

The WikiQuest: A Web 2.0 Approach to WebQuests
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What is a WebQuest?

A WebQuest is any student activity that requires research on the Internet as a means of exploring a topic or answering a series of questions. It is a way to encourage students to explore real-world use of English written for native speakers. They often take the form of a list of questions to be answered by conducting a simple web search and can be followed by an evaluation of the information found.

WebQuests are useful for students with limited English proficiency or classes with different proficiency levels because students are allowed to work at their own pace and do not need to understand all of the text they are asked to scan.

An example of a traditional WebQuest would be to send students to the website, for example, of Kentucky Fried Chicken fast food restaurants. The teacher would visit the site beforehand and create a list of questions to answer or facts to locate. The students would work together to find the information and then share what they found later during class.

How does Web 2.0 affect the WebQuest?

With Web 2.0, the Internet has become far more interactive than it was in the 1990s. Instead of using the Internet as only a means of getting information, people can now interact a great deal more and can create content of their own quite easily. Some examples of Web 2.0 include blogs, wikis and social networking sites. In such instances, the users have control over the content.

As stated above, traditional WebQuests for English language students would send them to a particular website to simply gather information. With Web 2.0, however, teachers can now send students on WebQuests where they not only locate information, but can also create it and have it published.

One example is what I call the *WikiQuest*. Wikipedia.com is the world's largest encyclopedia and it is entirely created and managed by its users. This means that anyone can create or edit an article on Wikipedia.

In a WikiQuest, the teacher can send students to a particular Wikipedia page in order to find, evaluate, change or add to the information that is posted there. If, for example, there is an article about the students' home town, they can read it, evaluate it and make changes, deletions or additions as they see fit. If there is no such article, they can create it.

Thus students are using English creatively to evaluate and analyze information, solve problems and create authentic texts for publication. And the topic is one that is of interest and importance to them. In such activities, language is contextualized, skills are integrated and materials are authentic.

Activity

Below are two sections taken from the Wikipedia article on Yaroslavl. With two partners, read and evaluate one of them (your choice). Answer the following questions:

1. Is the information clear and easy to understand?
2. Is there any incorrect information?
3. Is there any important information that is missing?
4. With your group, how many changes can you think of which you would like to make?
Write a list on a separate sheet of paper.

History

Yaroslavl lies at the intersection of several major highways, railways, and waterways. Preceded by Viking sites such as Timerevo from the 8th or 9th centuries, the city is said to have been founded in 1010 as an outpost of the Principality of Rostov Veliky, and was first mentioned in 1071. Capital of an independent principality from 1218, it was incorporated into Muscovy in 1463. In the 17th century it was Russia's second largest city, and for a time (during the Polish occupation of Moscow in 1612), the country's de facto capital. Today, Yaroslavl is an important industrial center (petrochemical plant, tire manufacturing plant, diesel engines plant and many others).

Main Sights

The most ancient building in the city is the *Spaso-Preobrazhensky* ("Transfiguration of the Saviour") Cathedral of the Spassky (St Saviour) Monastery constructed in 1506—1516 on the foundations of the original edifice dating back to 1216—1224. In the 16th century, the first stone wall is built around the monastery. It is from this monastery that an army of volunteers led by Minin and Prince Pozharsky set out to liberate Moscow from Polish invaders. In 1787, the monastery was closed and converted into a residence of the Yaroslavl and Rostov bishops. At that time, monastery buildings began to be reconstructed. New cells and the prior's chambers were built.

Apart from the *Spaso-Preobrazhensky* ("Transfiguration of the Saviour") Monastery, the oldest churches in the city date back to the 17th Century and belong to the so-called *Yaroslavl type* (built of red brick, with bright tiled exteriors). Those of St. Nicholas Nadein and Elijah the Prophet have some of the Golden Ring's most impressive frescoes.

Yaroslavl is the site of the Volkov Theatre (built 1750), the oldest theater in Russia, and the Demidovsky Pillar.

The city has many Russian Orthodox churches, one Russian Old Believers church, one Baptist church, one Lutheran church, one mosque and one synagogue.

Text copied from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yaroslavl>