

BRAINSTORM

The purpose of a brainstorm is to highlight key concepts. It can be used before students begin a piece of literature to access prior knowledge and to set the stage for future discussions. It can also be used during a unit or a piece of literature to cause students to think about key concepts. The idea of a brainstorm is to have students write as many ideas as possible without stopping to determine if it is right or wrong. In a brainstorm, thinking as many ideas as possible and writing them down is the goal.

Give students two minutes to jot down as many ideas as possible on the topic you have chosen. Have students do this individually in their notebooks. From here you can go in a couple of different directions.

1. If you have time and would like to reinforce team-building skills, have each group member read his or her brainstorm to the group. Have one group member write out the ideas they feel are the most important from each individual brainstorm, creating a group brainstorm. Next, ask each group to place a star next to the three most important ideas in their brainstorm. Then have them elect one person to present these three ideas to the class. Have them be prepared to explain why they believe their ideas are the most important. Tell them that if another group reads their answer, they must choose another one so that each group presents three ideas that are not alike. Create a class brainstorm list with these ideas on them. Before you have finished ask if there are any other ideas the class feels are important that are not on the list. Add them. You may want to revisit this brainstorm and add to it as you move through the unit.
2. If you do not have a lot of time, you may want to skip the group work step in the list above and go directly to the class brainstorm. Have each individual select the top two ideas they feel are the most important. Go around the room and take one answer from each student. You may want to choose a student to write on the board while you facilitate. Make sure students know they cannot give the same answer another student has given. They must choose another answer from their brainstorm.