

English
Grade 8AB



Lesson Plans

“Butterfly Pamphlets—Small Changes to Big Changes”

Subject:

English: 8AB

Level:

Grade 8

Abstract:

During this lesson, students will research a current world political, social, or environmental problem. Then they will create an informational pamphlet designed to persuade readers to act in some small way to solve the problem, which creates a “butterfly effect” of small changes that may eventually lead to large-scale change. In conducting this research and creating these pamphlet, students will be empowering themselves by learning more about their world while at the same time empowering their classmates with small solutions to big problems.

Invitation:

Write these quotes on the board:

“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” (Lao-tzu)

“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” (Edmund Burke)

“If a butterfly flaps its wings in Brazil, does it start a tornado in Texas?” (Edward Lorenz)

Ask students to do a quickwrite (free writing, responding randomly to an idea) about these three quotations and how they are related. Conduct a conversation geared to invite students to the idea that large change is effected by small efforts. Ask students to brainstorm examples in nature where small events trigger large results (for example, an avalanche started by a few pebbles falling, small insects building large structures, human beings being stung by bees or tripping over small objects, etc.) Explain that this concept of “the flap of a butterfly” will be the focus of their activity over the next couple of weeks. Like little butterflies, they will find ways to affect some large changes with just a small effort.

At this point, distribute sample pamphlets you have collected (look in hospitals, libraries, and your local chamber of congress for free ones). Ask students to look at several pamphlets, then guide a discussion about what makes a good pamphlet (easy to read, bold colors or fonts, pictures or graphics, good information, etc.). Write these qualities down on a large piece of paper and keep it posted in the classroom for the duration of the lesson.

Situations

Where: This lesson could be done in a classroom computer lab setting in “round-robin” fashion by allowing students to share computer access, or in a larger computer lab with one student per computer.

When: This lesson would work well as a cross-disciplinary lesson with a Science or Social Studies class. It could also work just as well as a stand-alone lesson.

How Long: It should take students approximately 10 class periods (45 minutes each) to complete this lesson.

Tasks:

Task 1:

There are two ways to approach the task of selecting problems for research: students may select a problem from a list provided by the teacher or they can brainstorm problems as a class and then have their ideas approved by the teacher. The latter method does result in more student buy-in, but can become unruly. Note: students should be encouraged to choose specific, even local, problems so as not to be overwhelmed by the enormity of the problem. For example, focusing on “Litter and Waste on our School Campus” rather than “Pollution” would make for a much more approachable problem.

Task 2:

After the problems have been selected, hand out the “Worksheet: K-W-L Research Guide” attachment and guide students through the “What I Know” section. In this section of the worksheet, students will brainstorm all that they know (or think they know!) about the problem they have chosen. The result of this activity is to stimulate questions and discussion, so it’s OK if things get a little noisy during this activity. Encourage students to talk to each other about the ideas they are coming up with—in this way, they may discover more about the problem. (For example, they might find out that their classmate’s uncle works for a city homeless shelter—a wonderful possibility for conducting an interview!) By the end of the activity, students should have at least five things written on their papers, if not more. Encourage students to attach sheets of binder paper if their ideas fill the space allotted.

Task 3:

The next step is for students to generate questions (What I Want to Know) about the problem. These questions need to be specific. It will be vital for the teacher to monitor this activity and guide students toward specific questioning. Use the repeated advice: Do you *really* think you will be able to find an answer to this question? If not, how can you rephrase or refine it so that you *will* be able to find one? Students should generate a minimum of eight (8) questions.

Task 4:

Along with identifying questions, students will need to start thinking about where they will find answers. A search on the Internet is fine, but it might be easier and more effective to simply ask an expert or check in an encyclopedia. Students will fill in the "Possible Answer Source" section of their worksheet with the best possible plan for answering the question. Watch for students writing "search the internet" over and over. There is an over-dependence on internet "surfing" rather than "searching." Remind students to be specific.

Task 5:

The next step is to seek answers to the questions. Students will do this via the Internet, interviews, or library research. Students will need to take notes on paper, notecards, or in an electronic format such as a Microsoft Word document. The teacher will determine the level to which students will need to cite resources. A sample website evaluation form is provided as part of the K-W-L Research Task Sheet, but may be adapted as the teacher sees fit. The teacher will need to monitor the note-taking task to ensure that students are taking accurate notes.

Task 6:

After some initial research has been done, students will need to draft their pamphlet. Use the attached "Template: Sample Pamphlet" and the "Butterfly Pamphlets Rubric Review Sheet" to guide students' work. After draft plans have been completed, students will need to finalize research to create final drafts of pamphlets.

Task 7:

When final drafts are completed, students will be paired for peer review. Using the rubric as a guide, students will evaluate each other's pamphlets, providing feedback as to how the pamphlets could be improved. Students will write directly on the pamphlets so that feedback is specific and can be addressed.

Task 8:

After students receive feedback, they will revise their pamphlets accordingly.

Task 9:

For presentation, students will read and evaluate the pamphlets of at least three other students. The way that this will happen is up to the teacher.

Some ideas are:

- Row or Group Exchange: Students simply exchange pamphlets while staying seated at their desks and use the “Butterfly Pamphlets Rubric and Review Sheet” to conduct reviews (this is a quieter method).
- Information Fair: Students display three to five copies of their pamphlets around the room along with other props and/or manipulatives to support the information in their pamphlets. Students circulate the displays and select three to five pamphlets to evaluate using the “Butterfly Pamphlets Rubric and Review Sheet.”

Task 10:

Follow-up: the teacher may decide to allow students to do one final revision after this student review. Regardless, the next step is for students to take action. Each student will select a minimum of one idea from the pamphlets they read and act on it. This might mean writing a letter, performing some kind of task like picking up litter on the school campus, volunteering at the SPCA for a weekend, or starting a new habit like reading the newspaper every day. Whatever they choose, students need to document their action and share it with the class. This works best as an oral report, as it forces students to be held accountable for their actions.

Task 11:

Final evaluation: the teacher will provide the final evaluation for this project using the “Butterfly Pamphlets Rubric and Review Sheet” attachment. It is important that students understand that what is being evaluated is the CONTENT of their work, not necessarily how “fancy” their pamphlets turn out to be. After receiving their review sheet, students will write a one-page reflection based on their work during the project. This review sheet makes a nice addition to a portfolio, along with a copy of the student’s pamphlet.

Interactions:

Full Class: All students will read at least three other pamphlets and provide a critique of the work done.

Partners: This lesson could easily be done as a partner project, or partners could work together to serve as editors for each other.

Individual: Each student will complete his or her own pamphlet, provide a critique of three other students' pamphlets, and perform a self-evaluation.

Standards:

READING

1.0 Word Analysis, Fluency, and Systematic Vocabulary Development

1.3 Use word meanings within the appropriate context and show ability to verify those meanings by definition, restatement, example, comparison, or contrast.

2.0 Reading Comprehension (Focus on Informational Materials)

Structural Features of Informational Materials

2.1 Compare and contrast the features and elements of consumer materials to gain meaning from documents (e.g., warranties, contracts, product information, instruction manuals).

Comprehension and Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text

2.6 Use information from a variety of consumer, workplace, and public documents to explain a situation or decision and to solve a problem.

WRITING

1.0 Writing Strategies

Organization and Focus

1.3 Support theses or conclusions with analogies, paraphrases, quotations, opinions from authorities, comparisons, and similar devices.

Research and Technology

1.4 Plan and conduct multiple-step information searches by using computer networks and modems.

1.5 Achieve an effective balance between researched information and original ideas.

Evaluation and Revision

1.6 Revise writing for word choice; appropriate organization; consistent point of view; and transitions between paragraphs, passages, and ideas.

2.0 Writing Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)

2.4 Write persuasive compositions:

- a. Include a well-defined thesis (i.e., one that makes a clear and knowledgeable judgment).
- b. Present detailed evidence, examples, and reasoning to support arguments, differentiating between facts and opinion.
- c. Provide details, reasons, and examples, arranging them effectively by anticipating and answering reader concerns and counterarguments.

Assessment:

- "Butterfly Pamphlets Rubric and Review Sheet:" Students will receive a review sheet with comments from their peers and their teacher as to why their pamphlet received the score it was given.

Tools:

- Sample pamphlets
- Colored paper or color printing capability
- Newspapers or access to current newspapers and other media online
- Microsoft Word
- Clipart or access to online clipart.

Project Tips and Alternatives:**Tip #1:**

This lesson works well as an introduction to a “community service” unit, which many schools now require.

Tip #2:

Students may decide to adopt a “class cause” and all focus on creating pamphlets that reflect different ways for people to fight for the cause. For example, the class may choose “Protecting the Oceans” as their cause and then individual students’ pamphlets could address various aspects, such as commercial fishing violations, illegal dumping into city sewers, beach cleanup, and environmentally friendly fishing and beachcombing, etc.

Tip #3:

If you anticipate that students may not be able to come up with ideas on their own for this project, there are several websites devoted to “small change” causes (see resources.) These will provide a wealth of ideas and may lead to larger involvement.

Tip #4:

The pamphlet is obviously just one form that this project could take. Students could create posters, websites, videos, buttons, anything they are inspired to do! The pamphlet is simply an inexpensive yet powerful piece of activism.

Attachments:

- “Worksheet: K-W-L **Research Task Sheet**”
- “Template: Pamphlet”
- “Butterfly Pamphlets Rubric and Review Sheet”
- “Step Sheet: Creating a New Document”
- “Step Sheet: Inserting Pictures into Microsoft Word”
- “Step Sheet: Importing Graphs from Excel into Word Documents”

Web Resources – Content:

A list of [linked web resources](#) related to the content of this lesson can be found on the Lesson Page.

Web Resources – Word:

A list of linked web [resources for Word](#) can be found on the Word Resources page.

Assistive Technology:

Please refer to the [Assistive Technology section](#) for information on methods and devices to help ensure that all students have access to the curricula in the least restrictive environment.