

Being creative and innovative in a history unit - example

Context

A first year History unit aims to develop an understanding of the processes of historical change through the development of skills that may then be employed in the study of past and contemporary communities. These outcomes are addressed:

- Identify further aspects of the relationship between theory and practice in cultural practice; and
- Locate aspects of their own practice culturally.

Students' courage and confidence to be creative and innovative is developed in this history context when students create connections between physical and social changes and employ poetic thinking to portray those changes in new and imaginative ways. Building an explicit thinking activity into the teaching and learning programme for the unit supports this outcome.

Learning Activity

Starting with the statement that "Revolution is when a stick is stuck into the spinning spokes of the wheel of a society" students are asked to share a time when they, or someone they knew, suddenly changed the way they had been doing something and began to do it completely differently.

Students were then given their assessment task: to design a Metaphor Machine to represent a historical revolution of their choice. Each function of the Metaphor Machine had to be bound by a principle that existed in the physical world, but which was then figuratively connected by student analysis and imagination, to an aspect of the chosen revolution (portray in new and imaginative ways). This project encouraged students to explore, through artistic expression, the connections between physical and social changes (create connections between physical and social changes). They had to come to grips with the complexity, the brilliant and passionate people, the surprising events, and the bold actions that were the drivers for their chosen revolution, and portray them using their Metaphor Machine.

Assessment

The minor assignment for the unit (worth 20%) was the creation of the Metaphor Machine, which was required to represent the student's chosen historical revolution and the connections evident between the physical world portrayed and their chosen revolution. These connections were assessed using the SOLO taxonomy (pre-structural, multi-structural thinking). Students were asked to hand in drafts demonstrating the progression of their thinking so that they could also be assessed on the fluency, flexibility and originality of their ideas (their creativity).