

## Chapter 2

# Discussion and Communication

### **Introduction**

### **Creative uses of Email**

### **Educational Uses of Blogging**

### **Chatting**

### **Bringing the World into Your Room: Skype and iChat**

### **Final Thoughts**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Effective discussion is at the heart of every successful History and English classroom. The sharing of information and ideas encourages students to engage actively with course materials and to articulate opinions based on sound critical thinking. Fortunately, computers and the Internet open the doors to a variety of exciting, new ways to discuss and communicate with your students. And unlike the physical classroom, you won't be limited by space and time. In this chapter, we'll discuss new ways to generate discussion with your students both in and outside of class and to communicate more effectively with the world outside your classroom walls.

## **CREATIVE USES OF EMAIL**

Electronic mail is a popular and easy-to-use communication medium that teachers can adopt for a number of classroom purposes. If your school does not provide you with a shared platform for emails between teachers and students, see Chapter 10, *Class Management*, for some ideas. One of email's advantages is that communication is virtually instantaneous and messages can be stored and archived. Teachers can email students homework assignments, class notes, multimedia files, and various other course materials, and students can store these materials electronically and indefinitely. And that's just a start. Creative uses of email can help spur discussion and active learning. This section is devoted to outlining just such uses.

### **Using Email to "Jump Start" a Class: Daily Warm-up**

Short journal-style writing assignments are great ways to get class started. They quiet the room, give students time to reset their brains to your class, and they allow class discussions to emerge from ideas developed in writing.

### **Tech Specs: Email Daily Warm-up**

**Set-Up Time:** None (Maybe 15 min to set-up an extra “Turn-in” email account).

**Keep-Up Time:** 10 minutes (To think up warm-up questions and send an email).

**In-Class Time:** 10–15 minutes.

**Tech Savvy:** Low.

### **Tech Terms**

**1–1 or One-to-one** computing refers to situations where every student has access to a computer—such as a computer lab, a classroom with a laptop cart, or a school where every student is required to have or provided with a laptop.

If you work in a 1–1 computing environment, email is a great way for students to write these kinds of journal assignments. Rather than scratching their thoughts in a notebook, they’ll send them directly to you. Even if you only occasionally read through them and grade them randomly, your students will have a much greater incentive to write thoughtfully than they might if they were just writing in their notebook. Perhaps more importantly, when students are emailing something to another reader, they are more motivated to do better work.

To simplify receiving a classroom full of emails, it’s very helpful to set up a separate “Turn-in” email. This can be as simple as setting up a Gmail, Yahoo, or Hotmail account like [TurnInReich@gmail.com](mailto:TurnInReich@gmail.com) or setting up a special Turn-in account on your school server. That way students can email questions and issues to your main email account and assignments to your Turn-in account.

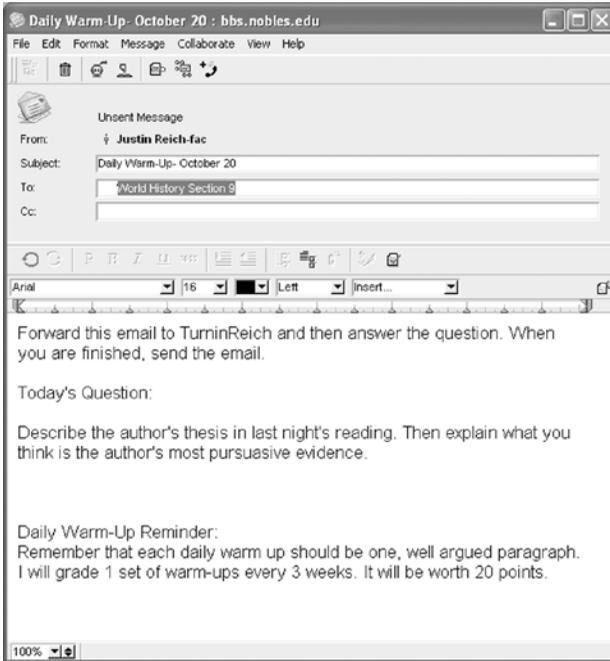
Using email for a daily warm-up is simple. Send students a question about the previous night’s assignment, or a thought question about the topic of the day, or even a “pre-question” about a new topic, and have them respond to your email.

### ***Sample Exercise: The Daily Warm-Up***

In the following example, Justin set up a mailing list for one of his World History sections. Most email systems make it very easy to store groups of email addresses as a single list, which is very handy when emailing classes.

Students are instructed to forward the email to Justin’s TurninReich account. If students forward the email, then the original text is preserved so they don’t need to retype the question. Typically, students would be given 5–10 minutes for this exercise. If students finish quickly, encourage them to improve their paragraphs by rewriting the topic sentence or including more evidence.

Once time is up, ask students to send their answers via email, and start class with a conversation about the Daily Warm-Up. If you have students who are reluctant to speak up in the midst of a heated discussion, this can be an excellent time to call on them to share their thoughts, since they have had a chance to rehearse their ideas in writing.



A typical Daily Warm-Up email for one of Justin's World History Classes.

Every month or so, go through your Turn-in email account and correct a random assignment. You can email the student back with a comment on their response and a grade. With everything on email, this can be an entirely paperless assignment! Grading these warm ups occasionally will keep students on their toes.



**PENCIL:** If any student has a problem receiving or sending an email, they can always write their response on paper.

## Reaching Outside the Classroom: Emails to Authors and Other Professionals

### Tech Specs: Emails to Experts

**Set-Up Time:** 30 minutes (To send an introductory email to the professional and write guidelines for students).

**Keep-up time:** None.

**In-Class Time:** Anywhere from a half-class activity to a homework assignment.

**Tech Savvy:** Low.

Many assignments respond to a particular article or book. Why not direct those writings towards the author? Many online newspapers now include the author's email address in the header of the article. For books written by professors at universities, their emails can often be found by searching for them on the college or university Web site, and sometimes they can be found by putting their name in a search engine. Authors often have their own Web site and many of them read and respond to email. If you are reading works from a popular author, chances are that there is an association dedicated to studying that author's works that may entertain questions and host forums.

Before having a class email a professional, send the person an email warning them of the impending deluge. You might have more luck getting a response if you mention that

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you would be grateful if they would be willing to send a response to the entire class. As we have experimented with this approach, we have had a variety of responses ranging from silence to a response to one student to a response to the whole class. Whether or not you do hear back, students, in general, put more effort into their writing if they are writing to someone specific and know that their works will be judged not just by their teacher but also by a member of the public.

Students need to be warned in advance of this assignment that respectful criticism is encouraged, but any inappropriate or disrespectful language will earn them a failing grade.

### Writing Letters to the Editor and Submitting Editorials

#### **Tech Specs: Emails to the Editor**

**Set-Up Time:** Generally 10–15 minutes is sufficient to find an email address to your local Opinion Editor. Again, it can be useful to send them a warning if they'll be receiving 80 letters on a topic.

**Keep-Up Time:** None.

**In-Class Time:** One homework assignment or one class-length activity.

**Tech Savvy:** Low.

Publishing your opinions in a local newspaper is one of the great means of contributing to a democratic community. With the advent of email, submitting your thoughts is easier than ever. Many Language Arts classes have units devoted to persuasive writing, and it can be incredibly empowering for students to take a shot at using the media to persuade not just their classmates, but also their entire community.

Visit the Opinion Section of your local paper online and look for links that say *Submit a Letter to the Editor* or *Submit an Op-Ed*. These links will often lead you to guidelines for submitting these writings and email addresses for the relevant editors.

Letters to the editor are typically printed in response to published articles or on issues of regional importance. Papers often accept letters up to 250 words, though they will often edit them down. The best letters to the editor are snappy, concise, and direct. Drafting them so that every word counts is an excellent exercise for budding writers.

Op-Ed pieces are longer, typically around 700 words, and they are columns that address issues in the news, but they do not respond to particular articles like Letters to the Editor. Op-Ed literally stands for “opposite the editorial page,” since most opinion columns are published opposite the editorial page. While most of these columns are written by professional writers, pundits, and community leaders, students and teachers have as much chance of getting their thoughts published as anyone else.

An excellent resource on submitting Letters to the Editor and Op-Eds is the Web page on the topic published by the Communications Consortium Media Center at <http://www.ccmc.org/oped.htm>. The page includes helpful tips for writing opinion pieces and email addresses for opinion editors at the 100 largest circulating papers in the US. You may not have much luck getting your work published in your local paper, but sometimes its fun to go for the gold!

## Using Email to Connect Your Students to the World: ePals

### **Tech Specs: ePals School Networking**

**Set-Up Time:** Two hours—one to set up an account and learn about the ePals Program, and then another to plan once you have connected with another school.

**Keep-Up Time:** Regular emails with your ePal classroom.

**In-Class Time:** Variable, depending on your investment with the other school.

**Tech Savvy:** Low.

Email also provides an excellent opportunity to communicate with schools around the country and around the world. Some of the best email pen-pal exchanges might come from connections you have with friends who are teaching across the country or overseas. If you need help finding pen pals in other parts of the world, one great resource is <http://www.ePals.com/>. On an average day, 25 new schools join the ePals community and you can search pen pals by country. ePals connects schools across the world and can provide language translation services and content-filtering. The connecting service is free, and ePals also offers school-wide blogs and email accounts.

There are a variety of other services that will connect pen pals across the world, and a Web search for “Pen Pals” will find many others.

### *Getting Started with ePals*

Go to <http://www.epals.com> and click on *Join ePals* in the left navigation bar. We recommend you join the ePals “Global Community” of over 7 million students and teachers from 191 countries. You are asked to complete a school profile with information about the languages, ages, and number of your students, as well as the number of classrooms that will participate. You are also asked to write a brief description of your school and ePal objectives.

Here is the profile we submitted:

Our 9th grade “History of the Human Community” (HHC) students will study the history of the Middle East from September to December 2006. They will learn about its religious and historical roots as well as study contemporary conflict in the region. Our students are English speakers between 14–15 years old and many are Jewish (a few are Muslim). We would like to converse with students from Israel as well as from Lebanon, Palestine, and Egypt and learn from their insights and experiences. We have a blog set up where our students will post their thoughts and we would invite your students to comment. We also have videoconferencing available as well as chat software.

ePal member schools can read each other’s profiles and can search for schools by various criteria. Click on Find Classrooms in the left navigation bar and search by keywords, area (city/state/country), age, language, or a special category. Keep in mind that some schools from select countries may be more in demand than others. For example there may be more Western schools in ePals trying to contact Middle Eastern schools than the other way around.

We used ePals to put our 9<sup>th</sup> grade World History students in touch with teachers and

**ePals** WHERE LEARNERS CONNECT

ENGLISH FRANÇAIS ESPAÑOL DEUTSCH PORTUGUÊS 日本語 عربي 中文

**Classroom Registration**  
Tell us about your class

The following information is used to create your class profile:  
NOTE: Fields marked in **bold** are required.

**School name:** Noble & Greenough School

**Street address:** 10 Campus Drive

**City/Town:** Dedham

**State/Province:** Massachusetts

**Zip/Postal Code:** 02026

**Language(s) Spoken:** English  
(ie: English, Spanish, French - List All):  
French  
Portuguese  
Spanish  
German

**Members from:**

- Russia
- USA
- Canada
- France
- Australia

are searching for partners in:

- Australia
- Germany
- Italy
- United Kingdom
- USA

Click on a country link above to view member profiles for that country.

**The newest ePALS member is:**  
[Pulaski Heights Middle School from USA](#)

**ePALS Essentials**  
Home  
Join ePALS  
Find Classrooms  
Check Email  
My Account  
Logout

**Projects**  
Chinese-English Language & Learning Portfolios  
Talk to Teachers  
Communication Tools  
Teaching With ePALS  
Support  
About ePALS  
Products and Services

**FREE INFO KIT**

ePals collects information from classrooms looking for pen pals and then publishes that information online so that classrooms from across the globe with similar interests can connect. *Source:* Courtesy of ePals.

students in the Jerusalem and Lebanon during a unit on the Middle East. We searched ePals for participating schools in Middle Eastern countries and sent messages to them inviting collaboration with our students. We also obtained a list of American and International schools in the Middle East and contacted them directly. One school contacted us as a result of our ePal profile and another responded directly to our email. We used a combination of email and blogging to converse with our friends from the Middle East, and we had some logistical problems organizing communication in the different time zones, but overall our students were excited and motivated to hear from students in the regions they were studying. ePals helped make our studies of history and current events more personal and meaningful.

## EDUCATIONAL USES OF BLOGGING

One of the most popular new media for communication on the Web is the Web log, or blog. While blogs can become quite sophisticated forms of Web pages, they are all basically chronologically ordered journals where readers can leave comments.

Blogs have many educational uses and teachers, students, and researchers are increasingly integrating them in the classroom. Blogging provides creative opportunities for active learning activities such as role-playing, debating, and problem solving. Students can use their blogs to discuss, analyze, and reflect on what they are reading and learning.

Topics that deal with controversial subjects, child and teen issues, and current events can be especially meaningful to students and can help elicit active discussion and debate. Students enjoy writing about topics that interest them the most and teachers can use blogs not only to interact with students beyond the classroom but also to learn more about them.

## Breaking Down the Blog

What is a blog anyway? If you are asking that question, we are really glad that you are reading this book and taking some risks learning a new technology. Here's a break down

### Tech Specs: Getting Started with a Classroom Blog

**Set-Up Time:** You can have a basic blog up and running in as little as 30 minutes, and you can spend hours customizing your blog with content and features.

**Keep-Up Time:** Writing a blog post as a teacher takes only a few minutes, maybe slightly longer than it takes to send an email.

**In-Class Time:** It takes only a few minutes for a student to post a comment to a teacher's blog or log in to her own blog. Writing assignments can be 10 minute reflection pieces or longer class or homework assignments.

**Tech Savvy:** Low. Performing the basics functions of blog—writing posts and leaving comments—is easy to do.

## Best Practices in Educational Blogging

Bloggging works best in an environment where the teacher is not afraid to act as a facilitator who allows students to learn from each other. Blogging is most effective when students evaluate, discuss, and challenge each other's thinking and come to revise their own understanding of a topic.

Bloggging can be used in any numbers of ways. It can be used to form a reading discussion forum or literature circle, post short current events articles and invite students' thoughts, foster communication between multiple classes, serve as a log of student progress on a research assignment, post photos and homework assignments online, and much more.

The image shows a screenshot of a blog titled "Mr. Reich's World History Class" with the subtitle "Conflict and Identity". The blog features two main posts and a sidebar. Callouts provide the following information:

- Posts:** The author of the blog writes a series of chronologically ordered posts.
- Comments:** Others can respond to a post with a click.
- Posts:** The author of the blog writes a series of chronologically ordered posts.
- Discussion Question for tomorrow:** A post dated September 27th, 2006, with the text: "Write a discussion question for tomorrows class based on *Why High School Students Hate History*. Posted in Homework Assignment | Edit | 2 Comments »".
- Welcome to class:** A post dated September 27th, 2006, with the text: "Welcome to my World History Class! For you first blog post, please tell me about your goals for the year in one, well-crafted paragraph. This is your first writing for the year; impress me with your creativity and care. Posted in Homework Assignment | Edit | 2 Comments »".
- Pages:** A list including "About", "Expectations for all major assignments", "Expectations for every blog post", and "Fall Syllabus".
- Archives:** A list including "September 2006".
- Categories:** A list including "Homework Assignment (2)".
- Links:** A list including "Teaching History with Technology" and "The Best of History Web".
- Search:** A search bar with a "Search" button.
- Sidebar:** The side of the blog can organize lots of other information. Pages are simple webpages and Links connect readers to other sites.

All blogs contain three main elements: posts, comments, and a sidebar.

The key to effective educational blogging is not technological prowess, but rather thoughtful and sustained pedagogical integration

If blogging is presented as a peripheral activity, with little or no direct connection to your class goals, it will be of limited effectiveness. Likewise, if blogging is a sporadic homework activity, and one without an assessment framework, students may question its importance and utility. So, think beyond that first blogging assignment and plan out several, regularly scheduled blogging assignments with clear goals and an assessment strategy. Many bloggers—teachers or otherwise—start with a flurry of posts and then stop blogging; plan to post regularly, even if it just every two weeks. Also, do not underestimate initial student anxiety (and perhaps skepticism) about the process. While many students will likely embrace the innovation that blogging represents—some probably blogs themselves—they may be unclear and unsure of how to express themselves in this new academic milieu.

### Ten Things to Do With Your Class Blog:

- 1. Post a homework question**
  - a. Each student writes a one-paragraph response
  - b. Read a few before class to see what your students think about the reading
  - c. You can require students to respond not only to the reading, but to each other's responses as well.
- 2. Start a discussion**
  - a. Pose a question and require that students post at least three contributions to a discussion over the course of a week, or more contributions over the course of a unit.
- 3. Invite outsiders to comment on student work**
  - a. If you know the author of a book you are reading, have students write feedback and have the author respond
  - b. Have students from another school comment on your students' work
- 4. Have students post discussion questions for tomorrow's class**
  - a. This is great when you know you won't have time to plan
  - b. If you know that you've flubbed a class and students are confused, have them post questions about things they don't understand
- 5. Post your lecture notes or a summary of the day's class**
  - a. You can even record a podcast and post an audio summary of the day's class on your blog. More on that in Chapter 8, Student Presentations.
- 6. Have students post *their* notes for the day**
  - a. Assign one student per day to be the scribe for the class. This is great for discussion-based classes where you want students to focus on the discussion and not have to worry about taking notes.
- 7. Post the daily homework assignment**
- 8. Post links to supplementary materials from the Internet**
  - a. Author bios or Web sites
  - b. Links to book reviews
  - c. Links to relevant news articles
- 9. Post progress reports on team projects**
  - a. Students can post their work to the blog so that others can see what they are doing. They can also comment on each other's work.
  - b. If faculty are trying to work as a team or core group, use a blog to communicate with each other about lessons, etc.
- 10. Have students create their own blog for an independent study**
  - a. We have students post an outline of their week's work before our weekly meeting.

## Setting up a Blog

### *Three Choices for Blogging Sites*

There are many blog creation and hosting services on the Internet. Here are three options that we have experience with and are comfortable recommending to you:

1. <http://www.blogger.com>

Probably the largest blogging site on the Internet; purchased by Google a few years ago.

*Pros:* Free. Simple interface. Quick and easy to set up. Good security features. Students who read blogs in their own time will be familiar with the tools and layout.

*Cons:* Sometimes long load times in posting and managing the blog. You cannot post documents or files to a Blogger page unless you have your own file server somewhere.

2. <http://www.edublogs.org>

A free blogging site, powered by WordPress (another good free blogging tool), with sites preset up for educational blogging.

*Pros:* Free. Simple interface. The ability to create simple Web pages along with your blog for syllabi, course expectations, etc. Constantly improving tools for embedding images, sounds and files. Justin's choice for classroom blogs.

*Cons:* It has many great features, but all these extras can make it harder to learn your way around the interface.

3. <http://www.typepad.com>

A feature-rich subscription service by Six Apart.

*Pros:* You can upload any type of file—Word documents, PowerPoint presentations, Sound files, etc. Lots of template options and easily customized. The ability to create simple Web pages along with your blog for syllabi, course expectations, etc. Easily downloaded from the page. Tom's choice for classroom blogs.

*Cons:* Somewhat more complicated interface. Subscription based service. Sometimes down for service.

### *Getting Started: Blogger*

During our workshops we often have teachers blogging in less than ten minutes. It's very easy. For the purposes of this tutorial we will focus on Blogger, Google's popular and free blog creation and hosting service.

**Here are some instructions for starting a blog with Blogger:**

#### **FEATURED PRODUCT**

#### **Blogger Blogs**

**Web site:** <http://www.blogger.com>

**Developer:** Google

**Cost:** Free

Blogger allows anyone who registers for a free Google account to start up a Web blog. There are currently no limits on the number of posts you can have or the length of time that your blog will be persevered.

**Step 1: Register for a new blog**

Go to <http://www.blogger.com/>. Click *Create Your Blog Now* to get started. Since Blogger is owned by Google, you need to have a Google account to set up a blog. If you have a Gmail account, then sign in using that information. If you need to make one, you can do so when signing up for a Blogger blog. Once you are all set with your Google account, you can choose a title and address for your blog and then click *Continue*. Finally, you’ll have a chance to choose a template for your blog. You can change it later if you want to.

**Step 2: Create your first post**

Once your account and blog are up and running, you’ll be taken to the Blogger “Dashboard.” This is where you can manage your new blogs. The first task is to create your first post. Start by clicking the *New Post* button.

Add a title to your post, such as “Today’s Blogging Activity,” or the name of the assignment, and then write out the assignment or activity in the big text box.



Blogger’s simple interface for writing posts looks similar to many basic email editors.

*Source:* Courtesy of Google.

**Step 3:** Publish your post. Click on Publish to see your post live or Save as Draft to save it for later revision. You’ll get a message that the post has been published successfully. You can then select View the Blog to see your work published. Easy, right?

**Step 4:** Email students your blog URL. Your blog will have a Web address, or URL, associated with it, which will be NameOfYourBlog.blogspot.com. You can share that address with your students so they can visit your blog to read your posts and leave comments.



Our sample post from the previous image has now been posted to the blog. *Source:* Courtesy of Google.

**Step 5: Have students leave you a comment.** Your students can now leave comments on your blog that you and your students can read. To leave a comment click on the comments link underneath the published post. You will be directed to a comments page (like the one below) where you can type your comment and publish it live. So, the next time someone hits the comments link they can read your comment and then leave their own.

**Note:** *With many blogging tools blog authors can determine who may read their blog and who may comment. For privacy and security reasons, you may not wish people outside your classroom to see your blog. We discuss privacy and security considerations later in this chapter.*



**WEBSITE:** If you would like more detailed instructions on how to register and use Blogger, please visit <http://www.edtechteacher.org/chapter2.html> for some video tutorials.

## Blog Types: Single Class Blog, a Blog for Each Student, or both?

An important consideration is whether you want a **single class blog or a blog for each student in the class**. In the first scenario, you, the teacher, post to your blog and students leave a comment on your post. A single class blog is often quick and easy to create and you could have a class blog up and running in a very short time. It is also easier to read and review posts and comments on one blog as opposed to many blogs. Students will also tend to read more of each other's work if it is on a single blog versus having to visit multiple, separate blogs.

That being said, students often enjoy having their own blog and it may encourage them to write more and take more ownership of their work. Literature teachers, in particular, often want students to have an extended writing space of their own. Moreover, if students each have their own blog then they are *truly blogging*, and not just commenting on someone else's blog. So, it may be worth a few hours at the beginning of the term to create a **blog** for each and every student.

To help clarify the distinction between these two ways of using blogging in classrooms it can be helpful to think of things this way: in a class blog, teachers post and students comment; with multiple blogs, students post and teachers (and students) comment.

## Examples from Real Classroom Blogs

### *A Simple Blog from a First Time Blogger*

The course below features a teacher blog, but no student blogs. The teacher posts questions and students then answer using the Comments option.

In this example, the instructor (in this case the Head of the Noble and Greenough School, taking his first bold steps into blogging) asks a study question about every week and students respond with a comment. The activity is not so different from a standard study question exercise, so why use a blog? What are the advantages?

### AP European History 2004-2005

A Class Weblog

**November 08, 2004**

**The English Civil War**

What do you think was the most significant cause of the English Civil War?

November 08, 2004 | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(14\)](#)

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**October 26, 2004**

**Louis XIV**

There has been long debate over whether Louis XIV of France can be considered a "great" ruler. Assess the greatness of Louis XIV.

October 26, 2004 | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(18\)](#)

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**October 13, 2004**

**Absolute Monarchy and the Wars of Religion**

How might the rise of absolute monarchy in the 17th century be related to the period of turmoil between 1520 and 1648, also called the age of the wars of religion?

October 13, 2004 | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(16\)](#)

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**October 04, 2004**

**The Reformation and Modernity**

**Recent Posts**

[The English Civil War](#)

[Louis XIV](#)

[Absolute Monarchy and the Wars of Religion](#)

[The Reformation and Modernity](#)

[Appeal of Lutheranism](#)

[Welcome](#)

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**Recent Comments**

[Mireille on The English Civil War](#)

[Lauren on The English Civil War](#)

[Allie on The English Civil War](#)

[Caroline on The English Civil War](#)

[Amy on The English Civil War](#)

[Selden on The English Civil War](#)

[Chris on The English Civil War](#)

[alex on The English Civil War](#)

[an on The English Civil War](#)

[Audrey on The English Civil War](#)

This very simple blog, requiring minimal effort to maintain, gets students involved in a productive conversation through writing. *Source:* Courtesy of Robert Henderson.

- **When students publish publicly, they tend to do better work.** When they know that not just the teacher, but also all their peers may be perusing their comment, they put a little more care into their work.
- **Students can respond to each other's work.** The activity below asked students to create discussion questions for class (a great activity when you won't have much time to plan!).
- **Blogging creates a permanent record of discussion that everyone can see.** After blogging for several weeks in one class, students began asking if they could cite each other's ideas and language in their own papers. It proved to be a great opportunity for students to engage in a genuine scholarly discussion. For classes with reliable computer access, reading the class blog can be a great warm-up to a class discussion.
- **Blogging can allow exchanges beyond the classroom walls.** Whenever a guest speaker comes to class, students blog about the discussion, and then we invite the speaker to add a comment in response. Blogging also lets parents peek into the work students are doing for class, hopefully stimulating dinner table discussion. If you teach multiple sections of the same class, blogging can let you create dialogue between sections. Students who collaborate on projects through blogs are more likely to chat with each other about their course work in the halls and by the lockers.

### *40 Acres and a Blog: A Blog for Each Student*

The course below features a teacher blog with student blogs. On the left is the instructor blog and on the right is one student blog. Links to the student blogs are listed on the left, so students can easily navigate between blogs.

Student blogs over time become online portfolios where students can keep a permanent, public record of their work throughout the year. The advantage of individual student blogs is that students may have more ownership over their page, and it is easier for them to see how they have progressed as a writer over the year. It also allows the instructor to have all of the student's writing in one place for final grades or end of semester comments.

## U.S. History -- Mr. Daccord

Tom Daccord's United States History class at the Noble & Greenough School

### CATEGORIES

[Current Affairs](#)

[Unit 1: Industrial Age](#)

DACCORD U.S.  
HISTORY

[Brooke](#)

[Casey](#)

[Daccord U.S. History](#)

[Devan](#)

[Emily](#)

[Hanna](#)

[Ian](#)

[Julia](#)

[Liz](#)

[Matt](#)

[Mel](#)

[Sophie](#)

[Stephanie](#)

[Tucker](#)

SEPTEMBER 13, 2006

Industrial Age, 1877-1920 (Post #1)

What was the point of today's activity? How does it connect to last night's homework assignment? Please make specific reference to terms/people/concepts from the homework.  
Post your 1-2 paragraph answer on your blog.

Thanks

September 13, 2006 at 07:51 AM in [Unit 1: Industrial Age](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(2\)](#) | [TrackBack \(0\)](#)

SEPTEMBER 09, 2006

9/11: Are We Safer Five Years Later?

In recent speeches President Bush has claimed that the United States is much safer than 9/11. "Many Americans look at these events," Mr. Bush has said, "and ask the same question: Five years after 9/11, are we safer? The answer is, yes, America is safer. We are safer because we've taken action to protect the homeland." He and others point to air security improvements and revamped intelligence agencies that can share information more freely. Other cited improvements include the expansion of agents assigned to work on counterterrorism.

However, others disagree. For instance, former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense Larry Korb says: "What has happened is, particularly with the invasion of Iraq, we have created a lot of al-Qaida wannabees, and there are more people now that are trying to do us harm than there were before we went into Iraq." Senator John Kerry concurs: "[President Bush's] disastrous decisions have made Iraq a fuel depot for terror, fanning the flames of conflict around the world."

What do you remember of 9/11? Do you feel safer now than five years ago? Why or why not?

September 09, 2006 at 08:47 PM in [Current Affairs](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#) | [TrackBack \(0\)](#)

In Tom's blog, you can see the questions that he has posed to his students. In his student's blog, you can see the response. Both blogs have links to everyone in the class, to facilitate discussion and collaboration.

## Brooke (U.S. History)

### CATEGORIES

[Current Affairs](#)

DACCORD U.S.  
HISTORY

[Brooke](#)

[Casey](#)

[Daccord U.S. History](#)

[Devan](#)

[Emily](#)

[Hanna](#)

[Ian](#)

[Julia](#)

[Liz](#)

[Matt](#)

[Mel](#)

[Sophie](#)

[Stephanie](#)

[Tucker](#)

OCTOBER 06, 2006

What is the proper role of government in American Society?

It is hard to draw a clear line as to where government should interfere with American society and where it should stay out. In my opinion, I believe the government should regulate areas of society where the health of the public is at risk- food and drug regulation especially, and areas where corporations could abuse power because the way that government does these things currently works well. However, I do not agree that the US should feel obligated to spread democracy and capitalism to countries around the world. It is not our responsibility and often times we end up getting ourselves into wars where the other country could have taken care of themselves. It is necessary to intervene in this matter sometimes, as it maybe was in Iraq, because if the US is in anyway in danger, the government needs to step up and protect its citizens.

October 06, 2006 at 07:06 AM | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#) | [TrackBack \(0\)](#)

SEPTEMBER 20, 2006

Ragged Dick

1. Honesty, integrity- Dick refuses to steal, no matter how tempted or hungry he might be
2. Being hardworking and willing to work- this is how Dick gets enough business to support himself
3. Being a good person/friendly- this is how Dick makes friends and connections that help him get more business and sometimes a place to eat, this is also how he meets Frank
4. "honest looking"- without this Dick would not have gotten the chance to make some of these connections
5. Being smart/aware- Dick has to always be on his toes, as was demonstrated with the "dropping" of the wallet. without this quality Dick could have been easily taken advantage of

September 20, 2006 at 07:09 AM | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#) | [TrackBack \(0\)](#)

### RECENT POSTS

[What is the proper role of government in American Society?](#)

[Ragged Dick](#)

[Ragged Dick](#)

[Industrial Age \(Post #1\)](#)

[9/11: Are we safer five years later?](#)

## English IV - Ms. Snyder

A blog for Sarah Snyder's English IV classes

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November 27, 2006

### Creon's character

Assess Creon's character in *Antigone* Scene II through Scene IV. What do his words reveal about him? What do others' words about him reveal about Creon? Use at least two quotations in this paragraph and make sure to sandwich the text with an introduction and unpacking. Please use the correct format with page numbers, quotation marks, and punctuation.

November 27, 2006 at 01:14 PM in [Antigone](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#) | [TrackBack \(0\)](#)

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October 16, 2006

### Chapter 24 response

There are two things I want you to respond to in your own blog about this chapter. First, do you think Holden's reaction to Mr. Antolini is justified? Please use textual support to augment your argument. Second, please find an important moment/quotation in this chapter and respond to it. Practice using a quotation effectively (sandwiching it and 'unpacking' the words and connecting the quotation to themes or symbols) and correctly (punctuation/page number).

October 16, 2006 at 06:29 AM in [Catcher in the Rye](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#) | [TrackBack \(0\)](#)

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October 05, 2006

### Quotation response for Tuesday 10/10

Please choose an interesting, telling, powerful, or important quotation in *Catcher in the Rye* from pages 66-104. Analyze this quotation in depth; why is important? What do particular words convey about the characters, themes, or symbols? If the quotation connects to one or more of the paradigms we are using to understand literature, please explain the connection. Make sure the quotation (with page #) is in your analysis. Please use the correct format for weaving in quotations. Have fun!

**CATEGORIES**

- [Antigone](#)
- [Catcher in the Rye](#)
- [House on Mango Street](#)

**ENGLISH IV SNYDER**

- [Audrey](#)
- [Caitlin](#)
- [Cassandra](#)
- [Clark](#)
- [Dan](#)
- [Dana](#)
- [Ed](#)
- [Eliza](#)
- [Gene](#)
- [Gunilee](#)
- [Ian](#)
- [Jack](#)
- [Jesse](#)
- [Julian](#)
- [Katherine](#)

Here is another blog where the teacher poses questions in the teacher blog, and then students post responses in their own blogs. *Source:* Courtesy of Sarah Snyder.

## Advanced Features in Blogger

? Help

### Configure Link List

CANCEL SAVE CHANGES

Title:

Number of links to show in list:  Leave blank to show all links

Sorting:

New Site URL:

New Site Name:

ADD LINK

---

[Edit Delete](#) [Best of History Web Sites](#)

CANCEL SAVE CHANGES

Through this window, you can create a list of links for your blog. *Source:* Courtesy of Google.

By clicking the *Add Page Element* button, you will discover a wide range of features that you can add to the sidebar of your blog. For instance, use the “List” feature to include a list of expectations for student posts, or use the “Feed” element to have a running ticker of news clips relevant to your class (there is more on RSS feeds later in the chapter).

Perhaps the most useful feature would be to include a list of links. You will, of course, want to be sure that you link to all of our Web sites: *Best of History Web Sites*, *Teaching English with Technology*, *Teaching History with Technology*, *Ed Tech*

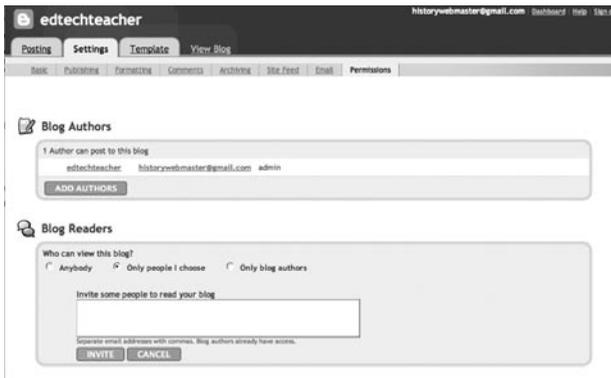
Once you get the hang of basic posts and comments, you will quickly find that nearly everything in Blogger is easily customizable.

### *Adding Page Elements*

Click on the *Layout* button for your blog on the Blogger dashboard, and you'll be taken to a page where you can edit your blogs “Page Elements.” These are a wide variety of features that can help you customize your blog and make it more useful for your students.

*Teacher* (pretty please! It helps our ranking in search engines.) Equally useful would be linking to your school Web page, other important resources, or if you have every student in your class have a blog, you can create a list of links to all of their blogs. If you create a separate class Web page—and many instructors find that a blog works just fine as a class Web page—then you should link to there from your blog as well (we'll discuss how to make simple Web pages with Google pages in Chapter 8, Student Presentations).

### Who can View Your Blog?: Setting Permissions



With a little logistical work, you can set up your blog so that only certain people can view, post, or comment.

Source: Courtesy of Google.

activity and cutting your class blog off from the outside world somewhat defeats its purpose.

To set permissions you need to be logged in to your Blogger account. Click on the *Settings* tab and then select the *Permissions* link. You can select *Anybody*, *Only People I Choose*, or *Only Blog Authors* to view your blog. If you only want your students to view the blog then choose *Only People I Choose*. Invite each student by adding their email addresses in the box provided and then clicking the *Invite* button.

## Bloggging Logistics . . . Bloggistics?

### Blog Administrative and Authorship Considerations

At our school we have a centralized system where administrative control of blogs rests in the hands of two Information Technology department members. We create all blogs, train all teachers, and make fundamental design, content, and Acceptable Use Policy decisions. In some other schools, teachers create and administer blogs on their own and make fundamental design, content, and Acceptable Use Policy decisions. A centralized system helps ensure some supervision over design, content, and etiquette, but the downside is that it risks stifling teacher initiative and creativity.



**WEBSITE:** Tom has recorded a podcast on blog administration and authorship considerations at <http://www.edtechteacher.org/chapter2.html>.

If you really want to keep your blog away from outside eyes you have several options. Most blog services give you the option of assigning password protection to your blog. Blogger gives you the option of deciding who can view your blog and who can leave a comment on your blog. So, if you don't mind outsiders reading you class blog, but don't want them to leave comments you can set up your blog that way. Just keep in mind that blogging is intrinsically a public

## Blog Protocol and Privacy Issues

Students will be posting work to the Internet and must be cognizant of proper Internet protocol, and just plain decency! We tell our students to never publish a personal attack and to never be unduly critical or harsh in tone or content. We encourage students to use the comments option to praise their peer's work, to ask questions, and to point out what they found particularly informative, or engaging in a blog post. That being said, we do use blogs as a means of debate and often have students with opposing viewpoints blog on a particular issue. Thus, it is not uncommon for students to criticize each other's arguments via their blogs. However, argumentation should be undertaken in a spirit of constructive criticism and in an effort to sharpen analytical thinking.

You may wish to review student comments before they are actually published. Both the teacher and the student should keep in mind that any malicious or inappropriate content on a school blog may result in disciplinary action for a student, and even a teacher. So, the teacher needs to exercise caution. However, the review of all student posts can be a time-consuming and tedious chore for a teacher. Thus, you must gauge the maturity of your students and decide whether expediency is worth the risk of inappropriate public content. Blogger, Edublogs, and Typepad all include options where you can choose to review comments before they are actually posted to the blog.

In Blogger go to *Settings*→*Comments* and click the *Yes* box next to *Enable Comment Moderation*. Blogger has a helpful tutorial on how this works, just click the question mark icon next to *Enable Comment Moderation*.

Also, avoid publishing student last names. The Web is by nature is public and as teachers and administrators we should not reveal the identity of our students online to strangers. Instruct students not to include their last name in posts or comments.



**WEBSITE:** Visit <http://www.edtechteacher.org/chapter2.html> to listen to our podcast on blog privacy and security considerations.

## Blogging and RSS

### Tech Specs: Blogging and RSS

**Set-Up Time:** Setting up an RSS aggregator and finding your favorite RSS feeds can take an hour or two.

**Keep-Up Time:** Once you have your RSS aggregator up and running, it takes only a minute or two to add new feeds.

**In-Class Time:** We mostly use RSS to keep up with the news and developments in education, but with some investment of time, you could get your kids started as well.

**Tech Savvy:** Medium. Getting started with Really Simple Syndication isn't always so simple.

There are so many different blogs being written by students, teachers, and educators, that it can be quite difficult to regularly read your favorites. RSS is nifty way of receiving new information from online sources you select, like your favorite blogs or Web sites.

RSS is commonly known as “Really Simple Syndication” and through RSS *feeds* you can receive a steady stream of information without directly searching for it.

An RSS feed is a source of information that is regularly updated. By subscribing to RSS feeds, you can get that stream of information delivered to you. For instance, let’s say you want to receive every new post that edublogger Will Richardson adds to his Weblog blog at <http://www.weblogg-ed.com/>. If you go to his Web site you will see an orange “XML” icon at the top of the page. (At some site you will see an orange “RSS” icon.) XML is the coding used to send and receive RSS feeds. By placing the orange XML or RSS icon on their Web page the author is inviting you to subscribe to this feed. Now you just need a tool to collect these feeds of information.

To collect and read RSS feeds from Web sites you need what’s called an RSS *aggregator*. An aggregator enables you to collect and read RSS feeds in one central location. There are Web-based aggregators, and downloadable software aggregators, so you can choose what’s most convenient for you.

There are many potential educational benefits associated with RSS. For instance, a social studies class could stay abreast of the latest developments in Iraq. English classes might receive updates on teaching literature from favorite Web sites or collect new poems from poetry blogs.

## COLLECTING AND READING RSS FEEDS WITH BLOGLINES:

A simple and easy way to collect and read RSS feeds is the free Bloglines aggregator at <http://bloglines.com/>. Bloglines is a Web aggregator that enables you to make your own personalized page tailored to your interests. From within Bloglines, you can choose from millions of live Internet content feeds—including articles, blogs, images, and audio. After you register with Bloglines you can search for and collect the feeds you want to receive. Bloglines constantly check those feeds for changes or additions and sends new information to your personal Bloglines account.

**Step 1. Register with Bloglines.** It’s free and easy. Go to Bloglines at <http://bloglines.com/> and click on the *sign up now* link. The registration form is short so you’ll be done quickly.

**Step 2. Click the *Feed* Tab.** Once registered you’ll want to add feeds to your account. There are two fundamental ways to do this. One is first to go to a favorite blog or Web page, find the URL of its RSS feed, and then add it to your Bloglines page. The second way is to search within Bloglines for feeds and add them to your page.

**Step 3. Click the *Add* button.** In this instance we’ll assume that you’ve come across an interesting blog or Web site and want to add its RSS feed to your Bloglines page. To do this, you’ll want to copy the URL of the blog’s RSS feed and then paste it into the Blog or URL text field you see in Bloglines.

**Step 4: Copy and Paste the URL of a RSS feed.** To find the RSS feed of a particular blog or Web page, look for a small, orange rectangle on the site that says either XML or RSS:

It might look something like this: 

(If you can’t find it they probably don’t offer an RSS feed.)

To capture it, *right-click* on a PC, (*Ctrl-click* on a Mac) and select *Copy Link*. You can now go back to Bloglines and paste the feed into the Blog or URL text field. Finally, click *Subscribe*. The feed is now added your Bloglines page.

**Step 5: Search for feeds using Bloglines then add them.** To search for feeds within Bloglines use the search function available in the top right corner of the Bloglines

page. Toggle the box furthest to the right and select *search for feeds*. Type in keywords, such as “teaching literature” or “teaching American history” and hit the arrow button to search for feeds.

Search results appear in the form of links to blogs and Web pages. Click on a link and peruse the source to decide if you would like to subscribe to its feed. If so, simply hit the *Back* button in your web browser and look for the small *subscribe to feed* link underneath the link to the source. Click it and the feed will be added to your Bloglines page.

**Step 6: Read your Bloglines feeds.** To read your feeds you make sure are logged in and that the *Feeds* tab is selected. Simply click on the link that represents the source of the feed you are interested in. By default Bloglines will display the most recent news associated with that feed first. Click on any of the links to read the article post or story. Come back regularly to Bloglines to read new information from your feeds.

If you opt not to use Bloglines, you might download free aggregator software such as NetNewsWire (Mac OS X) or SharpReader. The advantage of Bloglines is that it is a Web-based aggregator, so you have nothing to download and you can access your Bloglines account on any computer connected to the Internet.

One advantage of using RSS for information retrieval is that your aggregator feed is virus free, ad-free, and spam-free! Additionally, the content is something you want to read because you subscribed to it. To help you sort through thousands of potential RSS feeds try Feedster at <http://feedster.com>. This search engine uses RSS feeds to discover major happenings in the “blogosphere” in near-real-time. Technorati at <http://technorati.com/> is a great way to search and organize blogs, as well as Internet pictures and video, and provides up-to-the-minute information.

### Select Examples of Blogging Activities for the Classroom

#### **Tech Specs: Sample Blogging Exercises**

**Set-Up Time:** Copying or modifying these activities should only take 10–15 minutes once you have your blog up and running.

**Keep-Up Time:** None.

**In-Class Time:** Most of these activities are designed for one night or one-half of a class period, but read the fine print below.

**Tech Savvy:** Low. Blogging is one of the easiest ways to venture into teaching with technology.

Blogging provides opportunities for active learning techniques such as role-playing, debating, and problem-solving. Students can use their blogs to discuss, analyze, and reflect on what they are reading and learning. Blogging tends to heighten student interest and motivate many kids since posts will be “published” and potentially be available to the public at large.

Edublogging can take many forms and thus these activities are fairly diverse in form and content. Some of these blogging activities may be completed in a single evening while other will take several classes. Some are stand-alone assignments while others are part of a broader activity or project.

### *Discussion Question: “What is the most significant cause of the English Civil War?” (High School)*

The following is a straightforward one-night assignment that uses a single blog to help foster debate and analytical thinking. The teacher poses a single question to his blog: “What is the most significant cause of the English Civil War?” Students answer the question via the Comment link located at the bottom of the teacher’s post. Students end up answering the question at different points during the evening and are required to read previous student responses before publishing their own. In this way students are prompted to consider the ideas and opinions of their peers before responding to the post. Naturally, the later a student responds to the question, the more he or she will have to read and consider before offering a response. (You might limit a respondent to reading two or three previous comments.) Nonetheless, the teacher insists that each comment include some point or perspective that differs from previous ones. This exercise helps encourage analytical thinking and discussion and provides a great foundation for a verbal debate the next day in class.

See a sample of student comments below:

Comments	
<p>The most significant cause of the English Civil War stems directly from Charles I's desire to create a uniform religion (Anglican). By trying to force the "Book of Common Prayer" and bishoprics upon Scotland, Charles was just looking for trouble. Scotland predictably revolted and Charles' stubborn stance against Parliament had to give in. His clear desire to become the absolute ruler of "Britain" instead of using Parliament to simply rule England sparked the English Civil War.</p> <p>Posted by: <a href="#">Greg</a>   November 8, 2004 03:58 PM</p>	<p><b>Recent Comments</b></p> <p>Mireille on The English Civil War</p> <p>Lauren on The English Civil War</p> <p>Allie on The English Civil War</p> <p>Caroline on The English Civil War</p> <p>Amy on The English Civil War</p> <p>Selden on The English Civil War</p> <p>Chris on The English Civil War</p> <p>alex on The English Civil War</p> <p>anne on The English Civil War</p> <p>Audrey on The English Civil War</p> <p><b>Archives</b></p> <p>November 2004</p> <p>October 2004</p> <p>September 2004</p>
<p>I agree with Greg in that religion was the major cause of the English Civil War. However, I also believe that Charles' personality, and the way he approached certain things was a major factor as well. But back to religion-- when Charles attempted to impose the English Prayer Book on the Presbyterians of Scotland, he had definately gone too far. Charles mounted a campaign against the Scots in 1639, but failed miserably. He then summoned a parliament to raise money for another campaign against the Scots. The parliament was closed in a matter of weeks, because Charles and the council could once again, not agree to terms. The Scots eventually invaded England, and Charles had to buy a truce. But to do this, again, Charles had to turn to Parliament for money. Overall I believe that Charles' arrogance and somewhat stupidity when it came to religion, and, how to manage parliament was the chief cause of the English Civil War.</p> <p>Posted by: <a href="#">Griffin</a>   November 8, 2004 06:23 PM</p>	
<p>I think that the major cause of the English Civil war was the unyielding senses of entitlement of Charles I and of the Puritan gentry of Parliament. The opposing forces would not exist without Charles' desire to embody absolutism (as Griffin and Greg said above) and the gentry's desire to resist. It seems that the more deliberate cause can be attributed to Charles, for in hindsight, we can see that Parliament's efforts to "check" the power of the monarch was more than legitimate.</p> <p>Posted by: <a href="#">Abby</a>   November 9, 2004 07:37 AM</p>	

In the example above, you can see how students read each others ideas and react to them.

Source: Courtesy of Robert Hernderson.

### *Discussion Question: Origins of the Cold War (High School)*

*In this example blogging is the culminating activity of a one-night Web page reading assignment. The specific purpose of this assignment is to get students to provide a clear opinion on Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech. These statements then can be used in class the next day as a foundation for a broader discussion on the Origins of the Cold War.*

#### *Instruction to students:*

Go to CNN's The Iron Curtain Special Report at: <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/episodes/02/>

## 52 Discussion and Communication

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1. Examine Interactive Map: Post-War Europe (Iron Curtain 1946)
2. Click on “Iron Curtain” and read about Poland and West Germany
3. Read PRAVDA: Stalin’s “Iron Curtain” Response

After completing the above reading, post an answer to the following question to our class blog: What is your position on the following statement: “Churchill’s comments were inflammatory and unnecessary.” Do you agree or disagree?

Your posts will serve as the basis of our class discussion tomorrow.

### *Discussion Question: Life of a Hobo: Interdisciplinary Blogging Activity (Middle School, High School)*

This creative writing/historical simulation activity calls on students to research the plight of homeless teenagers during the Great Depression and then create their own fictionalized account of a day in the life of a Hobo. Students post their story on their blog and read each other’s work, commenting on other pieces about what they liked about the story they read and what made it seem authentic. The blogs provide a public forum to present and share student work.

### *Instructions to Students:*

In this assignment you are to write from the perspective of a Hobo who is “riding the rails.” Use your knowledge of the period and your creativity to create a story (250–500 words) about a day in your life as a Hobo.

Here are some questions to help guide your story: How old are you? Where are you from and why have you left home? Are you traveling alone or with someone? Who? What possessions do you have? What are your plans? What are your concerns? How are you feeling, physically and emotionally? What happened to you today? How did it make you feel?

Students were given the links below to help provide background on the life of a hobo:  
Background on the Great Depression:

- Riding the Rails (PBS) <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/rails/>  
Part of PBS’s American Experience television series, this site focuses on the plight of more than a quarter million teenagers living on the road in America.
- Tales from the Rails: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/rails/sfeature/tales.html>  
Weaver Dial: Battling the Bulls  
Leslie E. Paul: I Was a Burden  
Henry Koczu: Going to California  
Norma Darrah: One Weary, Hungry Mile After Another  
Gene Wadsworth: Losing a Brother  
Berkeley Hackett: Feeling Like Tom Sawyer
- New Deal Network <http://newdeal.feri.org/index.htm>  
The New Deal Network (NDN) features 20,000 items: photographs, speeches, letters, documents, and exercises from the New Deal era.
  - Bumming in California <http://newdeal.feri.org/fwp/fwp07.htm>
  - School for Bums <http://newdeal.feri.org/voices/voce02.htm>

- Breadline: 1929–1939 <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/peoplescentury/episodes/breadline/>  
Part of PBS's People's Century television series, this site explores the massive unemployment in America during the Depression and offers interviews, a timeline, and a teacher's guide
- Surviving the Dust Bowl <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/dustbowl/>  
Part of PBS's American Experience television series, this site examines the region in the Southwest renamed the "Dust Bowl" because of a catastrophic eight-year drought.
- Stories from the Great Depression <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/dustbowl/sfeature/eyewitness.html%20>

The following story written by a 10th grade student in response to this assignment:

## THERE'S NO AUNT SARAH

"My stomach's empty but it don't hurt and my back's near broke but it don't ache. Can't feel nothin' right now -not my tired feet that won't stop bleedin' or the on'rous weight of the dust in my lungs. The physical sufferin' ain't nothin' 'pared to the hurt in my heart.

When you've gotta worry 'bout starvin' and freezin' to death you forget to keep track of what day it is, but I'd estimate today's the 15th of December, year 1932. It took me near three weeks to get here. "Here" is Lancaster, California. I left home in Kansas when Dadi told me he'd got word from Aunt Sarah in California. "Aunt Sarah's got a place for you to stay with her and she's found you a good job in a shop downtown Lancaster," he said. "You go put your things in the bag that I've left you upstairs and I'll take you to the train in the morning. " I had never met Aunt Sarah, let alone heard mention of her in our house before the day that Dadi told me I'd to go live with her. Things were hard for us then. Not just hard for my family but for all the farmin' families in Kansas that depended on the crops. Ever since the topsoil started blowin' 'way nothin'd wanted to grow. No crops, just dust. It meant no money, empty stomachs, cold bodies.

At 14, I was the third oldest of Mama and Dadi's kids. My brothers Jake, 16, and Tom, 15, left a few months before I did to find work and s'port themselves on account of mama and dadi could hardly feed themselves. Before Dadi'd told me I'd be leavin' too I'd thought about gettin' myself a job. I felt awful guilty all the time 'bout bein' another mouth for Mama and Dadi to fill. It was almost relievin' that I'd be leavin'. My absence'd be improvin' for Mama and Dadi and my sisters. I kissed Anne-Marie, Sue, and Emily goodbye and went to find mama to do the same but Dadi said, "Listen, Sarah, you don't say nothin' to your mother. Good-bye will break her heart so you just let her be." It broke my heart not gettin' to say bye to her but I thought Dadi was right so I let her be like he said to. I put a pair of socks, a blouse, skirt and my doll, Jenny, into the canvas bag that Dadi'd left at the foot of my bed. The next mornin' Dadi walked me to the train station. He gave me 20 cents, told me which train to take, and left. I like to think Mama cried when she found out what Dadi'd done the next mornin'.

I made quick friends with a hobo 'bout my age named Jim. He warned me 'bout the railroad bulls and told me where the hobo camps that made the best mulligan stew were on the way from Kansas to California. I didn't spend more than a day with Jim but he taught me things my life'd come to rely on later. I spent 'near three weeks ridin' the rails, walkin' on route 66 to get from station to station and stoppin' at hobo camps in between. Pretty much 'came a 'bo myself. Today I arrived in Lancaster, California. The prospect a' my arrival here's what kept me goin' all the time I was trav'lin'. Imagine my disappointment 'pon findin' there really wasn't no Aunt Sarah. That there wasn't no warm place to stay, no good job like Dadi'd promised. I know now that I was a burden that Dadi made up his mind to get rid of. If the poisnin' mulligan stew I've been livin' off the past three weeks don't kill me, this feelin' in my heart will."

Here is a comment posted by another student:

"I loved your story! Your use of dialect seemed accurate and enhanced the diary-like tone of the story. I also liked how you conveyed the hobo's feelings of helplessness and sadness. You were able to get a lot of the things we had been talking about in class about hobo's in your story . . . the mulligan stew, the hunger, the dreams for a new job, etc. It's so suspenseful, I really want to know what happens next . . . good job!"



**WEBSITE:** These examples and many others can be found at <http://www.edtechtteacher.org/chapter2.html>

### *I-Search Literature Project: Reflective Journaling*

The I-Search is an independent literature research project where students keep a daily log of their interactions with the works and authors they are researching. Students choose a piece of literature they wish to investigate in depth, read scholarly critiques about the work, and then respond to what they read. Few structured guidelines are provided; students are encouraged to follow whatever theme or topic interests them and discuss their interactions with the literature. The I-Search blog serves as a personal diary of sorts as students record their reflections on the literature they are studying. During the process, students respond to comments made by their teacher, and possibly peers, and use these as the basis for developing a more sophisticated exploration of literature.

Peter Raymond, an English teacher at the Noble and Greenough School, says that the I-Search project he undertakes with High School Juniors "encourages a deep personal exploration" with literature within a public context. He says that student posts "become increasingly sophisticated, personal, and refined" as students develop a comfort with the blogging process and better understand the work in question.

## Courtney F.

### Journal Entry Twelve: Connection Between Mental and Physical Scars

After randomly reading an article in Psychology Today entitled "The identity dance: the battle between genes and the environment is over. As the dust settles, scientists piece together how DNA and life experience conspire to create personality," I began to think about the physical identity and how it is formed. In the article, scientists have discovered that while we are all born with a certain set of genes, the levels of certain chemicals in our brain which affect our behavior and identity may be altered by experience. A lot of times certain problems we may possess on a genetic scale may be disguised by, for example, a good relationship. The opposite works in the same way—a bad relationship may augment these problems. A Researcher says, "Maternal nurturing and discipline seem to buffer the effect of the serotonin gene," says Suomi. "If they don't have good mothers, then the [troubled] behavior comes out loud and clear."

I'm not sure if this has anything to do with scars and physical identity, but I'm interested in how a writer may use the idea of a scar itself in connection to identity. By definition, a scar is an area of flesh that has been ripped open and healed again but leaves a mark. I'm interested in how a scar comes from a gaping wound, which may signify an opening into one's personality. A psychological wound, which these psychologist may describe as the absence of a loving mother, may open paths for recessive traits. I think many of the slaves on Sweet Home, and in real life, suffered from these identity crises of having their flesh gouged open, both literally and metaphorically. The wounds they suffered from the plantations gave rise to psychological conditions, explained in this article by the presence of certain harmful genes. These psychological conditions paralleled the physical conditions they also suffered through—for example, bearing the strain of being whipped or beat-up. The scars that grossly healed over the wounds, creating messy scars also parallel the mental scars left on the minds of the slaves. In the life of a slave, physical and psychological trauma are inexorably related.

#### Sources Used:

Sinha, Gunjan, *The identity dance: the battle between genes and the environment is over. As the dust settles, scientists piece together how DNA and life experience conspire to create personality.*  
[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1175/is\\_2\\_37/al\\_n6006225/pg\\_3](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1175/is_2_37/al_n6006225/pg_3), Psychology Today, March-April, 2004

#### RECENT POSTS

Journal Entry Twelve: Connection Between Mental and Physical Scars

Journal Entry Eleven: The Relationship Between Physical and Emotional Scars

Journal Entry Ten: Scars As Parts of Identities

Journal Entry Eight & Nine: Slave-Owners' Systems of Power & The Stockholm Syndrome

Journal Entry Six & Seven: Human Superiority Over Animals & Tactics of Slave Owners

Journal Entry Four & Five: The Importance of Establishment and Preservation of Identity

Journal Entry Four: The Formation of One's Undesired Identity

Journal Entry Two & Three: Biblical Symbolism & Moral Implications of Imposing Condemning Identities

Journal Entry One: Intentional Vs. Unintentional Physical Marks & Their Connected Mental

In reading the titles of this student's journal entries, you can see how his thinking on the topic of identity matures. *Source:* Courtesy of Peter Raymond.

*Role-Playing: What Would You Bring to Walden?*

## Chris's American Literature 11

Just another WordPress.com weblog

**Your Nature Writing Here**  
March 1st, 2007 by workharder

Please post your piece of writing here. Then, after you've posted, read one or two other posts and just leave one comment for that person. Remember, reference the person whose post you're commenting on.

Posted in | 20 Comments »

**What would you bring?**  
February 24th, 2007 by workharder

Thoreau's Packing List

Following are the 12 items Thoreau took with him when he headed into the woods at Walden Pond in 1854.

- \* 1 axe
- \* 2 knives
- \* 1 fork
- \* 3 plates
- \* 1 cup
- \* 1 spoon
- \* a jug for oil
- \* a jug for molasses
- \* 1 lamp

What would you take, if you were headed into the woods to conduct the same kind of experiment Thoreau underwent? You can bring anything you want, no limitations.

Posted in | 30 Comments »

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Here, the teacher asks students to consider and re-write Henry Thoreau's list of the twelve items he brought to Walden Pond. *Source:* Courtesy of Chris Bagg.

This role-playing activity was designed by a teacher who had only been blogging with his students for about two weeks! In this activity, teacher Chris Bagg shows his American

Literature students the list of items that Henry David Thoreau brought with him to Walden Pond, and he then asks them to compile their own lists. The student work that emerges is a delightful combination of the insightful and the hilarious.

**Faraaz Says:**

February 24th, 2007 at 3:03 pm

- a gun
- a bunch of bullets
- a handbook on how to use a gun
- blanket
- knife
- axe
- lantern
- flashlight
- a lot of matches/lighters
- a cooking pot
- plate
- fork,spoon
- glass
- compass
- shovel
- emergency money
- clothes(not too many, 3 pants, 3 shirts)
- garlic salt for squirrel meat

Faraaz's response is humorous, demonstrates a familiarity with the text (garlic salt for squirrel meat), and could start a fine conversation comparing his relationship to the woods with Thoreau's.



**WEBSITE:** Listen to Tom's comments on some of these blogging activities at <http://www.edtechtteacher.org/chapter2.html>.



**PENCIL:** If your network is down on a day you planned on having students write blogs entries, they can always save their work and post it later when the network is back up. If you are planning a class where students will be reading blog entries, there is not much that you can do if the network goes down, so plan a backup activity.

### Edublogging Assessment

It can be a formidable challenge to grade a blog. Blogs are by nature informal and personal and don't always lend themselves easily to a formal grading rubric. Some teachers choose not to grade them directly at all and instead lump them within a class participation grade. Nonetheless, some teachers and organizations have attempted to formalize the blog assessment process. For instance, a team of teachers at San Diego State University has created a simple rubric for assessing blogs, which can be found here: [http://edweb.sdsu.edu/courses/edtec296/assignments/blog\\_rubric.html](http://edweb.sdsu.edu/courses/edtec296/assignments/blog_rubric.html). A Google search for blog rubrics will lead you to many other possibilities as well.

Your rubric may be quite different, or you may have no rubric at all. The important thing is to provide your students with a clear outline of the grading criteria you will use.

### Other Blogging Resources

For some more resources on blogs, we have two recommendations. The first is a Web site designed by Bernie Dodge at San Diego State University. In ed-tech circles Mr. Dodge is famous for his development of the "WebQuest" model for Internet-based research activities (See Chapter 4, Guided Inquiry) and has a wonderfully rich and useful list of resources for blogs as well, which can be found at this URL, <http://edweb.sdsu.edu/courses/edtec700/BL/resources.htm>, or by doing a Google search for "Bernie Dodge Resources for Edu-Blogging." His Web site covers a wide range of blogging topics: Protocols, Policies, Etiquette; Blogs by K-12 Students; Blogs by Educators; Blogs About EduBlogging; Example Class and Project Blogs.

### CHATTING

Class discussions provide excellent opportunities for people to listen, think, and speak. They have a few problems though. First, only one person can speak at once. Second, some people are too shy to speak.

Online chatting, using an instant message service or chat room, solves these two problems. Chatting is as natural to our students as picking up the phone is to us (for many, chatting is actually more natural). While chatting, students can all talk and listen at once. Many students who are nervous about speaking, have no trouble typing their thoughts, so chatting is a terrific way to let shy or quieter students have a more prominent voice in a conversation.

Chats can also be copied, pasted, emailed, printed, and saved. This means that you can evaluate, coach, and grade students on their conversations. You can then give praise to quieter students and encourage them to participate more in class, and you can help students improve their skills like supporting their arguments with source material. Chatting is like a small group conversation where students have a little bit more time and space to think and where you can give students more one-on-one coaching in a way that you cannot do with small, group discussion exercises.

Once you practice chatting in class, it can be an excellent solution for days where you need to be absent. Just email your students instructions, have a substitute sit in to supervise, and let the kids work the whole period.

Using instant messaging in class looks quite strange to teachers, but it quickly be-

comes perfectly natural for students. Each year we have a few students who tell us that of all the activities we do in class, this is their favorite.

## Sample Assignment for a First In-Class Chat

### *Instructions to Students:*

The leader from each group should invite the other members into a chat. From this point forward NO TALKING, ONLY TYPING.

Each person will then in turn ask one of the discussion questions that you prepared last night for homework. . You will be given 15 minutes to discuss. The goal is to discuss questions as deeply and thoroughly as possible. I'd rather read an in-depth examination of two questions than brief discussions of six. GO DEEP!

You will get a 5 point grade for this exercise. While I will raise the standards later, for now the grade will be mostly based on the following:

1. Do you stay on topic?
2. Do you carefully read and respond to each other?
3. Do you ensure that you finish each question before moving on?
4. Do you defend your ideas with quotations from the source material?
5. Do you challenge and question one another?

When you are finished, the leader should copy and paste the chat into an email and send it to turninreich.

## A Sample Chatting Exercise on the Bhagavad-Gita:

**Pablo** [10:11:31 AM]: Why is Arjuna reluctant to fight?

**Jess** [10:11:54 AM]: **Because he doesn't want to kill all of those people**

**Pablo** [10:11:55 AM]: Arjuna is reluctant to fight because he believes those people are his family.

**Jess** [10:12:02 AM]: **and his teachers**

**Vinesha** [10:12:07 AM]: yeah

**Jess** [10:12:09 AM]: **and his great uncles**

**Vinesha** [10:12:22 AM]: his family, he didnt want to kill them

**Jess** [10:12:29 AM]: **right**

**Vinesha** [10:12:39 AM]: he felt like he was close to these people

**Jess** [10:13:12 AM]: **yeah, and he thought it would be cruel and unnecessary to kill them**

**Vinesha** [10:13:17 AM]: yeah

**Jess** [10:13:28 AM]: **+, he says he doesnt want a kingdom**

**Jess** [10:13:30 AM]: **right**

**Vinesha** [10:13:32 AM]: he became overcome with grief

**Pablo** [10:14:04 AM]: "Then Arjuna saw in both armies fathers, grandfathers, sons, grandsons; father of wives, uncles, masters;brothers companions, and friends. When Arjuna thus saw his kinsmen face to face i both lines of the battle, he was overcome by grief and despair and thus he spoke with a sinking heart. "

**Jess** [10:14:20 AM]: **right**

**Vinesha** [10:14:44 AM]: so that's our conclusion for number 1

**Jess** [10:14:49 AM]: **then "I have no wish for victory Krishna, nor for a kingdom, nor for its pleasures"**

## 58 Discussion and Communication

You might note that these three students made 18 comments with 2 complete textual citations in less than 3 minutes. That's pretty exciting, but what is even more exciting is that at the exact same time four other groups of students were doing the same thing. Our classroom got an awful lot of work done together in a very short amount of time. The next step in the activity would probably be to have the students stop chatting on-line and to begin a whole group discussion on what they learned from talking to each other.

### **Basic Guidelines for Chat Groups**

1. Have students work in groups of 3–5
2. Give students clear expectations for grades
3. Require students to email you their work
4. Encourage students to challenge each other and to draw from the sources you are using
5. Make sure students start their chatting exercises with a series of questions to address; often it works best to have a combination of some questions supplied by the teacher and some questions that students have devised on their own.
6. Your school might have a chat function on the school email server (like FirstClass) or class management server (like Moodle). If not, you can have students chat using an instant message service like Meebo (<http://www.meebo.com>) or in their own private chat rooms with a service called Chatzy (<http://www.chatzy.com>).



**PENCIL:** If you can't get online during a class where you have planned a chatting activity, you can always have them answer questions in small discussion groups instead.

### **Starting a Chat Room with Chatzy:**

#### **Tech Specs: Start a Chat Room with Chatzy**

**Set-Up Time:** Plan 20–30 minutes to set up chat rooms for your students in the beginning of the year.

**Keep-Up Time:** 10–20 minutes to think up chat questions (unless you make students think them up as homework).

**In-Class Time:** 20 minutes to a whole period.

**Tech Savvy:** Medium.

Go to <http://www.chatzy.com>. Click on the link for *Create Virtual Room*.

Fill in the appropriate form windows and you'll soon have your own private chat room with a unique URL. Next, you'll need to click on *Invite People*, where you can fill out a form that will send an email to all of the people you would like to invite to your chat room.

**Chatzy**<sup>15</sup>

Chatzy is a free private chat service. Fill out the form to create a chat room immediately - only for you and the people you invite!

Why Chatzy is a good alternative to traditional chat sites as well as ICQ, Yahoo, MSN and AOL Messenger:

- Chatzy has no registration steps - your friends can join instantly
- Chatzy is free and has no popup ads
- Chatzy does not require any installation on your computer (= no spyware)
- Chatzy works on any PC, with any language and through corporate firewalls
- Chatzy is simple and easy to use

Frequently Asked Questions

Start Quick Chat
**Create Virtual Room**

The Virtual Room gives you password protection, custom welcome messages and much more. You can send out invitations after you create the chatroom below. Or, if you are running a Web site, link to it and use it as a free hosted chat solution.

**Your name/alias:**   ?

**Title/subject:**  ?

**Welcome message:**  ?

To join the chat, please identify yourself below.

---

**Room type:**  ?

**User password:**  ?

**Allow users to:**  Send out invitations ?  
 View the visitor list ?  
 Clear the room ?

---

**Admin password:**  ?

**Confirm password:**  ?

**Emergency email:**  ?

When you create a Virtual Room in Chatzy, it exists forever so you can have your students return to it throughout the year. *Source:* Courtesy of Chatzy.

Chatzy<sup>15</sup>

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»World History Room 1«

- Invite People
- Save / Print
- Clear Room
- Commands
- No Alerts
- My Preferences
- Room Properties
- Visitor List
- Create Room
- Chatzy Blog
- Help / FAQ
- Terms / Privacy

**Justin** from x.x.x.173 created virtual room 8 minutes ago

**Justin** from x.x.x.173 invited bjfreich@gmail.com 3 seconds ago

**Justin** from x.x.x.173 joined the chat

**Justin:** Hey we are chatting in here

**Bob** from x.x.x.173 joined the chat

**Bob:** Yep everybody can say things now

**Justin:** This is totally sweet

**Bob:** Yep, totally

© 2005 Chatzy

**Justin:**

They will receive an email with a link to your chat room. After logging in with the password you selected, your students can begin chatting.

These rooms are persistent, so anytime you want to use them, students can go back to the same Web address. If you made permanent teams in your classrooms, you could easily get this activity up and running with little time investment beyond the initial set-up.



**WEBSITE:** For more ideas on chatting, visit <http://www.edtechteacher.org/chapter2.html>

## BRINGING THE WORLD INTO YOUR ROOM: SKYPE AND ICHAT

If the perfect guest speaker for your class lives across the country or if you have a class of pen pals across the world, have them join your class by videoconference. There are several newer programs that allow free videoconferencing. If you and your guest are both using recent Apple computers, then iChat is a slick piece of software that allows you to make video calls, even with three or four people. Another great alternative is Skype, which is free to download and works across all different platforms.

### Tech Specs: Skype and iChat

**Set-Up Time:** Downloading and installing Skype is easy—it takes about 10 minutes—and iChat is preinstalled on most new Macs. If you want to set things up so that you can videoconference with your whole class, setting up cameras, microphones and speakers can take a while. A simple audio conference with a small class of students gathered around a computer doesn't take so long.

**Keep-Up Time:** Setting up a conference with a guest from away can be time consuming; you need to make sure that they have the necessary equipment and compatible software, and you should practice before you use it in class. For a good guest speaker though, the rewards are certainly worth the investment.

**In-Class Time:** Given the amount of time these take to set up, it's worth it to spend an entire class period with the guest.

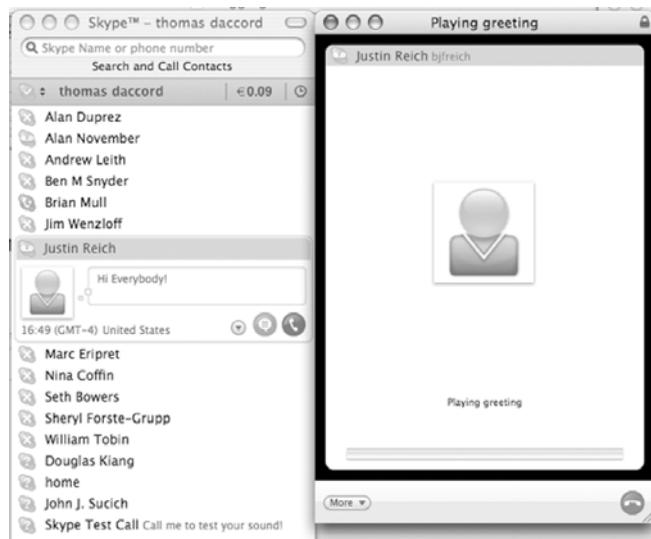
**Tech Savvy:** Medium to high. Especially if you are trying to incorporate video, some audiovisual know-how can be quite helpful.

For set up, you will need:  
For the classroom:

- A computer with Skype or iChat
- A projector
- Speakers
- Internet access
- A microphone that students can use to ask questions
- (Optional) A webcam that lets the speaker see the class.

*For the guest:*

- A computer with Skype or iChat
- A microphone
- Internet Access
- (Optional) A webcam so that the class can see the speaker



Tom calling Justin on Skype. *Source:* Courtesy of Skype.

## Skype

### FEATURED PRODUCT

#### Skype Internet Calling

**Web site:** <http://www.skype.com>

**Developer:** Skype, though now owned by eBay

**Cost:** Free

Skype offers free calls to anyone in the world on the Skype network, and low cost calls out to regular phones across the world. Video calling is also an option.

---

If both the speaker and the teacher have Skype accounts, then the call will be free. To start a call, you will need to add the other person as a contact in your Skype contacts, which you can do by searching for the person's name or Skype User ID. Once you are on each other's contact lists, starting a call is as easy as clicking the green phone icon near the contact's name. If you both have webcams plugged into your computers, you will also be able to see each other.



**PENCIL:** These activities depend on a few different pieces of technology working- two sets on computers, speakers, microphones, and the Internet. With a little practice these calls run quite smoothly, but with so many pieces involved, it's best to have a backup plan.

## iChat

### FEATURED PRODUCT

#### iChat

**Web site:** <http://www.apple.com/macosx/features/ichat/>

**Developer:** Apple

**Cost:** Free with Mac OS X

iChat is a chatting software with a beautiful interface that is available only to those with iMacs or MacBooks.

---

For iChat, you will need to sign in using a Mac account or an AOL account. If you are using Apple OS X Panther (10.3) or Tiger (10.4) you have all the software you need for video conferencing with iChat. iChat AV automatically detects both external Web cameras and the integrated cameras available on some Macs. You'll want to set up a "Buddy List" with the people you hope to conference with. To initiate a videoconference double click on the camera icon next to your guest's name, and you will send out an invitation. Once your guest accepts the invitation and everything connects, you should see each other. Your face will appear in a small box on their computer screen and their picture will appear on your screen inside their picture. Like Skype, iChat is free.

## Some Hints for Better Calls and Videoconferences:



In this picture Tom is using iChat to speak to a colleague in Hawaii.

- Be sure that the computer's audio speakers don't point towards the microphone, or you will hear a distracting echo of your own voice.
- Remember that both sides won't be able to see each other perfectly, so you may need to be a little more forceful than usual to interject to make a point or ask questions.
- You don't need to have webcams set up to just have a guest join you by voice, like a conference call.

Skype and iChat are both great tools for bringing the rest of the world into your classroom for dialogue and learning. You also might find that if you have friends or relatives living overseas, the free calling works pretty well for you at home too. Did you ever imagine this book would add so much to your personal life?



**WEBSITE:** We have video tutorials for both Skype and iChat at <http://www.edtechteacher/chapter2.html>

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Classroom conversations used to have two firm boundaries: the clock and the classroom walls. No longer. Using technology we can expand our classroom conversations through time and space. We can foster communication amongst our students and with the outside world from class, from the lab, from the library, and from home. The conversations can start in class, but they can continue long after the bell and students can contribute any time during the day or evening. Certainly nothing can replace the impact of face-to-face dialogue, but hopefully this chapter has offered you a number of ideas for how you can add to and extend those conversations.