on a Locker (worksheet, Word file).
2. Copy of Scanlon article