

Cognitive Tools Cheat Sheet

Somatic Cognitive Tools

Bodily senses

How can the topic engage the embodied nature of the mind or the enminded nature of the body? How can the body's senses evoke emotion and contribute to learning the topic?

Emotions

How can emotional responses be evoked? In what ways can the topic engage students as "perfinkers"? (That is, tie up perception, feeling and thought?)

Humor

What is unexpected, playful, or incongruous in the topic?

Musicality, Rhythm, Pattern

What patterns contribute to the meaning of the topic? How might students track different rhythms or patterns as part of their learning?

Gesture / Communication / Intentionality

How can the body be used to evoke meaning or to convey an idea central to the topic?

Mythic Cognitive Tools

Story

What is the story on this topic? How can we select content to bring out emotional meaning? Would inventing a character help tell the story? Can we personify elements of the topic?

Binary Opposites

What emotionally charged binary opposites will help to tell the story of this topic?

Metaphor

What metaphors will help engage student's emotions? How can you involve students in the creation of metaphors to demonstrate and improve their understanding of the topic?

Mystery and Puzzles

What mysteries can be found within the topic? Can historical mysteries be recreated to help students engage emotionally with the topic? Look for both puzzles that can be solved as well as still unsolved mysteries to ponder.

Games and Drama

Can you recreate the topic in a game or play? How can the students place themselves into the story of the topic?

Joking and Humor

What double meanings can be found within the topic and how can you use that double meaning to bring out the absurd or incongruous elements?

Forming Images

What vivid mental image (formed through oral language) will engage the student's emotions and tell them how to feel.

Rhyme, and Rhythm of Spoken Language

How can the topic be explored through the music of oral language: rhyme, alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhythm and meter, etc. Can you take familiar rhymes or patterns and adapt them to fit the topic?

Romantic Cognitive Tools

Heroic Qualities

What heroic qualities can be found within the topic such as courage, kindness, ingenuity, perseverance and loyalty? How can you attribute these qualities to inanimate objects that are central to the topic - the courageous tree

Extremes and Limits

How can we explain the topic within extremes or limits such as greatest, most dangerous, biggest, smallest or strangest?

Revolt and Idealism

What ideals or challenges to the norm are evident within the topic?

Graphic Organizers

What visual tools such as lists, flowcharts and diagrams will make it easier for the eye to retrieve information?

Humanizing of Meaning and Personification

Can you attribute the heroic qualities to items central to the topic?
(the courageous tree)

Who is the person behind this topic? What were they like? Why was it created? What is the historic source of this topic?

Collecting and Organizing

Are there limited sets within the topic that can be collected?

How can the student become an expert in one area by collecting details?

Change of Context and Role Play

How can a change in context or a point of view change or add to the emotional backbone of the story"

Philosophic Cognitive Tools

Craving for Generality (Powerful Theories)

What generality can be found within the topic? What great organizing theory or idea can be used to explain the topic?

Processes

What are the general causal chains, networks or systems that can be seen within the topic? How does everything work together?

Hypothesis and Experiment

In what ways can students test the generalized ideas or theories on the topic?

Search for Authority and Truth

What "absolute" Truths can be found within the topic? How can authority be established?

Anomalies of General Schemes

What small anomalies can be introduced to challenge and refine the theories or generalized ideas of the topic?

Satire

Are there ways to view anomalies in the theories or general schemes of the topic using satire?

Definition of Self

How can students see themselves within the topic? How can they define themselves and within the metanarrative of the topic? What part can they play?