

***Instant* Guide**

Pre-Play

Instant: Cross-Curricular Themes and Concepts

As a class, discuss the following themes and concepts from *Instant* to help familiarize your students with them. Try and focus the discussion on the meaning of each theme/concept. When the discussion is complete, ask students to match the theme/concept with its definition.

- Media Literacy
- Online Literacy
- Social Media
- Digital Identity
- Digital Identity vs Real Identity
- Online Fame
- Perceptions
- Domestic Abuse
- Parental Pressure
- Online Bullying

You may wish to write these themes and concepts down on a white board so that students can write them down before they research and discuss their definitions.

Some questions to help the discussion get started:

- What is the meaning of the following word? (Ask students to look up the words to get the real definition)
- Do you agree with that meaning or is it outdated?
- Can you think of an example of it?
- A lot of these terms interrelate, can you provide an example of some that interrelate and how?

To further enhance your students understanding of the themes/concepts in *Instant*, place them in small groups and assign each a theme/concept to research and explore. While exploring their theme/concept, they should focus on finding real-life examples (from reputable sources) of how the theme/concept can be both positive and negative (for example: online fame can see someone become famous for an actual talent and can also see someone become famous for an embarrassing action).

Each group will discuss the examples they have found and will brainstorm pros and cons of the theme/concept.

Each student will then be responsible for making their own word cloud based on what they have learnt from their exploration, as well as writing about it from either their personal perspective or how they have turned a con(s) of the theme into a positive (i.e. using social media to help others, instead of hurting them).

Alternate Activity: Random Theme

On separate pieces of paper, write down each theme and concept listed above and place them in a hat. Students will then pick a theme/concept out of the hat (have them write down what they pulled out and then place the original back in the hat for other students).

Once everyone has pulled out a theme/concept, they will then get more acquainted with it by exploring it through creative writing. For instance, if a student pulled out “parental pressure” they may choose to write a fairy tale that focused on a prince or princess who was receiving a lot of pressure from their parents or perhaps they may choose to write a monologue about it. It’s entirely up to them and how creative they can be!

Cross-Curricular Q&A

The following questions will assist in preparing your students for their viewing of *Instant*. Each question has a theme or concept in it from the play. The question(s) related to it begin to tie the theme/concept with the content of *Instant*.

Ask students to pick one (or two, or randomly assign them, it’s entirely up to you) question to write a formal, yet at times personal, response to.

1. **Online identity vs real life identity.** Are they always the same? Do you have a different online persona than your real-life one? Do you get confused within yourself? Have you ever been on the receiving end of that confusion? How did you deal with it?
2. How do you know what is **fact or fiction online**? What websites do you trust and why? What criteria do you use to analyze the validity of a site (list)? Use sources and provide at least one example of each (i.e. true story vs fiction) that you have experienced.
3. **Does social media help or hinder personal relationships?** Explain and make sure to include personal anecdotes and at least two reputable sources to enhance your position.
4. **Tone in online textual conversations.** What is the value of tone in face to face conversations vs an online textual one? Have you ever had your tone confused by someone? What happened? Or perhaps the reverse?
5. **Domestic abuse and the role of parental mirroring.** What is parental mirroring? Do we all experience this? How does it affect your relationships with others? How does it frame who you are? How do you react to a situation? Have you developed that reaction as a result of seeing your parent(s) react that way?
6. **Online bullying.** What is online bullying? What is your reaction when you see online bullying – what do you do? Do you gang up or troll people? Do you step in? Is it easier to defend someone who is being bullied online or in real-life? Explain.

Play

An “*Instant*” Review

Immediately after seeing *Instant* discuss it with your class, even if you’re on the bus back to school. The purpose of doing this is twofold: to garner the students’ immediate impressions and also to capitalize on the concept of ‘instant’.

Some questions to help prompt discussion:

- Did they enjoy the play?
- What was the general feeling of the play?
- Who was their favourite character? Why?
- Did they have a favourite or least favourite scene? Why?
- What types of reactions did you have to the play? Did it seem realistic?
- Did any scenes or moments in the play stand out? Why or why not?

With the initial impressions of the play explored, move the discussion a bit deeper.

Question to ask:

- What was *Instant* about? Describe.
- What was the main concept or point of *Instant*? Explain.
- Can you relate to it? Why or why not?
- Did *Instant* seem like a believable real-life story to you? Why or why not?
- What did you think of the ending of the play?
- Discuss the various relationships in the play. Can you name them?
- What did you think of Mer and Jay’s relationship when the play started? Did your opinion change at all by the end?
- What about Rosie and her relationship with Mer, how did it change?
- What about Rosie and Jay, describe their relationship and its evolution.

When the discussion is complete, ask students to write a review of *Instant*. Instead of writing a standard review, ask them to be creative in how they approach this.

Some ideas:

- Choose a character from the play and write a journal entry from their perspective
- Create a promotional campaign for the play (including posters/pamphlets, press release etc...)
- Write a letter to Erin Shields (playwright) or Geordie Productions
- Write a newspaper human interest story about one of the characters in the play
- Write a song that describes your thoughts on the play
- Write a pitch for the play to be turned into a movie including casting info.
- Create a comic book

When they’re done, ask students to share their creative reviews with the class.

Analytical Essay: Instant? Instant what?

Discuss the title of the play with your students. Why did the playwright name it *Instant*? What does *Instant* mean? Ask students to write an analytical piece exploring the meaning of the title *Instant*.

Meredith or Jay: An analysis

As a class discuss Meredith and Jay and their relationship with one another.

Some questions to help prompt discussion:

- Describe Meredith
- Describe Jay
- What is their relationship like when we first meet them?
- Does their relationship evolve throughout our time with them? How so?
- Describe their parents
- Would you say that Jay's mother is abusive? How so?
- What about Meredith's mother, is she abusive? Describe.
- Have they both experienced domestic abuse? How so? Explain

Ask students write a paper that compares and contrasts Meredith and Jay. How are they similar? Do they relate so well to each other as a result of their home lives? How do they differ, especially when they're at the party?

Rosie: I'll Just Be Me

Discuss Rosie with your class.

- Who is Rosie when we first meet her? What was your initial impression of her?
- What causes Rosie to change?
- Is Rosie acting like her true self after her 15 minutes of fame? How so?
- What happens to Rosie at the party?
- By the end of the play, who is Rosie? Describe.

Writing from the perspective of either Mer or Jay, ask students to write a character analysis of Rosie focusing on who she was at the beginning vs end of the play. For instance, if writing from Mer's perspective, students should point out how Mer's impression of Rosie changes throughout the play. If from Jay's perspective, how does he feel about Rosie's behaviour at the party?

Cross-Curricular Themes

Can you go Without Social Media?

Is there such a thing as being addicted to the internet? What about to social media?

Write that question on your black/white board and ask students to share their opinions on it.

Some questions to help prompt discussion:

- When you think of the various types of addiction, do you think of the internet? Why or why not?
- Do you think someone can become addicted to social media?
- Do you think you're addicted to social media?
- What social media site(s) are you checking every few minutes because you can't stand to miss something?
- How do you think someone can become addicted to a social media site(s)?
- Do you think this addiction is healthy? Or is it mainly unhealthy?
- What do you do when you're in the middle of a conversation with a friend and they check a social media site while you're still talking? How does it make you feel?
- Can you go a week without social media? 48hrs? 24hrs?

As a class determine an acceptable amount of time that they **all** agree will be social media free.

During this time, ask students to document their thoughts, feelings, and activities. How difficult is it for them to stay away from their favourite social media sites? Did they have any free time? What did they do with it?

When the experiment is complete, ask students to write about their experience. Did they learn anything from it? Will it change their behaviours in any way? What will they be taking away from this experiment?

Short Story: Before Social Media

Ask students to write a short story about life before social media. Some questions for them to consider: What year will their story be set in? What did people do with their time before social media? How did people communicate? How did news spread so fast?

The Value of Online Literacy

What is online literacy? Why is it a crucial skill to have?

Discuss those questions and the following with your students:

- Would you call yourself online literate? How so?
- Why is it important to have strong online literacy skills?
- Can you name some online literacy skills (ex. checking for a reputable source)
- How do you determine if a piece of information on social media is factual?
- Why is it important to have strong online literacy skills when using social media?

Randomly assign students to small groups where they will design and produce a social media literacy or online literacy toolkit.

Some items they may wish to include in their toolkit:

- A list of reputable sources
- Definitions of the new literacies (social media, digital, online, information etc...)
- Do's and Don'ts
- Examples where online literacy skills were needed
- Tips on critical and analytical thinking
- A list of sites to avoid

Ask students to be as creative as they wish when developing their toolkit. When they're done, have them show the rest of the class what they developed and display their toolkits around the room for students to peruse.

Social Media, Social Movement

Until this point, the focus has been on using social media responsibly and being aware of its ills, but what about the good, the changes that can arise from social media? For instance, in our 2015 federal election, the Liberal Party used social media in such an effective manner that the youth vote increased by around 11%, after it having been in decline for multiple elections.

Discuss the value of social media with your class.

Some questions to help prompt discussion:

- What are some positive ways to use social media? List.
- What are effective ways to use social media? List.
- Do you ever use social media for political issues?
- Do you ever use social media for social movement, civic-related issues?
- Name some social or political movements that have really taken off as a result of effective social media use, (i.e. LGBTQ2, Black Lives Matter, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women etc...)
- How do you know if the account for the social or political movement is legitimate?
- What are some of the advantages of using social media to help further your cause?
- Are there any disadvantages?
- What is meant by calling social media "the great equalizer"?
- Do you agree or disagree with that?

When the discussion is complete, students will begin to work on their social media, social movement project.

To begin, ask students to pick a social or political movement (this can also include a political party, a reputable organization with a socio-political message etc...) to study/follow via social media for a pre-determined length of time (one week, two weeks, etc...)

Once they've determined who they will study/follow, they will now pick two or three social media platforms to follow them on, ensuring that they are choosing legitimate accounts. During this time, they should be paying attention to how their movement is using social media.

Questions to keep in mind during this time:

- What social media platforms did you choose? Why?
- How do you know this account is legitimate?

- How active are they?
- Do they interact with others or simply use the medium to post their message?
- What message are they currently trying to get out?
- Is there a reason for this (ex. Black Lives Matter would be quite active right now).
- Are they effective in getting their message out?
- Do they appear professional?
- Do they have any posts that stand out to you (for good or bad)? If so, make sure to save a copy for your research.

When they've completed their research/follow time, they're now ready to write their analysis, which is to include the following:

- Description or history of the movement they've chosen
- The social media platforms they chose and why.
- Description of how this movement is using social media
- An analysis on the effectiveness of social media in assisting this movement
- An analysis on how this movement could be using social media more effectively
- Concrete examples of posts (textual, memes, photographic etc...) to support their analysis.

Op-ed: The Great Equalizer

Ask students to write an op-ed about social media being the great equalizer. Do they agree or disagree? Why or why not?