

technology integration

Role Play: Most social studies teachers have their students do some amount of role playing. A common approach is to assign each student a historical figure – Jose, you’ve got Thomas Jefferson; Anna, you’ll report on John Adams; etc. -- and have the students report on their assignee. In my experience, the effect of this is that each student becomes an expert on one, single person, but doesn’t learn too much from other kids’ presentations.

Technology tools can help change that. Imagine if, instead of assigning your students to write a report about various founding fathers, you had each student create a social network profile, pretending to be that person. On Facebook and other social networking sites, we can interact with our friends, post pictures of our exploits, and author commentary about our lives. What if students were doing all this, in the role of a historical figure? Rather than presenting a report about Thomas Jefferson, Jose would have to decide what Jefferson would say in response to John Adams’ post about democracy. Not only is it higher-level thinking, students are actually interacting with one another and having fun!

edmodo	student blogs	twitter
<p>Tool: Edmodo Equipment: Computer, Internet connection url: http://edmodo.com</p> <p>Edmodo is basically a closed social network, much like Facebook, controlled entirely by the teacher. The teacher decides who is allowed to join the network and, once in, everyone can see what everyone else posts. Teachers can post questions, videos, documents, assignments, and more. Students can turn in their assignments, reply to teacher questions, or reply to one another. Teachers can even keep a secure gradebook through Edmodo. Edmodo is a great place to have students start profiles as historical figures and interact with one another in those guises.</p>	<p>Equipment: Computer, Internet connection urls: http://classblogmeister.com; http://kidblog.org; or http://edublogs.org</p> <p>Blogging has a ton of uses in the classroom but, when it comes to role-playing, you can have students author blogs in the voice of different historical figures. What would Napoleon say if he were to author a 21st century blog? What commentary would he offer about the world today? And what would other historical figures comment in response? These are questions your students will be able to delve into.</p>	<p>Tool: Twitter Equipment: Computer, Internet connection url: http://twitter.com</p> <p>Twitter is a lot like blogging, only shorter. In fact, services like Twitter are often referred to as “microblogs.” Just like your students can write blogs in the guise of historical figures, they can tweet as these figures, as well. Better yet, they can create tweets from a particular time period in the person’s life. For example, the Massachusetts Historical Society began a Twitter account for John Quincy Adams. The group posted excerpts from Adams’ diary, written as he traveled across Russia, exactly 200 years after he had written them.</p>

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Historical & Global Data: Walk into any classroom, and you're likely to find some sort of bar graph, pie chart, or data plot. In Kindergarten, students start organizing data on pictographs. But, even in high school, they rarely ever get beyond the basics. Data visualization is a field that's made remarkable strides in the 21st century. In a world with millions of enormous data sets, we've started to realize that interesting visual data representations can help us understand and communicate information more effectively. There are several websites where students can see global and historical data come alive, through data visualizations.

buzztracker

Tool: Buzztracker

Equipment: Computer, Internet connection

url: <http://buzztracker.org>

Buzztracker tracks the location of the day's news, and then maps it on a world map. It displays the location of news stories with red dots – the larger the dot on a specific city, the more news originating from that city. The site also has archives going back to 2004.

So, for example, you can view the map on August 29, 2005, and then flip through the next day, and the day after, and so on. You'll see the dots suddenly all move from the Middle East to the Southern U.S. – New Orleans, specifically. What happened in New Orleans in August 2005? What a great way to start a conversation or show students history in motion!

gapminder

Tool: Gapminder

Equipment: Computer, Internet connection

url: <http://www.gapminder.org>

On Gapminder, anyone can access global statistics about carbon dioxide emissions, education rates, poverty levels, etc. (There's even a specific page for teachers that provides shortcuts to tools and guides for using Gapminder in a classroom.)

Users can choose which data they'd like to see on the x-axis and on the y-axis, so you can compare hundreds of global data sets and see how the statistics have changed over time. In addition, you can compare the same data sets from various countries on a single graph. It really is remarkable.

dipity

Tool: Dipity

Equipment: Computer, Internet connection

url: <http://www.dipity.com>

Dipity users can create multi-media timelines using this web-based tool. In addition to general information, users can add specific details, including text, weblinks, videos, images, and audio. Those viewing the timeline can see general information but, by clicking on an event, they open a window with the details.

Because Dipity timelines contain various media, they provide a more 3-dimensional view of a series of events. Several historic timelines are available on the website for students to browse. Students can also create their own timelines, using the site's interface, for research projects.