

Observation

ESTIMATED TIME

2 class periods and out-of-class time

PREREQUISITES

- This lesson may be completed independently of others. It may be done anytime.
- For the public place observations, consider taking a class trip to a local park or library or having students observe a location at school.
- Projector to show video clip.
- Computer access for blogging.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

- *Observation Rubric*
- *Breaking It All Down*

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Being an adept observer will help students in a number of classes. Observational skills are especially important when students are working on research reports. These skills may help students with their note-taking skills as well. Advisors may be able to connect with classroom teachers, particularly in English, Social Studies, and Science, to see if there is a way to incorporate this lesson into something the teacher has planned.

LESSON PLANNING

LESSON GOAL

Identify and build powers of observation.

Essential Question

What are strategies for effective observation?

Student Expectations

1. Record four observations from a video clip.
2. Work in a small group to choose significant details from the video clip.
3. Review the *Breaking It All Down* handout and label each of your four observations.
4. Complete out-of-class observation assignment.
5. Participate in class discussion about observation bias.
6. Comment on another student's notes in Blogger.
7. Complete reflection assignment.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Develop and practice observation skills.
2. Recognize observer bias.
3. Experience awareness of observation through senses.
4. Experience observation focus.

RATIONALE

In order to prepare to do research associated with their *Public Presentation* Lesson 34, as well as to develop skills through which they can better understand their world, we ask students to become better observers. This lesson is designed to help students develop observational skills through taking notes on what they observe. It also introduces them to the concept of observer bias, which is an important topic in research.



Observation Rubric



Breaking It All Down

PROCEDURES: WHAT TO DO

- 1. WHOLE GROUP** Begin the lesson by handing out the *Observation Rubric* to introduce the lesson and explain how students will be evaluated. Then show or have students individually view a short video clip to practice observation. The clip from the 1987 movie *Three Men and a Baby* that can be found on YouTube at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vF2f_k0Pnw is a good one. This clip begins with Ted Dansen standing next to Celeste Holm, who is holding the baby. Have students record four observations of what they see going on between the two main characters and the infant character. Repeated showings may be necessary. Students should not share observations or reactions during the showing of the clip.

ASSESSMENT

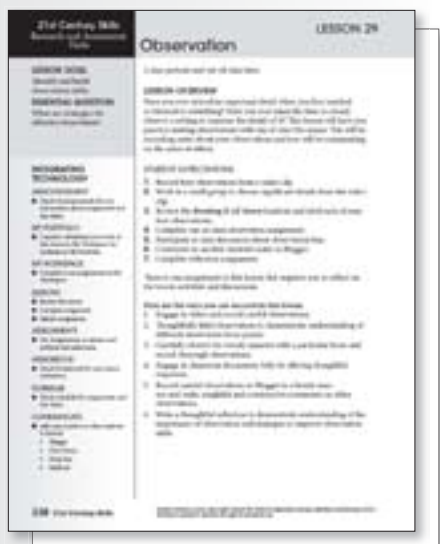
Video View a video clip and record observations.

- 2. SMALL GROUPS** Break students into small groups of 3-4 to share the observations they have made after viewing the clip. The team will pick three primary items to share with the rest of the class. A student volunteer will record the observations on the board for the rest of the class.
- 3. WHOLE GROUP** After sharing, ask if anyone noticed the ghost behind the curtain. Students may review the clip and discuss the presence of the “ghost.” *Three Men and a Baby* was shot in 1987 by Buena Vista. The “ghost” in the scene is really a cardboard cutout of one of the characters dressed in a suit. An urban legend, which persists to this day, claims that the “ghost” is that of a boy who died in the apartment in which the film was shot. The film was actually shot in a sound studio, meaning the apartment was part of a set that was constructed for the movie. Discuss what students did observe in the clip and how they or others would have been able to notice the ghost in the first place.
- 4. SMALL GROUPS** Review the *Breaking It All Down* document that explains observations for people, locations, situations, and processes. Have students label each observation they made in the video clip as focusing on one of the following: person(s), location, situation/context, or process/procedure.

ASSESSMENT

Label Observations Categorize observations.

- 5. INDIVIDUAL** Have students go to a public place either in or out of school (i.e. mall, city park, library) for a period of about 20 minutes with a notebook to make and record their observations. Students can focus on anything they would like during the 20 minutes, but they should respect the privacy of their subjects. Have students focus on one of the four foci (person, location, situation, process), as well as one of the five senses.



Student Pages

ASSESSMENT

Observations Make and record observations.

- 6. WHOLE GROUP** After students have made their observations, hold a class discussion to discuss the following ideas.
- Have each student describe why he or she selected a particular focus and sense, as well as subject.
 - Ask students to explain what they may have missed as a result of their focus.
 - Compare the different foci chosen by different students.
 - Discuss the idea of observer bias. Observer bias is the reason why we choose to observe what we do. Observer bias can mean sacrificing other important pieces of information.
 - Discuss how different careers use observation (customs agents, airport screeners, doctors, artists, writers, detectives, reporters).
 - Have students compare casual observation to scientific observation and the nature of science.
 - Introduce the class to the famous 19th century detective, Sherlock Holmes. Discuss this quote from the Arthur Conan Doyle story, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, “The world is full of obvious things which nobody by chance ever observes.”

ASSESSMENT

Discussion Participate in discussion about observation.

- 7. INDIVIDUAL** Have students record their observations in the *Sakai* Blogger and comment on at least one other student’s notes. In their comments, they will describe the student’s technique, source of knowledge, any bias, and ask at least one question of that student. All students should answer each question that is posed to them.

ASSESSMENT

Blogger Record and comment on observations in Blogger.

- 8. WHOLE GROUP** After blogging, groups will reconvene to discuss if different strategies could have been used to collect more complete observations in the situations posted on the Blogger. For instance, if a student was at a park where a class was discussing how to plant flowers, but the student focused on two people talking about a bird, they missed out on a crucial event occurring in at the park.

REFLECTION

Have students reflect in writing on the following prompt. Then have them use the *Sakai* Assignments Tool to submit their reflections for evaluation.



- Describe three things you learned about observations as a result of this lesson.
- How can you utilize these skills in other classes?

INTEGRATING TECHNOLOGY

ANNOUNCEMENT

- Use Announcements to remind students of assignments and due dates.
- Announcements should be coordinated with Assignments and Schedule.

SCHEDULE

- Add Assignments to the Schedule

EVALUATE/REVIEW

- Use Drop Box to access and evaluate student assignments
- Use Assignments to access and evaluate student assignments
- Student Portfolio
- Add a test or quiz if desired

LESSONS

- Review Lessons
- Add Resources if desired
- Change a Lesson if desired
- Schedule a Lesson
- Unschedule a Lesson

COMMUNICATE IF DESIRED

- Blogger
- Chat Room
- Drop box
- Mailtool
- Roster

Ohio Academic Content Standards

Grade 9 Science

Doing Scientific Inquiry

1. Distinguish between observations and inferences given a scientific situation.

- How can you apply what you experienced in this lesson to improve your observation skills?

ASSESSMENT

Reflection Complete a written reflection about observation.

ASSESSMENT

Use the *Observation Rubric* to evaluate student performance. Have students complete the rubric as a self-evaluation and then discuss the results.

DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION

SPECIAL NEEDS

Advisors may provide assistance by having an assistant record the observation notes as dictated by the student. In addition, the advisor may help the student by having them make observations during a school sporting event or assembly, as opposed to having them go to a public place and make observations.

GIFTED AND TALENTED

Gifted students can be very challenged by this lesson. They may be asked to take notes for a longer period of time, or to take notes from each of the four focuses on the same event. These adaptations will challenge them to develop an observer's eye.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

WEBSITE SOURCES

Preview sites for appropriateness before recommending them to students. If links are broken, search for similar information.

- *Three Men and a Baby* video clip with ghost. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vF2f_k0Pnw
- The complete works of Sherlock Holmes are public domain and available for free online. <http://sherlock-holmes.classic-literature.co.uk/>.