

Digital Citizenship

Lesson Title: Twitter: Less or More?

Middle School



Essential Question:

What are the pros and cons of communicating in 140 characters or less?

Materials:

- Lyrics to *Twitter, the Musical*
- If possible, access to *Twitter, the Musical*, which streams on YouTube (and has had almost 5 million views.), found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xr3TI7T6fIQ> by AVbyte
- **To purchase on itunes:** <https://itunes.apple.com/bw/album/twitter-the-musical-single/id715091554>
- Photos of Mies van der Rohe architecture
- #The Pledge of Allegiance Worksheet

Procedure:

Introduction:

1. Begin this class session by taking a quick poll of who participates in Twitter (has a Twitter account, posts on Twitter or just checks Twitter). For those who might not be familiar with the social media site, you can offer the following:

Twitter is a social network and real-time communication service launched in 2006 and used by millions of people and organizations to quickly share and discover information. The word Twitter comes from the frequent chirping sound made by birds, hence the bird used in the Twitter logo. Twitter users can send and read short 140-character messages called “tweets”. Registered users can read and post tweets, but those who are unregistered can only read them.
2. “Less is more” is an often-used phrase attributed to famous 20th century German-American architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. He sought to establish a new architectural style that could represent modern times: making use of modern materials including industrial steel and plate glass. He called his buildings “skin and bones” architecture, wanting to express the spirit of the modern era with great simplicity. (See slides of van der Rohe’s work at end of lesson.) How does van der Rohe’s phrase, “Less is more,” apply to Twitter? Explain.

3. Continue the discussion by transitioning to the types of tweets — from bonafide news stories to random thoughts by individuals worldwide. If possible, log onto to Twitter and take a look at what is trending that day.
4. Like all social media, there are positives, negatives, and many opinions about Twitter’s benefits and drawbacks. Launch an exploration with a bit of entertainment and watch Twitter: The Musical, which streams on YouTube (and has had almost 5 million views.), found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xr3TI7T6fIQ> by AVbyte
To purchase on itunes: <https://itunes.apple.com/bw/album/twitter-the-musical-single/id715091554>
5. Distribute the lyrics for a more in-depth conversation about its messages. Ask your students why they think the group created this piece. What are students’ overall impressions? Do the lyrics ring true? False? A little of both? Explain your answers. What do you think “literary littering” means? Why do people post “artsy pictures of my feet?”
6. The singers mention Twitter distributing information about “not petty things” like the Arab Spring. (Note: Research confirms that social media carried messages about freedom and democracy across North Africa and the Middle East, and helped lead to the political uprising known as The Arab Spring. For more information: <http://www.washington.edu/news/2011/09/12/new-study-quantifies-use-of-social-media-in-arab-spring/>)
7. Ask students what they think about condensing an important event (such as the Arab Spring) down to 140 characters.
8. Offer students a challenge. Many schools begin the day with the American Pledge of Allegiance. Including spaces, “the pledge” contains exactly 175 characters. Have students read/recite the pledge. (For those who are unfamiliar, the text is on the worksheet.)
9. Distribute copies of the #Pledge worksheet. Their challenge is to recreate the pledge as a tweet, with a limit of 140 characters. What is the key message? What might make it interesting or provocative enough to others to re-tweet it?
10. Have students share their 140 character pledges with the whole group and compare and contrast their edits.

Conclusion

Review the themes of the lesson and ask students if they think anything can be reduced to 140 characters. Is there anything that shouldn’t be reduced to 140 characters? Why or why not? What are the pros and cons of communicating in 140 characters or less?

Lyrics

Twitter: The Musical

Hello Twitter Bird.

Tweet a little tweet on twitter. Any little tweet will do
Every little tweet's a winner. You can do it too!
Tweet a little tweet on twitter. Everyone will know what's new
Tweet a little tweet on twitter. It's up to you!

In 140 characters I'll tell you what I eat
On Twitter I post random artsy pictures of my feet
I'm staying up to date with friends while walking down the street
Yeah Twitter's pretty sweet
I'm literally twittering my life is now complete
It's literally littering with every single tweet
You think that you're so cool
Re-tweeting things like tools
You're all a bunch of fools
Ooooo Hashtag Nature

CHORUS

Tweet a little tweet on twitter. Everything little thing you do
Every little tweet's a winner. You can do it too!
Tweet a little tweet on twitter. Everyone will know what's new
Tweet a little tweet on twitter. It's up to you!

Now get your popcorn out let's watch celebs go head to head
I read that Gaga's friendship with Perez is all but dead
Why do to live events
Just read your Twitter feed instead
So you can stay in bed.

But Twitter isn't just for petty things, don't be misled
It helped the message of the Arab Spring to grow and spread
With Twitter by your side, connected fair and wide
The world is intertwined

CHORUS

Tweet a little tweet on twitter. Any little thing will do
Every little tweet's a winner. You can do it too!
Tweet a little tweet on twitter. Everyone will know what's new
Tweet a little tweet on twitter. It's up to you!

Well hashtag this and favorite this
And maybe we'll retweet.
With Twitter by your side we're together far and wide
Any tweet will do!

For Mies van der Rohe Less is More



