INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES



Six-Word Memoirs

This is a strategy of brevity. You can say a lot briefly. Six-Word Memoirs does just that. Students describe topics in six words. Saying less requires identifying essential facts. It means thinking about word choice. It also requires eliminating unimportant information. It's not easy, but it's doable. Read this paragraph again to see!

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SIX-WORD MEMOIRS

Summary

This activity encourages students to be concise in their words and to concentrate on the essential facts and most important information. It can be used for vocabulary review or concept summary.

Procedure

1. Create a list of concepts, vocabulary terms, figures, etc., related to a lesson or unit.
2. Assign a student to each term.
3. Have them think about how to construct a "memoir" that is exactly six words. For example, a U.S. History student may write "I'm as slick as my oil" for John Rockefeller in order to remember that he was a businessman involved in the oil industry.
4. For this activity, incomplete sentences are allowed. Breaking up ideas into chunks makes them easier to remember, like dashes do for phone numbers. Less is more. Aim for accuracy and focus on word choice.
5. Invite students to tell a story with the facts. For example, if the subject was Rosa Parks, they might write, "Refused to move. Launched a movement." If they had read the short story, "To Build a Fire", they might write, "Man vs. Nature. Nature wins. Again."
6. Create a large class list of these six-word memoirs for students to use. These memoirs can help students learn terms and study concepts.

Adapted from Effinger, S., and Widdicombe, L. (2008, February 25). Say It All in Six Words. Ms. Effie's Lifesavers. https://mseffie.com/assignments/six_words/six_words.html