

Teaching Students How to Synthesize in a Literature Review



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Why?

- Literature reviews are a common assignment
- Students struggle with synthesis
- Significant literature on how the writing process, but less on explanations of literature reviews

Anticipated Learning Outcomes

- By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:
 - Synthesize sources in a thematically organized manner
 - Summarize the theme and findings in well-written introductory sentences
 - Properly cite the scholarly sources in the chosen written style

Materials Needed

- Face-to-face:
 - Printer and paper for:
 - Handout and nine separate sources
 - Quick reference for citations in APA or chosen style
- Online:
 - Blackboard
 - Program to share documents, such as Google Docs or Microsoft Word Line
 - Link to website that provides information about APA citations (such as OWL at Purdue)

Activity Preparation

- Choose a topic of interest to your class
- Identify three themes within the literature on the chosen topic
- Create fake sources that relate to the three themes
- Face-to-Face: Print and cut the sources into strips so students can physically move them around on their desks for the activity
- Online: Create a document with the fake sources listed then link to this document through a “test” in Blackboard; Within Blackboard, you will enter six questions, using the “essay” option

Activity

- Refresh students on what a literature review is
- Face-to-Face: Have students work in threes to complete the questions on the provided handout
- Online: Open the link with the sources and OWL at Purdue, have students answer each of the questions within Blackboard

Following the Activity

- Face-to-Face: Collect the handout and make corrections as needed
- Online: Give feedback through the gradebook, including references to the OWL at Purdue site if needed
- Note common problems and address them with the entire class during the next class period

Assessment Examples

- An exceptional activity would include the following:
 - Appropriate identification of common themes in the sources
 - Accurately written introductory sentences that incorporate multiple sources within a theme
 - Correctly written in-text citations, using the chosen writing style