



Teaching with Television

Does television really get your students talking? Education programs at The Paley Center for Media use television as a catalyst for learning and as a means for helping teachers meet curriculum standards.

Students today come into contact with the moving image on a regular basis and, as a result, engage with television and film in a very sophisticated manner. They are aware of narrative conventions and concepts such as genre, character development, story structure, and dramatic conflict. Television is a mirror of contemporary life and has the potential to serve as a catalyst for discussion and debate in diverse areas of study.

Professional training workshops explore how television can be used to enrich ongoing classroom curricula. Workshops emphasize the importance of focused viewing and discussion when using audio/visual media as a teaching tool. The Center's goal in offering this program is to fulfill its role as an educational resource and to help develop an informed audience. It speaks to a range of education professionals that includes those enrolled in pre-service teacher training courses, classroom teachers, and curriculum experts at the local, regional, or national level.

The mission of The Paley Center for Media is to acquire, preserve, interpret, and provide public access to an extensive collection of more than 120,000 radio and television programs. The Center's Education Department uses the collection in partnership with schools and other educational institutions to raise and explore the key themes and issues that have shaped contemporary society and also to develop and refine critical thinking, viewing, and listening skills in our audience.

Classes and workshops are designed to augment and enrich the study of Media and Communications, English Language Arts, American History, Global Studies, Art, English as a Second Language, Journalism, and Earth Science.

In special cases, Center Educators will work with teachers to create custom programs that coordinate with ongoing classroom curricula.

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Our education programs have several broad objectives:

- To introduce students to unusual, unique, and historic television and radio programs.
- To help students develop critical thinking, viewing, and listening skills. As with the study of literature or fine arts, to provide students with the specific set of analytic and interpretive skills necessary to understand radio and television programming.
- To develop a media-literate audience.
- To provide a museum experience that is relevant to ongoing classroom curricula and to the personal lives of students.

Classes and workshops have been designed to foster critical thinking, viewing, and listening skills and to encourage active discussion.

The basic units in any class or workshop are as follows:

Focus activity or discussion: Classes begin with a focus activity or discussion that introduces students to a specific theme, builds upon existing knowledge, and connects to the personal experiences of students. It may consist of a discussion based on a pre-visit worksheet, a role-play, or a simple clustering exercise about a particular word or question.

Focus question: To encourage careful viewing and listening skills, a focus question should be asked before a clip is screened. These questions ask students to notice something in particular during the clip. In order to spark discussion, the question must be specific but also open-ended, allowing for several different answers.

Screening of a clip: Ranging from one to eight minutes, television clips are often screened more than once, with intermittent pauses for discussion. With shorter clips students are able to remember more and are better able to discuss material in depth. Just as you would never give your students a complete text to read without stopping to reflect or discuss the content, television and radio should be experienced in manageable amounts.

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Summary/description: This helps to create a common ground for clip analysis. After each clip is screened, students are asked to describe what they have seen in a way that is detailed and comprehensive. Students are prompted with questions such as “What was the first thing you remember seeing?” followed by “What did you see that made you think that?” Combine student responses to formulate a composite summary of the clip.

Restate and answer the focus question, taking into consideration the previous class discussion, focus activity, and summary description: Encourage discussion and debate by asking, “Does anyone disagree or want to add to that?” or “Did anyone notice anything different?”

Make connections/compare and contrast: As additional clips are screened, ask students to consider their similarities and differences.