

TEDED Lesson Planner: A Trial Run

In order to increase the amount of voices and perspectives that enter my classroom, I frequently rely on TED talk videos. I use these clips to enhance lessons, provide a spark for conversation, as well as mix up the way that information is presented in the classroom. These clips are usually succinct and engaging: students connect with them in a variety of ways, even if they don't agree with the speaker's message, it provides an easy gateway to conversation.

I teach an elective class called Teen Issues in Literature, and try to incorporate a variety of methods for engagement in the class, including small group and whole class discussions, independent writing reflections, and group projects. TED talks work seamlessly into this class format. I was familiar with TEDed videos, and had seen the option for creating a lesson using a video as a basis for that, but had never created my own lesson using the TEDed format. Included in the TED lesson plan are the options to include the sequence of Watch, Think, Dig Deeper, and Discuss, concluding with And Finally.

The underlying goal for choosing TED ed was to explore lesson planning with a different format. Personally, I need to have guidelines for what I'm going to accomplish with my classes during the day. I have found that deeper conversations develop when I provide the class with a starting point with questions thought out in advance. The TED format was helpful in this regard, as it allowed me to structure an organized lesson plan as well as putting it in a format that is easy for the class to view: the individual sections have the space for students to view the discussion questions, instead of creating a separate powerpoint, or handout.

I based my lesson plan around a TED talk by Ruth Chang to see how it would work to incorporate this into the classroom. Ruth Chang presents the concept that we've been looking at difficult decisions through the wrong lens, that difficult decisions are tricky because you are inherently choosing between two equally good options and there's not necessarily one better choice. There are primarily seniors in my class, and through a previous writing assignment I discovered that several of them were frightened by the prospect of graduation, and having to make decisions in the 'real world.' My aim with this lesson plan was to alleviate some of the stress involved with decision making; I was hoping that by identifying the potential stressors involved with tough choices, my students could be more prepared to deal with those circumstances when they are confronted by them.

In order to activate this conversation, I created about 6 questions that I hoped would keep students on-track with the main message of what Ruth Chang was communicating. I was so glad to have these guiding questions for conversation: in class I had students write their answers down first, and then engage in conversation with their table, partners, and whole group discussion. In reviewing students written responses I was able to see that some of them, while they seemed to be on board with the group discussion, were actually not understanding some basic concepts from the clip. Having a type of formative evaluation for the clip helped me identify the main misunderstandings and address them the following day.

I used the TED clip in conjunction with an article from the New Yorker to help expand on some of the ideas brought up in the video. There's a link to the article from the TED lesson plan so students could easily access the article from their phones or computers if they chose to.

Ultimately, I feel like the TEDed lesson format would be the most useful for doing flipped classroom activities, as the links and questions are all in one location, and students can digitally submit their responses. I don't currently utilize the flipped classroom in acknowledgement of many of my student's jobs and lack of access to technology, however, I anticipate flipped classroom strategies in future classrooms. From TED ed, I appreciate the easy to use layout, as well as the option to include multiple choice, or open ended questions. This was an effective tool in the classroom that I will definitely be using in future lessons.