

TEACHING AND LEARNING WORLD GEOGRAPHY

QUESTIONING STRATEGIES FOR WORLD GEOGRAPHY: DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING

Introduction:

This material provides teachers a variety of strategies to ask students geographic questions through the use of current events, higher level questioning, and analysis frameworks. The quality of questions that students are asked will determine the level of their geographic understanding so it is important for World Geography teachers to challenge their students with appropriate questions. Learning to ask geographic questions like:

- “Where is it located?”
- “What is significant about this location?”
- “How is its location related to the locations of other people, places, and environments?”

is not easy but well worth the time and effort in producing geographically literate students.

TEKS:

(21) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology.

- (A) use historical, geographic, and statistical information from a variety of sources such as databases, field interviews, media services, and questionnaires to answer geographic questions and infer geographic relationships;
- (B) analyze and evaluate the validity and utility of multiple sources of geographic information such as primary and secondary sources, aerial photographs, and maps;

23(C) use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution;

Time:

Time will vary depending on the depth of questioning involved.

Strategies for Workshop Training:

This material includes a range of suggestions clustered around specific strategies to use in the classroom on a continuing basis. We begin by reviewing some general information about questions and progress into how to ask geographic questions.

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1. CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD QUESTIONS

Review the general characteristics of good questions. In a workshop setting you may wish to ask participants to suggest the characteristics of a good question. Then present these acknowledged characteristics:

1. Question *quantity* shifts to question *quality* in guided and reflective discussions.
2. Good questions are easily worded, generally brief, and call for new information rather than recalled knowledge.
3. Productive questions take students forward; they enable the teacher to provide scaffolding for students beginning to build their own understandings.

2. GOOD SAMPLE QUESTION STEMS

Brainstorm with participants to develop a generic list of a few good question stems. Depending on the circumstances, you may wish to break the group into pairs or triads to “think, pair” then share with the group as a whole. The list might look like this:

- Where?
- Why there...?
- What else is associated with that...?
- Why is that important?
- Why do you think that?
- Why do you think that someone would say...?
- What led you to that conclusion?
- What is another way you could say...?
- What is your reason for...?
- How...?
- How can we classify...?
- How does this definition relate to the topic?
- State in your own words...
- Do you know other places that are like this place?
- What is one place different from this place?
- Suppose...
- Predict what would happen if...
- What would you think if a character in a movie made that same decision?
- Have you ever heard the phrase ___? What do you think that means?
- In what way is ___ like ___?
- How are those ideas/events/people similar?

3. QUESTIONING STRATEGIES

Knowing what questions to ask is important, but the strategies in which teachers and students use questions are important to consider. Ask participants to consider this quote:

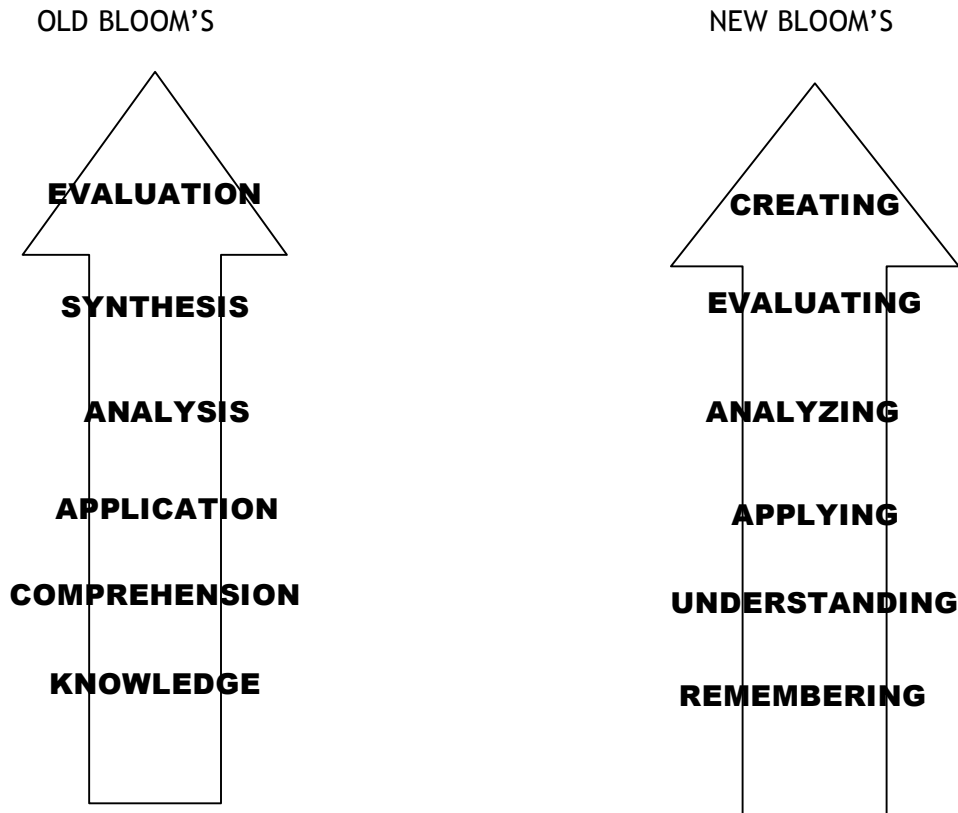
Are we burying thinking under tons of information? In our rush to finish the textbook, meet the “objectives”, present the content of the course, we may work against the most valuable objective of all: the development of our students’ minds. Many forces drive us to “cover content,” but we should remember that the word cover can mean “conceal.” How much real thinking is concealed in the petrified forests of subject matter?

-Anonymous

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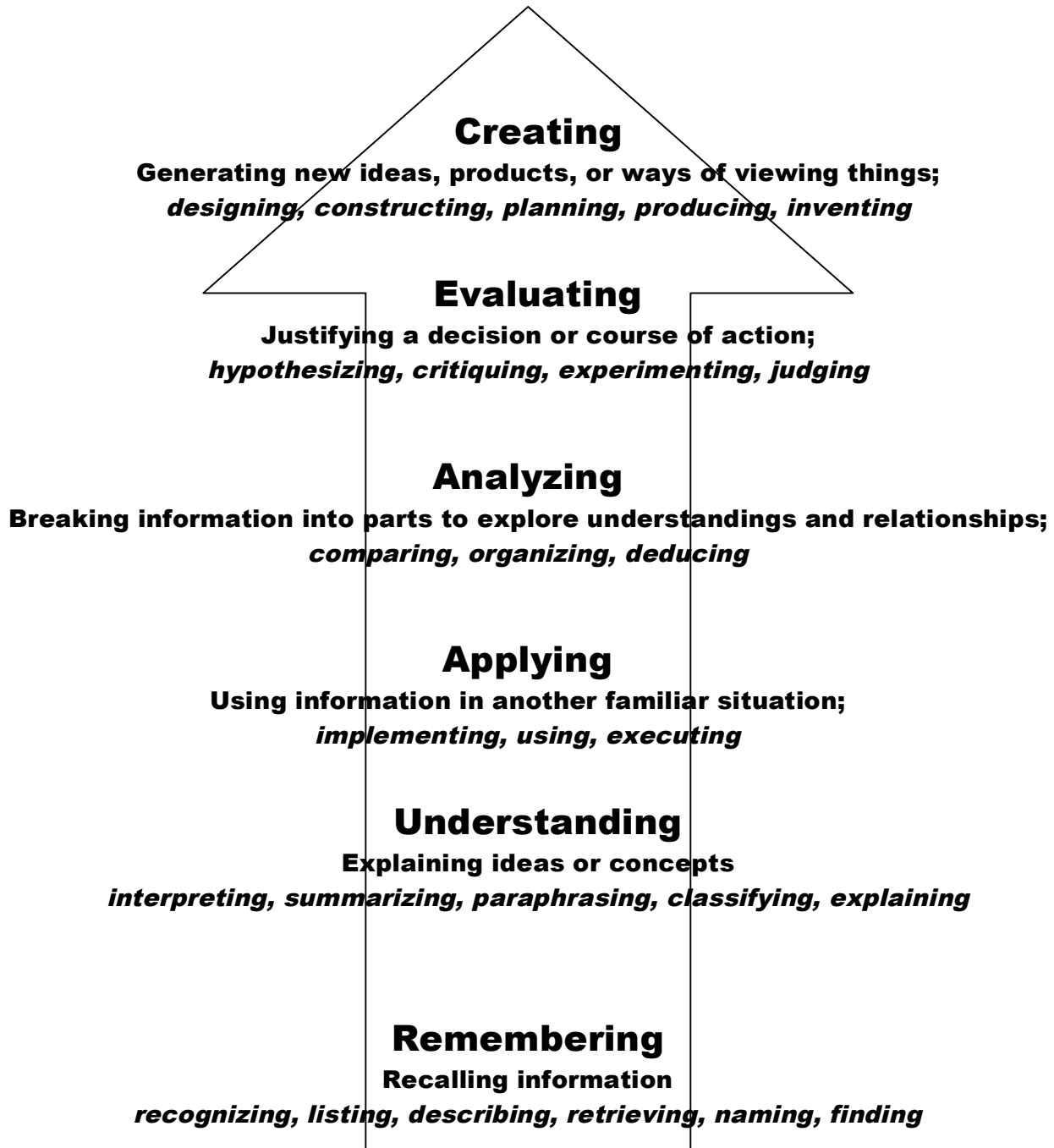
After discussing the quote, review with participants the most popular thinking hierarchy, Bloom's, New and Old. Present the assignment for students that asks them to use Bloom's taxonomy to write two to three questions about a unit of study as a review process.

NEW BLOOM'S TAXONOMY



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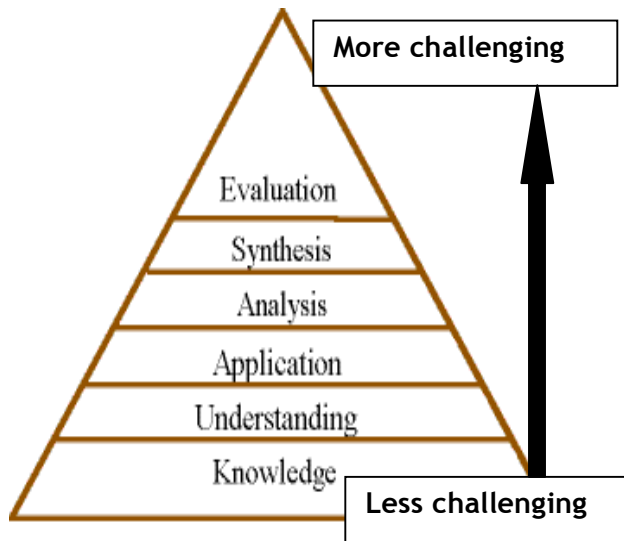
BLOOM'S REVISED TAXONOMY



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Suggested Student Activity: BLOOM'S TAXONOMY PYRAMID ASSIGNMENT

- Bloom's Taxonomy is a classification of levels of intellectual challenge important in learning.
- He classified levels of intellectual challenge based on this model.



DIRECTIONS

You will be writing test questions for this unit based on Bloom's pyramid.

- You must create 12 questions and provide an answer key.
- Questions can be multiple choice or short answer.
- You will do 2 questions in each section of Bloom's pyramid.
- You must create 2 questions each from the topics we have covered > Unity notes/ Imperialism/ Ireland/ Germany/ Strategic Zones- Med Sea/ Balkans/ European Union

Blooms question starters

6. Evaluation

Would it be better if ___? Why is it better that ___? How would you prove ___? How would you justify ___? What is the value of ___? How would you prioritize ___? Why did X choose ___?

5. Synthesis

How would you improve ___? What would happen if ___? What are alternatives to ___? Can you predict the outcome of ___? What changes would you make to solve ___?

4. Analysis

How is ___ related to ___? What inference can you make from ___? What is/was the motive for ___? What is the relationship between ___? What ideas justify ___?

3. Application

How would you use ___? What examples show that ___? What would result if ___? What facts would you use to show ___? What questions would you ask in an interview with ___?

2. Comprehension/Understanding

What is the main idea of ___? How would you compare ___? How can you contrast ___? How can you summarize ___? Which is the best answer for ___? How would you rephrase ___?

1. Knowledge

What is ___? Which one ___? How did ___ happen? Where is ___? When did ___ happen? Can you list three ___?

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4. THE 5 'A's OF GEOGRAPHIC QUESTIONING

In this section of the workshop you will work with participants to master specific questioning strategies. Begin by introducing participants to this easy mnemonic associated with geographic questions. Review and explain the range of geographic questions. Use a specific place known to participants if possible.

ASK the geographic question/s:

- Where is X?
- Why is it there?
- What is at this place?
- What else is at this place and associated with it?
- Where is this place in relation to other places?
- How is this place connected to other places?
- What nearby places are similar or connected to this one? (Regions)
- How are places similar or different?
- What effect (s) do places (or geographic features) have on their neighbors?
- What is the nature of change between places? (transition from one place to another)
- How are things arranged across Earth's surface? (Patterns)
- What patterns can you see in the distribution of geographic features, human and physical?
- How do things spread across Earth's surface? (Diffusion)
- Are spatial patterns similar? Why?
- What other places are like this place? Different from this place?
- What places do not seem to follow an observed rule, i.e., what are the geographic exceptions to the rule? And why?
- What larger area is this one inside? What smaller areas are inside it? (Hierarchy)

ACQUIRE the geographic information needed to answer such questions.

ARRANGE the geographic information you have found.

ANALYZE the geographic information for the answers you are investigating.

- Describe locations.
- List/describe what you might see, hear, smell, at a place.
- List/describe ways a place is linked with other places.
- Compare conditions and connections in one place to another.
- Analyze/describe how conditions in one place can affect nearby places.
- Identify regions as places that are similar or connected.
- Describe the spatial pattern of something on a map.

ANSWER the geographic question/s you asked at the beginning!

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5. GEOGRAPHIC QUESTIONING FRAMEWORKS

To complete this session, present participants with four frameworks to help students develop their self-questioning “metacognitive” thinking strategies. The revised Bloom’s taxonomy identifies four dimensions of knowledge: Factual (basic elements and facts); Conceptual (interrelationships among elements and facts); Procedural (how to do something); and Metacognitive (awareness and knowledge of one’s own thinking; strategic knowledge on how to learn). Teachers can help students be better students by presenting concrete strategies to help them organize their thinking. Depending upon time, give participants the opportunity to try out these strategies themselves. For example, for D “OSAE” provide a picture for participants to analyze.

A. ANALYZING GEOGRAPHY USING THE E S P N FRAMEWORK

Instructions to Students: As you read a selection, classify aspects or topics into the four categories as shown here:

Economic	Social	Political	eNvironmental

B. QUESTIONING STRATEGIES FOR PROBLEM SOLVING LESSONS

This type of strategy can be used as a framework to help students understand the elements of complex problems.

1. What are the major elements and issues of the problem?
2. How would you go about solving these problems?
3. Write a statement that fully defines the most significant problem
4. What is the best solution for this particular problem?
5. What impact will the solution have, who will accept it the most and the least?
6. What are obstacles to your solution?
7. What NEW problems could arise from your solution?

C. QUESTIONING STRATEGIES FOR POINT OF VIEW DISCUSSIONS

This line of question can be used in exploring the different points of view involved in complex problems.

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1. What are the needs of the people involved in this issue?
2. What are concerns of those involved?
3. Write about the perspective of each side.
4. What is your reaction to this issue?
5. Write a summary of the issue.

D. O.S.A.E.

This questioning framework is good for analyzing photos such as those in a textbook, on transparencies, PowerPoint, Internet, etc...

OBSERVE the photo.

SPECULATE about what you see.

ANALYZE the information.

EVALUATE the information.

Here are some additional questions to help prompt student thinking related to image analysis:

- How has the scene you see been affected by human activities?
- How might these activities affect the economy of the place?
- How might these activities affect the environment of the place?
- Can you think of any other ways that the land in the scene might be used?
- What brings people to the place in the image?
- What resources can you see in the image that are valuable?
- What economic activities can be seen in the image?
- What transport systems can you find evidence for in the image?
- What five things would you add to the image you are observing? What five things would you remove?
- What are five underlying factors causing the image to be the way it is? What caused this situation?
- (If the picture includes people) What do you think these people are thinking? Fill in a thought bubble.
- (If the picture is a family) Where do you think this family lives? What problems might this family face? What resources might this family require?