

Lesson Plan

Examining Infographics

Book: *The Debate about Homework*

Series: Pros and Cons

Level: Voyager

Objective

To help students analyze how representing information in various visual formats (such as charts and graphs) impacts what information is emphasized, and to practice converting text to visuals or visuals to text.

Supplies

- *The Debate about Homework*
- Paper and pencils

Before the Activity

Have students read *The Debate about Homework*.

Activity

Begin by having students turn to Chapter 2 (“PRO: Homework Helps Students Earn Higher Grades”). Read the following sentence out loud to the students: “When students regularly spend a reasonable amount of time on homework, their grades increase. Many educators recommend an average of 10 minutes per night per grade level” (p. 9).

This same concept (the number of minutes recommended per grade level) is illustrated by the “Homework Across Age Groups” infographic on page 11. Have students turn to that page and examine the infographic. Ask the following questions:

- Is anything easier to understand about this information when you look at the infographic? (Possible answer: You can immediately see how many minutes each grade level is recommended to have without needing to perform a math calculation.)
- Does the infographic make anything more difficult to understand? (Possible answer: In the infographic, you’d have to count the increase between each point to see that 10 minutes are added for each grade level.)
- Based on these differences, can you think of a situation in which the infographic is more helpful? (Possible answer: The infographic would be more helpful if you wanted to quickly find the required time for a specific grade level.)
- Based on these differences, can you think of a situation in which the text is more helpful? (Possible answer: The text would be more helpful if you were looking for a general principle for how much homework all students should have.)

Then read the students the following sentence from Chapter 5 (“CON: Homework Leads to Unhealthy Stress”): “In 2007, US high school students reported an average of more than two hours of homework per night” (p. 27).

Ask the following question:

- Is this more or less than the recommended amount of homework? (Answer: It’s more. At 10 minutes per grade level, only 12th graders should have 2 hours of homework.)
- Which source—the infographic or the text on page 9—makes this easier to determine? (Answer: It’s a little easier to compare this with the infographic, which shows how many hours students should have in each grade level.)

Homework amounts are also discussed in the infographic on page 7. Have students turn to that page. Students should use this “Homework Amounts” infographic to write a paragraph that compares the amounts of time students in different countries spend doing homework. The paragraph should include statistics pulled from the graph, and students should add transitional words and phrases to help it read smoothly.

Finally, have students turn to the beginning of Chapter 1 (“The History of Homework”). This chapter describes the changing views that American educators have had toward homework during the past few centuries. Ask students to create a timeline that includes eight entries summarizing the changes described in this chapter.

Evaluation

Using the attached answer key, give students up to 8 points for their paragraph summarizing homework amounts (one point for each country) and up to 8 points for their timeline (one point for each event), for a total of 16 points.

Standards

This lesson may be used to address the Common Core State Standards’ speaking and listening standards, grade 7 (SL 7.2) and reading standards for literacy in historical/social studies, grades 6–8 (RH 6–8.7).

Answer Key

Homework Amounts Paragraph (8 points: 1 point per country)

Answers will vary but should be similar to the following paragraph:

Students in Finland do the least homework, averaging fewer than three hours per week. Students in both Germany and the United Kingdom do less than five hours of homework each week, with students in the United Kingdom doing slightly more than German students. Mexican students do just more than five hours of homework, and Canadian students do about five and a half hours. In Australia, students spend six hours per week on homework. Students in the United States have a little more homework each week than Australian students. Students in Spain have the most homework, with about six and a half hours.

History of Homework Timeline (8 points: 1 point per event)

1800s: Students spend lots of time memorizing facts and figures (p. 5).

1900s: Educators encourage students to focus on critical thinking and spending time outdoors instead of just memorizing facts (p. 6).

1957: Worries about falling behind prompt a renewed emphasis on homework (p. 6).

1980s: Reports show students in US schools are falling behind (p. 6).

1990s: Teachers begin assigning more homework (p. 6).

2000s: Congress passes a law supporting standardized testing, which leads to more homework (p. 7).

2002: Students spend almost one and a half hours more time each week studying than they did in 1981 (p. 7).

2015: The law supporting standardized testing is replaced, and the debate about homework resumes (p. 7).