

Creative Hunt

A routine for looking at parts, purposes, and audiences.

Key Prompts:

- What's the main purpose here?
- What are the parts and their purposes?
- Which are especially smart or creative? — star them!
- Who is the audience for this?

Purpose: What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

An important part of creativity is recognizing how creative things around us are. This is often inspiring. Because we are too used to things, we do not appreciate their creativity. It is also often practical: we see better the limitations of things and how they might be improved. It's also a good way of understanding things better, by looking into what they are for, how they work, and who their audiences are. Thus, this creativity routine has an understanding bonus.

Application: When and where can I use it?

This routine makes thinking visible by helping students to find the creative thinking behind ordinary things — doorknobs, pencils, newspapers, toys. It can also be applied to more important things and more abstract things, like forms of government, hospitals, or schools. The routine helps students to appreciate creativity and be more alert to creative opportunities.

The creativity hunt is a good way to awaken students to the creativity in ordinary objects around them. You can use it on everyday classroom objects, like a blackboard, a ballpoint pen, a paintbrush, or an article of clothing. You don't have to stick to concrete physical objects. You can use it on more abstract things, like the 24-hour day, recess, a sport, or a game.

Besides the things around us, you can easily use it to connect to the subject areas. Here are some tips about picking a good object:

- Pick something that comes from human beings and human creativity, like a telescope, a form of government, or a means of communication.
- Pick something relevant to the subject matter you are teaching. For instance, a cannon, a musket, or a military formation would be a good choice if you are teaching military history. A particular tax or policy might be a good choice if you are teaching about government. A sextant or telescope might be a good choice if you are teaching about science.

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Creative Hunt, cont'd

- You can pick concrete things like a sextant or telescope but also abstract things like a particular tax or policy.
- Pick something that the students know enough about so that they can think some about what it's for, how it works, and who its audience is. For instance, you would not pick a telescope if students didn't know much about telescopes, but you might if you could bring one in and students could try it out and examine it. You would not pick an import duty if students had just heard the name but did not know how it worked, but if they had read and discussed it in general you might.

Launch: What are some tips for starting and using this routine?

Here are some basic steps for starting the routine:

1. Identify something for students to think about — something ordinary like a ballpoint pen or larger and more abstract like a hospital. It is natural to pick something from a subject matter being taught.
2. Set up the target diagram and label the key elements: main purpose, parts & purposes, audience. Say something like this: "Let's look at this from a creative viewpoint. Creative things have jobs to do. They need to hit their target. So here is the target. Let's explore how this thing hits its target."
3. Lead students in filling out the target diagram. Let them suggest main purposes (sometimes there is more than one), particular parts and the purposes they serve, and who the audience is. Also, invite them to star (*) any part they think is particularly smart or creative. You can conduct this as a general conversation, but another good way is to ask students to fill out Post-Its individually or in small groups and stick them up on the diagram.
4. Sum up by looking for what's creative. Go over the *'s and invite more. Emphasize how this clever object hits its target

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This thinking routine was developed as part of the Visible Thinking project at Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education.

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