



Crossing the line: group activity

Collection: The Subject & pedagogy

Resource: Working with threshold concepts

Approximate duration

Duration: reading time + 75 minutes

Learning outcomes

This activity should help course participants clarify their own minds about some of the reasons why students may seem to be lagging in their grasp of the subject. It could help them identify key issues in learning. On this basis, it should help them not only to empathise with students, but to think actively about how to engage their own students with the modes of enquiry that characterise the English disciplines.

Introduction

This is a group version of the individual activity suggested in ['Crossing the Line'](#).

The activity

This activity invites you to use Meyer and Land's ideas as a framing device and to try to identify the nature of the threshold concepts in your discipline. First the group should read the article by Meyer and Land as cited in the resource overview. Note that in 2.2 of the 2003 version they themselves have a go at identifying a bundle of such concepts for literary and cultural studies. Observing the post-structuralist bent of the contemporary disciplines, they pick out ideas to do with signification, deconstruction, and the absence that constitutes a presence. Threshold concepts, they speculate, are transformative, (probably) irreversible, and integrative. Once they've read the article, ask small groups to work together to identify



1 | *This resource is part of a set of professional development resources for Higher Education English (including English Literature, English Language & Creative Writing) called 'The Pool'. The resources were developed by the English Subject Centre in 2011 as part of a JISC/HEA Open Educational Resources (OER) Project.*

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1. What might be the key threshold concepts in their own discipline. Aim to identify two or three of these.
2. Next, ask them to think about the difficulties these concepts might present to students. Can they remember some examples where you thought 'this student doesn't "get" this'? Why might students have difficulty grasping this concept? Why might they even resist it?
3. On this basis, ask individuals (or pairs) to draw up a short sketch plan for a first year class where the core task is that of getting hold of and becoming fluent with one of the core threshold concepts identified earlier.

Relationship to the Professional Standards Framework

[Check here](#)

- **Core Knowledge 2:** Appropriate methods for teaching and learning in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme
- **Core Knowledge 3:** How students learn, both generally, and in the subject
- **Professional Values 3:** Commitment to the development of learning communities

More information about the Professional Standards Framework can be obtained from the summary factsheet in the Subject & Pedagogy Collection in HumBox.

<http://humbox.ac.uk/2731/>



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Resources in the *Subject and Pedagogy* Collection

- Subject and pedagogy: introduction to the collection
- Working with the English subject benchmark statement: resource overview
 - Using the English subject benchmark: group activity
 - Using the English subject benchmark: individual activity
- Working with the Creative Writing subject benchmark statement: resource overview
 - Using the Creative Writing subject benchmark: group activity
 - Using the Creative Writing subject benchmark: individual activity
- Writing and the teacher: resource overview
 - Writing tasks: group activity
 - Metaphors: group activity
- Hearing yourself teach: resource overview
 - Keeping a teaching journal: individual activity
- Working with threshold concepts: resource overview
 - Crossing the line: individual activity
 - **Crossing the line: group activity (* you are here)**



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