



Signature in the Schools: Here's the Deal

Exercise: *Posing Questions of an Era*

Subject(s): History, Theater, English

Goals: Students will be able to:

Promote collaboration with others both inside and outside the classroom.

Exercise their agency as members of the classroom community.

Articulate their values for their community and make arguments in their favor.

Distinguish one's own ideas from information created or discovered by others.

Demonstrate nonverbal techniques including, but not limited to, eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, and stance.

Show Connection:

In *Here's the Deal*, Mrs. Day asks the students to make connections between their current situation and the situations that led to the development of the New Deal. Before any of us can make those kinds of connections, we must understand our current situation better.

Resources:

[United States History Timeline](#)

[World History Timeline](#)

Set-Up:

Divide the students into groups of equal sizes for breakout rooms sessions that will take place later in the lesson. (We recommend doing this ahead of time for the sake of saving time, focusing on the exercise, and having fun with the students.)

Description:

Part 1: Brainstorming It

Using the chat feature on your remote learning platform, as a class brainstorm a list of notable events / instances / phenomena (political, economic, social, etc.) that students feel have left a distinct impression on citizens over the past **six** years. These could be historical events, passing fads, statements that people have said. Encourage students to get creative and really dive into the ocean that is their memory with this brainstorming session.

This number can be adapted to whatever best suits the needs of the classroom. This could also cover specific eras of history currently being studied, specific novels, characters etc.

Using the chat feature (or a Nearpod collaboration board or a Padlet board), work together to brainstorm a list of specific emotions and states of being that you feel might best label some of the events. (Remind students that there is no right or wrong way to feel for any of the options listed in the first brainstorm. We all experience things in very different ways and no person's emotional responses are invalid.)

Part 2: Physicalizing It

Ask students to stand up and to find a spot in the room that gives them room to move.

The teacher then selects an event from the brainstorming session and one of the emotional responses to that event listed. Share what you've selected with the class.

Explain to the students that you will countdown to one. Once you hit one, the students should jump into a pose, like they're a statue, that represents someone experiencing the selected event and emotion. Students should use their full body! (Feel it in your fingers! In your shoulders!) If students are not used to participating on camera, time for preparing with cameras off is encouraged. Do several rounds of this, regularly selecting new events and emotions.

If the group is comfortable with each other, you can ask half the group to pose while the other half observes and makes observations before swapping groups out.

Part 3: Rehearse and Presenting It

Once they have shown some improvement in showing their emotional responses physically, invite the students to take a seat. Instructions to the students may sound like this. "You will be placed in groups to take this to the next level. In these groups, I would like you to identify the five most important and impactful events from this list, the ones that you feel had a significant impact on American citizens over the past six years. As a group, choose five events and corresponding emotions and

create a group pose for each of the five events. Each group will present their five poses to the rest of the class. Once you've completed your poses, rehearse transitioning from one to the next so you all remember the order. Finally, prepare a title for your presentation. The title should frame the era. What would *you* call the last six years of American history?

Send each group into its own breakout room and give them time to prepare (we recommend 10-15 minutes.) Take time with each group to answer questions and to coach them. Things students should consider while preparing their presentations:

Physical relationships: How can you communicate who has the power in the image? Who is emotionally close? How do you accomplish that on a virtual platform?

Camera relationship: How does your proximity to the camera or other objects in your space affect the message of each pose? Would moving the camera to a different level communicate your message more effectively?

Authenticity: Do the poses feel emotionally authentic and respectful? Remember, these are real events that affected real people!

Once groups have had sufficient rehearsal and coaching time, bring them back together into the main space. Review the criteria you are expecting each group to present.

Have each group present their pose pieces. Discuss either after each group presents their piece or following the last presentation.

*What did you see that you liked? What are you curious to learn more about?
What do you have questions for regarding the moments and emotions chosen?*

Alternative(s):

Students may also work as individuals on this exercise, creating their own personal poses.

Instead of a series of poses, students may also create a short 10-line poem exploring the range of time in question. Each line of the poem should explore either a different "event" or state of being the population experienced.

Discussion:

Do you feel that the present era has been "defined" in any way? If so, how do you think it has been defined? Is it possible for eras to have different definitions and "keystones" among different populations?

If you were to do this exercise but narrow the focus to just your own life, what moments / events / instances would you choose? What emotions would you say typify your life and the moments that have made it up so far?