



NOTES ON BLINDNESS VR EXPERIENCE

OVERVIEW

Students will go through the “Notes on Blindness” VR experience. Using the material covered by the app and any other supplemental materials or information covered in the class, students will engage in discussions.

MATERIALS

- Oculus Rift
- Oculus controller/Touch

CREDITS

www.cultofpedagogy.com/speaking-listening-techniques/

www.grinnell-k12.org

www.notesonblindness.co.uk/vr/

SYNOPSIS

After losing sight, John Hull knew that if he did not try to understand blindness it would destroy him. In 1983 he began keeping an audio diary.

Over three years John recorded over sixteen hours of material, a unique testimony of loss, rebirth and renewal, excavating the interior world of blindness.

Published in 1990, the diaries were described by author and neurologist Oliver Sacks as, ‘A masterpiece... The most precise, deep and beautiful account of blindness I have ever read.’

Following on from the Emmy Award-winning short film of the same name, Notes on Blindness is an ambitious and groundbreaking work, both affecting and innovative – and one of the most essential British documentaries of the year.

TIMELINE

This activity is designed to take be completed in two-45 minute sessions.



DISCUSSION FORMAT SUGGESTIONS

Philosophical Chairs

(a.k.a. *Values Continuum, Forced Debate, Physical Barometer, This or That*)

Basic Structure: A statement that has two possible responses—agree or disagree—is read out loud. Depending on whether they agree or disagree with this statement, students move to one side of the room or the other. From that spot, students take turns defending their positions.

Variations: Often a Philosophical Chairs debate will be based around a text or group of texts students have read ahead of time; students are required to cite textual evidence to support their claims and usually hold the texts in their hands during the discussion. Some teachers set up one hot seat to represent each side, and students must take turns in the seat. In less formal variations (which require less prep), a teacher may simply read provocative statements students are likely to disagree on, and a debate can occur spontaneously without a text to refer to. Teachers may also opt to offer a continuum of choices, ranging from “Strongly Agree” on one side of the room, all the way to “Strongly Disagree” on the other, and have students place themselves along that continuum based on the strength of their convictions.

Affinity Mapping

a.k.a. Affinity Diagramming

Basic Structure: Give students a broad question or problem that is likely to result in lots of different ideas, such as “What were the impacts of the Great Depression?” or “What literary works should every person read?” Have students generate responses by writing ideas on post-it notes (one idea per note) and placing them in no particular arrangement on a wall, whiteboard, or chart paper. Once lots of ideas have been generated, have students begin grouping them into similar categories, then label the categories and discuss why the ideas fit within them, how the categories relate to one another, and so on.

Variations: Some teachers have students do much of this exercise—recording their ideas and arranging them into categories—*without* talking at first. In other variations, participants are asked to re-combine the ideas into new, different categories after the first round of organization occurs. Often, this activity serves as a good pre-writing exercise, after which students will write some kind of analysis or position paper.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Do you think hearing or seeing is more important in life? And why?
- What are the effects of blindness on one's life?
- What are some ways we potentially damage our eyesight slowly?
- Do you take your vision for granted or do you use it to better yourself?
- What would be the things you'd miss the most if you lost your eyesight?
- If you found out you were losing your eyesight and there was nothing you could do to stop it, what would be something you'd want to do or see before your eyesight was gone?

