



CLASSROOM VIDEO • VIEWING GUIDE

TEACHING STRATEGY: BIG PAPER

Overview

In this classroom video, history teacher Kevin Toro uses the Big Paper teaching strategy as he shares primary source documents about the Reconstruction era with his students. This discussion strategy uses writing and silence as tools to help students explore a topic in depth. In a Big Paper discussion, students write out their responses to a stimulus, such as a quotation or historical document. This process slows down students' thinking and gives them an opportunity to focus on the views of

others. It also creates a visual record of students' thoughts and questions that you can refer to later in a course. You can use this strategy both to engage students who are not as likely to participate in a verbal discussion and to help ensure that students who are eager to talk also listen carefully to the ideas of their classmates. After they participate in this activity several times, students' comfort, confidence, and skill in using this method increases.

Questions to Consider

1. At **0:58**, Mr. Toro says that as students participate in a Big Paper activity, they “are dealing with primary sources, but it almost feels personal in a way.” What do you think he means by that?
2. What role does silence play in this Big Paper activity? What scaffolding might you need to do in your classroom to make silence an integral component of the activity?
3. At **4:56**, examples of the students’ writing on the Big Papers are made visible. What evidence do you see of students making meaning of the texts?

Featured

Kevin Toro

Teacher

11th & 12th Grade

Arlington High School

Arlington, MA

Video Goals

- **Witness** how to use this strategy with students.
- **Consider** how you might use the Big Paper strategy in your own classroom.
- **Determine** the differences between a typical class discussion and a Big Paper discussion.

Lesson Resources

- [The Reconstruction Era Primary Sources](#)
- [Teaching Strategy: Big Paper](#)