

3 Web search activities

One of the great criticisms of traditional coursebooks is their lack of authentic material. The Internet provides a solution. It is a treasure chest of information that can provide children with a first-hand glimpse into the lives and cultures of people around the world. But as much as this new information source teaches us about others, it also helps us reflect on ourselves. This notion of learning about ourselves by looking at others is at the heart of many of the activities in this section.

Web searching is a complex task and requires children to make sophisticated logical decisions. They must draw parallels and look for relationships in a very undefined information space. In this way they strengthen both their critical and creative thinking skills and thereby support their learning across the curriculum.

The following activities represent a selection of web search activity 'genres' which can be applied to the teaching of a variety of topics. They are templates for teachers to use and modify according to need. Most of the activities also contain suggestions for web creation in the Variations and Follow-ups.

Links to websites are included, sometimes within the activities and always in section 7. Please check the website accompanying the book for downloadable templates, additional suggestions, and notification of any broken links.

3.1 The day I was born

LEVEL

Pre-intermediate and above

AGE

10 and above

TIME

90 minutes +

AIMS

To research facts about the day a child was born.

Language: Simple past.

PREPARATION

There are many websites that offer information on birthday facts. See 'Birthdays' in section 7, page 113, for some. Note that many are heavily Anglo-American in orientation and you may have to modify your search accordingly.

IN CLASS

- 1 Ask the children to tell you their birthdays. Tell them yours. (Boy, are you old!!!). State a fact about something that happened on your birthday. (*The first moon landing, the number one hit in the US charts was 'Purple Haze' by Jimmy Hendrix . . .*)
- 2 Tell the children that you are going to give them a list of websites where they can find information about what happened the day they were born.
- 3 Tell the children you want them to answer some questions about their birthday. Some successful questions are listed below, but you may want to add your own:
 - *Find out what famous people were born on your birthday.*
 - *What day of the week were you born?*
 - *What was the weather like on the day you were born?*
 - *Calculate how many minutes/days old you are.*
 - *What was the top music hit/movie on the day you were born?*
 - *Did anything important happen on the day you were born?*
- 4 Let the children search the sites you chose. Move about the room and help where necessary. If you have only a few terminals, you may have to break the project up over a series of days or assign the search as homework.
- 5 Once the children have completed their worksheets ask them to write a short story entitled *The Day I was Born* based on the information they collected. For lower-level students you may want to provide sentence stems.

FOLLOW-UP 1

You may want to initiate a web project with other schools. Register your project at one of the common web registry sites and collect information from your partners. Alternatively, you may want to search existing projects (there are many of this kind) and join them. (See 'Finding partners' in section 7, page 110.)

FOLLOW-UP 2

Take the stories and create a timeline to display in the classroom. You may want to solicit more birthdays from partners until you have an entire year of individual birthday stories.

FOLLOW-UP 3

If someone famous was born on your children's birthdays, let them investigate this person and tell the class about him or her.