

**Title of Session:** Paranormal WebQuests

**Moderator:** Bernie Dodge

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Room: Hot Tub Conference Room

**BjB:** we usually start discussions with brief introductions. Would you like to do that today, Bernie?

**BernieD:** Yes.

**BernieD:** I'm Bernie Dodge, a professor of Ed Tech in San Diego.

**TomMarch** joined the room.

**BjB:** Please tell us where you are located and what you teach or hope to teach.

**BernieD** waves across the Pacific to Tom

**BjB** waves hi to Tom

**BjB:** I'm an art teacher in Pennsylvania and a helpdesk volunteer for Tapped In

**BjB:** we're just doing intros, Tom

**BjB** wonders if everyone is shy?

**EmilyW:** I am Emily, I am in Dallas, I am a recent college graduate and a web designer, I hope to be a technology coordinator or web designer for a school in the future

**BjB:** thanks, Emily

**AdemolaP:** I am Ademola in Chicago. I teach Computers to 5th-8th graders. I'm hoping to learn more about webquests from the two experts here.

**BernieD:** They're all in the witness protection program, BJ.

**ColetteH:** how do we get your attention to do our introduction

**LarissaGst3:** Hello, I am a junior at Florida State University where I am an English Education major.

**BjB** laughs...must be, Bernie!

**JulieAA:** I had a bit of trouble joining, sorry. I am attending the meeting as part of a college class assignment.

**TomMarch:** One expert and one guy hanging out in Oz

**BjB:** Colette, just type your intro

**BjB:** nice to see you, Tom...it's been a while

**BernieD:** We done?

**BjB** looks around the room to see if anyone else wants to introduce themself?

**CelinaA:** I'm math teacher in Sao Paulo Brazil in college and math education for master and doctor,. Sorry for my English. I did 2 webquest in Portuguese and one is in the Bernie's site

**TomMarch:** (I just got your announcement - I was in a chat with the Capstone Group - I couldn't have planned it had I put it in my diary!)

**BjB:** thanks, Celina

**ColetteH:** I'm a Special Education Teacher in Mermentau, La. I'm attending this meeting as part of a college class assignment.

**BjB** smiles. looks like a diverse group, Bernie

**BernieD:** As usual.

**BjB** hands the virtual floor over to Dr. Dodge

**BernieD:** Let's start.

**BernieD:** Glad you all could make it. Tonight's topic title is cheesily provocative. It was intended to lure in innocent bystanders.

**BjB** chortles...looks like it worked!

**BernieD:** If you came here for Bigfoot, you'll leave here with something else, I hope.

**BernieD:** From the beginning, the WebQuest format had critical thinking as one possible focus (along with problem solving, creativity, analysis... etc.) In a media-rich world, it's increasingly important that the next generation be able to distinguish shades of truth and failures in logic.

**BernieD:** The young are often fascinated by claims of extraordinary events that defy conventional explanation. Maybe it's because kids have so many roads open to them, so many possibilities, that they welcome stories that seem to say that every thing their parents know is wrong, and that amazing things can happen.

**BernieD:** In fact, when I was a kid, I had a library of UFO books about 5 feet wide!

**BernieD:** What do I mean by the paranormal? Let me lump together several things: parapsychology, UFOs, and cryptozoology (lake monsters, sasquatch, chupacabras, and so on), as well as the Bermuda Triangle and Atlantis.

**BernieD:** I was curious to see if there were teachers out there who were creating WebQuests exploring these topics and doing it well. What do I mean by doing it well? I think the world would be a better place if the next generation had well-honed BS detectors. They would, I hope, be quickly able to tell when a story fell apart, and would demand extraordinary evidence for extraordinary claims.

**BernieD:** Can these topics be misused? I anticipated finding WebQuests in which these subjects were used because they are cool, and no critical thinking was engaged. This strikes me as a bad idea, because it would add yet another channel to all the other ways the media make us stupid.

**BernieD:** Have I offended anyone yet? What do you all think about the paranormal?

**BernieD** is deafened by silence.

**EmilyW:** I am not sure what you mean by paranormal in webquests

**BjB:** I'm intrigued....part of me is still that teen and part of me is an adult who wants scientific evidence

**CelinaA:** I think it's possible

**JulieAA:** I know my students love getting books about strange events in the library. It usually is a good topic to get everyone interested.

**ColetteH:** I want to know more

**LauraGle:** I am not certain what is meant, either

**LarissaGst3:** No. I have always wondered about the Bermuda Triangle especially since the show Lost came on.

**BernieD:** Well... I've lined up a half dozen WebQuests that treat this topic in various ways.

**TomMarch:** The Web is rife with great misinformation.

**JeffC:** Well... the World Weekly News just reported that terrorists have hijacked a UFO... so... I'm interested.

**BernieD:** Let me start with one that was created in my own course about 8 years ago.

**BernieD:** Have a look at this:

<http://edweb.sdsu.edu/courses/EDTEC596/UNITS/Bermuda/BTriangle.html>

**LauraGle:** Very cool. What is the target age for this webquest?

**BjB:** welcome back, Larissa. Do you need the url again?

**BernieD:** Because this is such an old lesson, I think most of the links are bad. It's a bit unusual, too, in being interdisciplinary at the high school level.

**BernieD:** Nowadays I've learned that that's an unnatural act and I don't push it as much.

**BernieD:** What do you think about this lesson?

**CelinaA:** What is the task?

**JulieAA:** the webquest looks great, you had great ideas, but I agree that this cross-subject ideas would not work in high school these days

**BernieD:** There are many. Each for a different subject area.

**BernieD:** "What is the Task?", though is a great question. It's always the first thing I ask.

**BernieD:** No other reactions?

**CelinaA:** Where are the links?

**LarissaGst3:** the task isn't clear to me

**BjB:** welcome, Marielle. We're looking at

<http://edweb.sdsu.edu/courses/EDTEC596/UNITS/Bermuda/BTriangle.html>

**TomMarch:** It looks something like the first "Searching for China" that elicited your response, "It's good, but it's not a WebQuest"

**MarielleP:** Hi, BJ. All.

**LarissaGst3:** Yeah I have done ONE webquest and it doesn't look like one

**BernieD:** I know the links are in there somewhere.

**MarielleP** nods.

**BernieD:** Well... my major disappointment was that this group of students took the topic totally as student bait, and dropped the ball in terms of critical thinking.

**BernieD:** In fact, I recently blogged about this.

**BernieD:** <http://webquest.org/bdodge/2005/03/bermuda-triangle-and-me.htm>

**EmilyW:** I am confused how webquests work

**BernieD:** You'll see more with a better example next, Emily.

**BernieD:** So.... let's look at another.

**LauraGle:** As a high school teacher I sometimes feel as though students don't want to think about anything other than grades.

**MarielleP:** Wow! I never met a reputed Bermudatriangulationologist before!

**BernieD:** Here's one that looks more like today's format of WebQuests:

**BernieD:** <http://www.rbhs.w-cook.k12.il.us/Mancoff/phenomna.html>

**JulieAA:** What a crazy letter to get. The guy sounds serious

**ColetteH:** yes, that is one

**BernieD:** I like the lurid colors.

**LarissaGst3:** Yes the task is clearly stated for first timers too

**BernieD:** What do you think I might not like, though, being the picky guy that I am?

**CelinaA:** I don't like this

**LauraGle:** This would definitely attract everyone's attention!

**LarissaGst3:** the links?

**BernieD:** Nah.

**EmilyW:** what grade would this be for?

**BernieD:** It's basically just a research paper.

**CelinaA:** What the children's learn with this. Do webpages?

**BernieD:** No scaffolding, no transformation of information.... just go out and write a paper.

**BernieD:** There is no guidance that might inoculate them against dumbthink.

**MarielleP:** Good one for the old copy-paste trick.

**LarissaGst3:** no grading scale?

**BernieD:** It's just another Leonard Nimoy special on the Discovery Channel.

**EmilyW:** To make a webpage of it seems like it would be for older students

**ColetteH:** no higher order skills

**BernieD:** Emily... the medium they use isn't that important. What matters is the kind of thinking we're asking for, and this just asks for summarization.

**JulieAA:** just to write a paper as an eval is boring, I would think they would only find basic info

**EmilyW:** oh ok

**EmilyW:** I am still new to understanding webquests, and anything that involves making a webpage gets my attention since I am a web designer

**BernieD:** Take a look at this one: <http://warrensburg.k12.mo.us/webquest/media/>

**BernieD:** Click on the Task, and then go to Paranormal.

**BernieD:** If we look at this in terms of Bloom's Taxonomy, we're at least at the Analysis level. The last two were several floors down from that.

**MichaelaMM:** okay, bear with me ... I'm new to Tapped In so not sure what to do .... am doing this for a graduate class

**BjB:** just listen, Michaela...and click on the url

**MichaelaMM:** okay, thanks

**BjB . o O** ( hold down your ctrl key on your keyboard as you click )

**BernieD** thinks he has arrived at the pinnacle of his career now that he's a required part of someone's course.

**JulieAA:** I thought webquests were web based only, this task tells me to do outside research off of the web???

**EmilyW** agrees with Julie

**LauraGle:** Well, there are 2 of us I have 2 courses that talked about this site and asked us to take a look.

**BernieD:** So... this WebQuest seems a lot closer to the mark to me. Using the paranormal as a motivating vehicle to look at clear thinking makes sense.

**CelinaA:** I don't like again.

**BernieD:** Books still work, Julia. WebQuests have never been web-only because there still aren't enough computers to go around.

**BernieD:** What don't you like, Celina?

**JulieAA:** good point

**CelinaA:** About the task and evaluation

**EmilyW:** then how is it a webquest?

**EmilyW:** just because it is on a website?

**BernieD:** Wait and look at a few more examples, Emily and focus on what students do, not the medium.

**BernieD:** The evaluation is certainly skimpy. Probably the author ran out of time. That's why I have my students do the Evaluation part early on before the Process.

**CelinaA:** There is no good orientation about how to be an good critical

**BernieD:** Here's one I just saw today for the first time.

**BernieD:** Yes... that kind of scaffolding is needed.

**EmilyW:** I actually have to leave the session now, it was great seeing these webquests

**BernieD:** In fact, here's a good resource that not enough of these WebQuests have made use of: <http://www.csicop.org/>

**BernieD:** File that away for later. Let's look at another quest.

**BernieD:** <http://www.integratelearning.org/Lesson%20Bank/GloriaILearn/ufo/ufo.htm>

**BernieD:** I like parts of this, but I prefer WebQuests that are wrapped around a single challenging task instead of a series of smaller tasks.

**LarissaGst3:** very organized and requires a lot, but look at the audience

**BernieD:** Seems as though they'd practice a lot of useful reading and writing skills.

**ColetteH:** I also like how organized this one is

**JulieAA:** I don't think I would actually call a vet and ask for local ranchers' numbers to ask about livestock mutilation, but the skills are good

**BernieD:** It would be interesting to hear what the vet would say.

**CelinaA:** It's good for learn how to write well and to be creative

**BernieD:** Let's look at one more.

**BernieD:** <http://www.station05.qc.ca/css/ecoless/stmarg/als/memphrequest/index.htm>

**BernieD:** It's almost cinematic in its animated grandeur, wouldn't you say?

**JulieAA:** OOO, bad graphics

**LarissaGst3:** I like it

**LarissaGst3:** it has the rubric that I mentioned that was missing from one of the previous

**BernieD:** Yes, but look at the content of the rubric.

**CelinaA:** The other is better

**BernieD:** It's mostly about process.

**LarissaGst3:** yeah I see

**BernieD:** We're beginning to run out of time, so let me throw out a few more URLs for you to look at later:

**BernieD:** <http://web.mala.bc.ca/webquests3/ghosts/Intro.html>

**BernieD:** <http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/fil/pages/webufosjo.html>

**BernieD:** <http://readysetgo.uwinnipeg.ca/webquest.cfm>

**BernieD:** That last one is aimed at adults and is not bad.

**BernieD:** What I was hoping to find, though, still eludes me.

**LarissaGst3:** what

**BernieD:** I'd love to see a WebQuest that uses the paranormal to lure students into thinking harder.

**BjB . o O** ( a reminder that if you are logged in as a member, you will get a transcript of this discussion, including all urls, emailed to you when you log out )

**BernieD:** A WebQuest with a single, hard task that requires analysis, provokes argument, requires looking at evidence and multiple opinions, and that provides some guidance on all those things.

**CelinaA:** Thanks a lot Bernie

**MichaelaMM:** thanks Bernie .... the webquests were great because we're currently working on that in class, by coincidence

**BernieD:** Given the present lockjaw that teachers are suffering in this high stakes environment, I don't foresee anyone developing such a WebQuest soon.

**LarissaGst3:** Thanks Bernie, I thoroughly enjoyed

**ColetteH:** Something to remember when developing a webquest - thanks Bernie

**BernieD:** I hope your class comes up with some great ones, Michaela.

**LauraGle:** Thank you, This was very interesting!

**JulieAA:** This helps to keep on track when creating my next webquest- thanks

**BernieD:** Any other parting thoughts?

**BjB:** thanks, Bernie. Are you doing a session in May?

**CelinaA:** Welcome in Brazil

**BernieD:** Yup. Maybe about the WebQuest situation in Brazil. I'll be there during the third week of May.

**MarielleP:** I think that "luring students into thinking harder" is sadly more the exception than the rule, regardless of medium or format.

**BernieD** agrees, sadly.

**CelinaA:** I will see you there (Florianopolis)

**MarielleP:** But alas, we must continue to fight the good fight - for thinking harder!

**BernieD:** Looking forward to it, Celina.

**MarielleP:** Onward, troops. Thanks, Bernie.

**BernieD:** Good night/morning all.