

Making Connections to Current Events

SOCIAL STUDIES Age 10-11



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Learning Aims:

- To practice nonfiction text reading strategies.
- To strengthen students' ability to make connections to current events.
- To grow literate global citizens.

CONTEXT

My students recently completed a nonfiction, current events reading unit. Shortly after finishing the unit, I was shocked to see the spire above Notre Dame, engulfed in flames, crumble to the ground. This made me think about the opportunity my students had lost. While churning this over in my mind, I had an idea. I could help students unpack this tragic current event, practice their close reading skills, AND still give them the opportunity to visit Notre Dame in all its glory using VR technology.

PRACTICAL SESSION



Notre-Dame de Paris Playlist

Students discussed their prior knowledge on Paris, Notre Dame, and this new current event. Afterward, we created a KWL chart to document what they knew about the event, what they wondered about the event, and what they learned about the news event. I introduced the news article and asked students to read it using close reading strategies. At the end of our discussion, one student said she thought the fire at Notre Dame would be like the United States losing the White House or the Statue of Liberty. Another student stated, "I think people will be sad that they can never see Notre Dame again. Some people there have probably never seen it."

This comment helped me connect my current events lesson to using ClassVR technology. I asked students if any of them had been to Notre Dame and then told the students that they were going to be able to say that they saw it without even leaving the classroom! Each student placed a VR headset on and explored the three different views of Notre Dame. We analysed and evaluated the beauty, significance and history of the building and were able to answer and explore some of the students' key questions using the ClassVR experiences.

IMPACT ON LEARNING

ClassVR turned a current events lesson into a culminating experience; it connected them to the news events in a way that printed word or an online video could not do. Students were able to experience Notre Dame as it was before the fire. Adding Virtual Reality to my lesson also awoke my students' sense of empathy and helped them to understand this global news event in a more meaningful way. Afterward, a student said, "At least I can now say I saw it!"

