

Using Facebook With Literature

“Knowledge itself is power.”

— Francis Bacon, English statesman, writer, and philosopher of science (1561-1626)
(Foundations for Life, Elementary, Volume 1, Issue 2, #23)

Overview:

Instructors and students can learn more about social networking sites by using Facebook.com to set up profiles that correspond to fictional characters in a text. By creating a model profile, instructors can familiarize themselves with the procedure and teach students the importance of maintaining high privacy settings on their profiles. The lesson will teach safe use of social networking while exploring characters in literature. Student computer access is necessary (1 per 5 students).

Objectives:

- Instructors will learn more about the dynamics of online social networking by exploring Facebook, setting up profiles, and using the site to help the class learn more about characters in literature they are reading.
- Using the profiles, students will learn the importance of privacy when posting information online.
- Students will work in groups to develop their understanding of the characters in the text and their motives in the plot.
- The activity will increase understanding of online communication and the positive benefits of appropriate use of social network sites.

Materials:

- E-mail and Facebook accounts sufficient for the class (one per group of five students)
- Digital camera
- Clothing or material to create the characters' profile images (students can choose to either dress up in the style of their character or create a puppet)

Procedure:

1. Familiarize yourself with Facebook by visiting the site and setting up a sample profile in the manner of a literary character well known to the students.
2. Make sure the privacy setting for the profile is adjusted to the highest level so only “friends” can see the information.
3. Set up the character profiles.
4. Introduce the project to the students.
5. Ask them if they know about social networking sites and if they have profiles.
6. Have them share their ideas. If they have profiles, ask what problems they've encountered with the site. Share your experiences in setting up your profile.
7. Explain that they will create profiles for the characters in the book they've been reading. Tell them you've already set up the pages. Their job is to create profiles that accurately reflect each character's personality.



JOSEPHSON
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8. Divide the class into groups of five students and choose the characters. Ask the students if they want to dress up or create puppets, then take digital photographs of the creations to post online.
9. Determine a deadline for the profile pages. Reiterate that these are private profiles for class only. They will fail the assignment if they adjust the privacy settings.
10. Continue the activity by posting questions about the text to each “friend.” Other activities you could include are:
 - Choose a quote from the text that best represents the character (in the “information” section of the profile).
 - Have the groups ask questions to the other characters in the “questions” application.
 - Have each character post something on another character’s *wall* that reveals something about them the other may not know.
 - Use the Group Activity sheet to ensure each member of the group is participating fully in each activity.

(available from http://sitemaker.umich.edu/brittanydavis/materials_i_created)
11. End the exercise when the book is finished. Have students write final reflection pieces on their participation. Have them reflect on how the social networking sites would have affected the plot in the book and what differences they notice in their own lives when they use such sites.
12. Reinforce the message that privacy is of utmost importance on these sites. Their information should be shared with only friends. And they should never post anything about themselves or others that they wouldn’t want to become public knowledge.

This lesson is adapted from a unit created by Brittany Davis, a graduate of the University of Michigan teacher-training college. You can access her lesson plan and supplementary resources at:

<http://sitemaker.umich.edu/brittanydavis/home>

