

Media in Society
MIT 1200F – 007
Group Activity: Final Exam Review

Every TA knows that the end of the semester is a tough slog for their undergraduate students, and in tutorial, they might not be particularly interested in class discussion with you. So, why not get them talking to each other?

This activity was designed as a final exam review for students enrolled in my tutorial section for MIT 1200 (Media in Society). In this course, students learn to identify the underlying themes within texts, whether this is a discussion of gender roles or of the increasing status of technology in our communicative world. For their midterm and final exam, students are asked to identify common themes between two texts based on quotes provided from each text. They are asked to provide another two quotes from each text that they think help to support the theme that they had identified. In an effort to better prepare students for this style of exam, this activity seeks to get students thinking about potential text pairings, themes, and quotes that work to exemplify their theme – but with a competitive edge to make it fun and engaging!

The learning outcomes are:

- 1) To attain a better grasp on the style of the exam
- 2) To think more in-depth about each text
- 3) To review each text and refresh its content in students' minds.
- 4) To be able to find effective quotes within a limited time span, as they are similarly given only so long to complete this task during the exam.

Resources Required:

- The texts from the course that may potentially appear on the exam (in this case, course pack and two graphic novels)
- A whiteboard/chalkboard and appropriate writing utensils
- Two lists, with half of each of the texts on each list for the two teams (see example below)

This activity should take around 50 minutes, including post-activity discussion.

How does this work?

The activity itself is quite simple, but effective. Break your class into two or more teams (depending on how many students you have), and explain the activity; it has two parts. For my class, first students were advised that they would receive five texts each (see below), and from these five texts they must come up with at least three pairings and corresponding themes. They were working under pressure, as they only had ten minutes to complete this task. Once they had decided on their pairings/themes, one team member was to write these on the board.

Team A's Texts	Team B's Texts
"I See You"	<i>Maus I & II</i>
<i>Skim</i>	"The Pilot"
<i>Blade Runner</i>	"Speech Sounds"
"Fool's Errand"	<i>Run, Lola, Run</i>
"Even the Queen"	"Margin of Error"

After both teams have completed this first task, each team needs to work together to find quotes that support the other teams' pairings and themes. So, Team A must find at least two quotes from each text in each pairing for Team B's proposed pairings/themes, and vice versa. Again, the teams are working under pressure, with only 15 minutes to find supporting quotes.

It is important to note that even though the class is separated into two teams, they still need to work collaboratively on the project. If a team makes a claim about theme between two texts that doesn't work or is too far-fetched, the other team will be able to point this out by *not* being able to find quotes that support it. This reinforces to students the value of being able to back up your ideas with evidence, as well as demonstrates to them themes they should avoid on the exam. However, students are also encouraged to come up with "difficult" themes – ones that are not immediately obvious that will make the other team think hard about how it can be supported and to find quotes that they think fit.

As the teams find and agree on quotes that they think support each theme, they write the page numbers on which these quotes can be found beside the pairing/theme on the board. Once the teams have provided page numbers for all of the quotes (or scenes, in the case of the films shown to my class), we discuss the rationale behind the quotes that each team chose to support the theme. This gives students an opportunity to discuss not only the basic content of these texts, but also a chance to discuss and debate how they think a particular theme is evident in the texts.

For my class, while they were working on finding quotes, I took the time to type out all the information they'd written on the board into a Word document on the computer in our classroom. Once students had finished and we'd discussed how and if the quotes worked, I included parts of this discussion into our document as well. Students received a copy of this in their email inbox as a tool they could use later on when they began to do their serious studying. They were highly satisfied with this activity, and agreed that it helped them to begin to tackle the often onerous task of studying for finals.

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