Strategy: Monte Carlo Quiz

The Monte Carlo Quiz shakes up boring reading quizzes, giving students a fun change of pace.

Origin

Fernald, P. S. (2004). The Monte Carlo quiz: Encouraging punctual completion and deep processing of assigned readings. *College Teaching*, 52(3), 95-99.

Application

The Monte Carlo quiz is a fun way to blend reading quizzes with the idea of chance. This format involves using dice to determine if students will be quizzed and what the content of the quiz will be. Students are provided quiz guidelines in advance to guide their reading and note taking and are allowed to use their notes on the quizzes. All answers are limited to no more than an eight sentence paragraph. Students report that this is a preferred method of quizzing because it encourages them to complete reading assignments before class and gives them a feeling of control over their preparation. The option of using peer grading can also reduce instructor workload.

At each class meeting a student is selected at random to roll the die.

Roll 1: Odd numbers indicate no quiz; even numbers indicate a quiz and proceeding to Roll 2.

Roll 2: Number indicates types of question:

1: Knowledge: Describe the major thesis (the central idea or ideas) in the reading. Include ancillary or secondary ideas to strengthen the thesis.

2: Comparison: Identify two concepts or principles presented in the chapter or article and, when you first mention each, underline and define it. Then show how the concepts or principles are similar and different from each other in some way(s). Alternatively, choose one concept from the reading and one concept from this course (outside the reading) and conduct the comparison.

3: Application: Select a concept in the chapter or article, clearly define or describe it, and then indicate how it applies to someone you know. Provide sufficient details as examples to justify your claim.

4: Critique: Write a critical perspective on some aspect of the chapter or article, citing evidence that prompts you to agree or disagree with the author's perspective. Note that the critique may be positive, negative, or both. Your evidence may be personal experience, others' experiences, scientific findings, or logic.

5. Passion: Citing page number(s), quote verbatim a statement or brief passage that prompted you to have an emotional response: excitement, frustration, pleasure, anger, confusion, sadness, delight, etc. Then identify and explain the reasons for your emotional response.

6. Student choice: Answer any question, 1-5

Optional additional roll: If there are multiple chapters or readings and you wish to narrow the opportunities for responses, you can have an additional roll to select a reading or chapter.

Grading the Monte Carlo quiz:

E (Excellent): Demonstrating sound understanding of the selected concept(s), the answer is clearly stated and accurate. (95 percent)

G (Good): The answer is mostly or essentially correct but incomplete or unclearly stated, as illustrated by the following examples: a secondary thesis is not identified (question 1); a concept is not clearly defined or a similarity is either inaccurate or not identified (question 2); an example does not precisely fit the concept (question 3); type of evidence is not clearly identified (question 4); an emotional response is implicit but not clearly specified, or the quotation is not verbatim or has no page reference (question 5). (85 percent)

S (Satisfactory): The answer is incorrect, yet it demonstrates some familiarity with and understanding of some portion of the assigned reading. (75 percent)

U (Unsatisfactory): The answer is incorrect and demonstrates no familiarity with or understanding of the assigned reading. (65 percent)

A (Absent): Student was absent from class. (no credit)

Grading can be done by the instructor or by peer review. Peer review options may include having two readings of the quiz to confirm the assigned grade.

Reflection

- How does this compare to what you are already doing?

- What other strategies do you use to ensure students read material before coming to class?

- Do you think this would be effective in your class?