
TOAST FOR CHANGE

OBJECTIVE

The Toast for Change was a pivotal moment in the Freedom Writers' journey. The goal of this activity is to validate your students' past experiences, while offering them an opportunity to change the direction of their lives. Students often believe that their past choices and academic performance may bias their teachers. The Toast for Change is a symbolic way to make your students realize that whatever they may have done before stepping into your classroom does not matter. This activity should be considered a new start for your students, one that will help them rebuild their road to success.

DESCRIPTION

Prepare your classroom by placing all the desks against the wall, leaving enough room for your students to form a circle in the center of the room. Give them each a plastic champagne glass of sparkling apple cider, and ask them to make a Toast for Change. Toasts should be of a personal nature and shared with the rest of the class.

MS. G'S TIP

Aside from offering your students a new start, the Toast for Change will also allow you to form a safe environment for your students to share their emotions. Students will begin to trust their peers and create strong bonds with their classmates.

It is important to establish the proper environment for the Toast for Change, so prepare everything before your students get to class.

Be prepared for this activity to elicit intense emotional responses from your students.

MATERIALS

Plastic champagne cups
Sparkling apple cider
Paper towels
Change Poem
Visual graphic: Champagne Flute

PROCESS

- Step 1:** Prepare one glass of sparkling cider for each student.
- Step 2:** Arrange the desks against the wall, so that there is an area large enough for your students to stand in a circle.
- Step 3:** As your students arrive, ask them to leave their backpacks against the wall and form a circle in the center of the room.
- Step 4:** Ask a couple of volunteers to help you pass out the glasses. Tell your students to refrain from drinking until everyone has had a chance to share their toast.
- Step 5:** Introduce the Toast for Change by referring to the *Change Poem*. Explain to the students that the point of this activity is also about making changes in their lives.
- Step 6:** Go around the circle and have each student tell the class one thing that they would like to change about their life. Share something that you, as their teacher, would like to change. Students will appreciate your willingness to share, and will be more likely to bond with you.
- Step 7:** Once everyone has shared their toast, have the class raise their glasses, and toast for change.

VISUAL GRAPHIC ACTIVITY

Use the image of the champagne flute for the students to record their toasts.

**NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH
"NCTE" STANDARDS**

Standard 2. Reading for Understanding
Standard 3. Evaluation Strategies
Standard 4. Communication Skills
Standard 5. Communication Strategies
Standard 6. Applying Knowledge
Standard 9. Multicultural Understanding
Standard 10. Applying Non-English Perspectives

Standard 11. Participating in Society
Standard 12. Applying Language Skills

VOCABULARY CONCEPTS

Epiphany
Metamorphosis
Transformation
Cathartic
Therapeutic

ASSESSMENT

Following this activity, have each student write down and explain their “toasts” for change. Make a copy for your files and meet with each student to help them create an action plan for how they intend to make their change become a reality. If possible, meet with each student several times during the school year to assess their progress.

TAKING IT FURTHER

Ask the class as a whole to discuss and identify a problem in their community that they would like to change. This can become a service learning project for the class. Students should create an action plan to enact this change.

Freedom Writer Feedback

The Toast for Change was a defining moment for me. Raising a plastic glass seems like a small step toward change, but it helped me define my goals and believe that I could reach them. The day we toasted was also the day we all started being real with each other - we shared something special, and we all bonded.

The Freedom Writers Diary Quote

“I got a second chance to change things for the better. I thank God that he sent an angel to give me that chance to change.” —Diary 31

Teacher Talk

This is a great activity to use at the end of the unit or when you feel the time is right. Many of your students will be changed forever.

CHANGE POEM

Directions: Fill in the blanks below to complete this poem. Keep in mind all of the things you have learned from reading and studying *The Freedom Writers Diary* in class. Be prepared to share your poem with the class.

CHANGE

I was _____
(a description of who you were)

I remember _____
(describe a sad memory from your past)

I heard _____
(something you wish you didn't hear)

I saw _____
(something you weren't supposed to see)

I worried _____
(something that troubled you)

I thought _____
(a description of where your life was headed)

But, I want to change.

I am _____
(an accurate characteristic of who you are)

I think _____
(how you perceive the world)

I need _____
(a goal you wish to fulfill)

I try _____
(something that will help you improve yourself)

I feel _____
(describe an emotion)

I forgive _____
(someone or something that caused you pain)

Now I can change.

I will _____
(a positive prediction of who you will be)

I choose _____
(something you want to do differently)

I dream _____
(something you dare to dream about)

I hope _____
(something positive you strive for)

I predict _____
(how you see yourself in the future)

I know _____
(a description of your future self)

I will change

