



thinking space

PROVOCATION

WHAT IS IT?

An element of shock and surprise in a classroom, if managed well, can inject energy and provide a memorable leaning experience and a shared starting point for discussion.

A provocation is an unexpected event planned by the facilitator to surprise the learners. The provocation is immediately followed by structured reflection.

RECIPE

- **No. of participants:** 5 – 30
- **Age of participants:** 12 +
- **Preparation time:** : 5 - 20 minutes thinking time
- **Delivery time:** 10 - 30 minutes
- **Materials:** Using sound, light, costume and / or prop as appropriate

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Planning the provocation will involve making a judgement about the kind of experience your audience can cope with. Learners often buy into unexpected experiences to a greater extent than you'd expect. For example, a provocation involving an intruder, an injury or an argument might shock or upset learners if you let it go on too long. Some of the most successful provocations move from the plausible to the surreal fairly quickly, allowing the class to move from surprise to amusement without feeling manipulated.

Ideally a provocation should occur when learners are engaged in a set task. Sometimes the task can be linked to the provocation.

EXAMPLES

A lesson on health and safety in Design Technology could begin with a teacher injuring themselves on equipment.

A lesson on eye witness testimony in Psychology could be interrupted by an argument in the playground which students only half see through the classroom window.

An English lesson could be interrupted by a teacher in role as a character from the book they are reading.

A provocation in a Science lesson could involve an unexpected outcome from an experiment, like an explosion.

In History the class might meet a historical figure who tells them something they weren't expecting.

TIPS

- Give the students a chance to recover from the shock or surprise. They may want to talk to each other about it or to laugh. Let them absorb it first before a more structured discussion.
- Plan the reflective discussion carefully; be clear about what you want them to get out of it especially as the initial surprise and excitement might throw you a bit.
- If it's possible, film the provocation. The footage can be used later to help students reflect on their reactions. (See 'Using Film' Tool.)

YOUR NOTES...

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FIND OUT MORE

- See 'Using Film' Tool
- See 'Activity-Based Discussion' Tool



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