

8 Icebreakers Adapted for Online Student Communities, Part I

1. Animal Haiku

Title: If you were an animal, which animal would you be?

Description: Write a haiku to highlight the traits that you think you have in common with this animal. The word haiku means “light verse” in Japanese, and it does not rhyme. It is a three-line poem that follows a strict syllable structure: line 1, 5 syllables; line 2, 7 syllables; line 3, 5 syllables. Once you have posted your answer and corresponding haiku, vote on the haiku you think is most creative.

Once the question has been posted, suggest the following animals to initiate the students’ participation.

- Elephant
- Lion
- Rabbit
- Owl
- Dog
- Flamingo
- House cat

Type: Vote or Suggest

2. Time Machine

Title: If you could travel back in time to one of the following time periods in American history, which would you choose and why?

Description: After selecting the time period you would visit, explain your choice in 2 to 4 sentences.

Type: Multiple Choice (*Post the following choices or make up your own.*)

- 1830s: Wild West
- 1920s: Roaring 20s
- 1950s: Rock ‘n Roll/Suburbia
- 1960s: Hippie Generation/Anti-War Movement/Civil Rights Movement
- 1970s: Disco Fever
- 1980s: Wild Fashion/Brat Pack
- 2025: The Future
- I am happy in 2011

Go to www.simplek12.com/tlc/classroom for more information.

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3. Super Powers

Title: If you could have any super power, which would you choose and why?

Type: Multiple Choice (*Post the following choices or make up your own.*)

- The ability to read minds
- The ability to stop time
- The ability to fly
- The ability to become invisible
- The ability to heal people
- The ability to be invincible

4. Famous Person

Title: If you could meet one famous person, dead or alive, who would it be and why?

Description: State the person's name, his/her occupation (i.e. politician, comedian, musician, author, etc.), explain why you want to meet this person and list 3 questions you would like to ask him/her. Once you have posted your response to this question, respond to at least 3 of your peers. You can ask them about why they choose to meet this particular person, share thoughts and stories, add questions to their list of things to ask, etc.

Type: Forum

5. Desert Island Dilemma

Title: If you knew you would be stranded on a desert island for 1 year, which 5 objects would you bring with you?

Description: Keep in mind that there is NO electricity on the island! Choose your objects carefully then explain your choices in a short paragraph. Once you have completed your selections and posted your explanation, read and respond to at least 3 peers.

Type: Forum, or use the Multi-Multiple choice question type if you want to provide students with a list of possibilities to choose from.

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6. Acrostic Poem

Title: Create an acrostic poem using the letters in your name!

Description: Use the letters of your first name to create a poem that describes you. Each letter should begin a line of your poem and can be a single word or series of words. It does not have to rhyme but it can. Once you have written and posted your acrostic poem (see my example below), then read 3 poems written by people you did not know before this class and post comments, questions, etc.

Ms. Tucker's Acrostic Poem:

Tenacious
Unique
Charismatic
Kindred Spirit
Energetic
Really Organized

Type: Forum, or allow students the ability to vote on their favorite acrostic poem using the Vote or Suggest question type.

7. What's in a name?

Title: Read the chapter titled "Name" from the novel *House on Mango Street* and reflect on your own name.

Description: You may need to talk with a parent to find out more about what inspired your name. Feel free to discuss your first, middle and/or last name for this activity. Answer the following questions: What is your full name? Does your name mean something in a different language? Were you named after anyone? Do you have a nickname that your friends or family call you? Do you like your name? Why or why not? If you do not know anything interesting about your name, make up something creative. Once you have posted a reflection on your own name, read and respond to at least 3 of your peers. Remember that some stories may be fictional. You are welcome to ask questions about a person's story to find out if it is true or not. This could lead to some interesting discussions!

Type: Forum

Attach: PDF document of the "Name" chapter.

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8. Three Truths & A Lie

NOTE: This icebreaker has the students post their own questions, rather than responding to one posted by the teacher.

Ask the students to write four statements about themselves. Three of the statements should be true and one should be made up. Have each student post a question as follows:

Title: Which statement about [student's name] is false?

Type: Multiple Choice

- Statement 1
- Statement 2
- Statement 3
- Statement 4

Instruct the students to list each statement as a multiple-choice option. You can then reveal the answers in class to see which student was able to trick the majority of his/her peers. The more creative, the better!

Catlin Tucker is an English teacher at Windsor High School and has worked in Sonoma County for nine years. She currently teaches 9th and 10th grade English and has previously taught 11th grade Advanced Placement English. She also teaches online college research writing courses through Axia College.

Catlin earned her B.A. in English Literature from the University of California, Los Angeles and her Single Subject English Credential and Education Masters from the University of California, Santa Barbara. Her Masters in Education focused on creating and maintaining a safe space in the classroom to lower the affective filter and create a more supportive and effective learning environment.

She is currently part of the Collaborize Team, designing resources for the education market.

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