

Four-Square [text work]

Description

A four-square allows students' thinking processes and the construction of their knowledge to become visible. By asking students to record their thoughts as they view each of three or four artifacts, the teacher can help students become aware of their own cognition and their growing understanding of a concept or event.

Materials

- three or four items (could be texts, maps, photos, quotes, video segments, or any combination)
- a chart with four squares drawn on it, large enough for students to write a short paragraph inside

Procedure

1. Present the chart. Tell students they'll be writing their thoughts after you present each of the three or four items. The first square in the chart could include a sentence leader such as "At first I think..."
2. Show the first item to the students and direct them, after they've viewed and considered it, to write their thoughts in the first box. It is essential that they be able to write their ideas before the next item is presented.
3. Next, present the next item and ask them to write in the next square, which could include a sentence leader such as "And now I think..."
4. Sometimes it's helpful for students to discuss their thoughts about the first two items here, in partners or as a group. Doing so can clarify the topic or help them understand what others are thinking about it.
5. Continue with the third item, and if there is a fourth, the fourth item. You may choose three items only to allow the fourth square to be a summary or synthesis box, unless you have an alternate closing activity.

Considerations

- Your activity may have a different outcome if you mix the media (a map, a photo, a text, a video) than if you select one medium and present progressive chunks (four maps showing changes over time, or four segments of a video).
- Your activity will be affected by the order in which you present your items.