

Teach Like a Pirate

by Dave Burgess

Categories - How can I make this lesson outrageously entertaining, engaging, and powerful so that my students will never forget it and will be desperate to come back for more?

-The Kinesthetic Hook

- How can I incorporate movement?
- Can we throw something, roll something in class?
- Can we get up and act something out?
- Can we incorporate gestures and motions that students could do from their desks?
- Can we turn the room into a giant opinion meter?
- What kind of simulation can we do that would allow them to reenact part of this lesson?
- Can I change the structure of this lesson from a seated activity to a walk around activity?
- Can I use a game that incorporates movement and action to enhance this lesson?
- How can I guarantee that every student is up and out of their desk at least once during this lesson?

-The People Prop Hook

- How can I make my lesson "play big" by using students as props, inanimate objects, or concepts?
- Can we create a human graph, chart, map or equation?
- Can students be assigned a specific step in a process or an event and then have to order themselves sequentially?
- Can some students be props and the rest of the class "prop movers?"

-The Safari Hook

- How can I get my class outside my four walls for this lesson?
- Where would be the best place(s) on campus to deliver this content?
- Is there an area of the school that serves as the perfect backdrop?
- Can I plant key items outside for us to "discover?"
- Can we leave campus to go to the ultimate location to teach this material?

-The Picasso Hook

- How can I incorporate art into this lesson?
- What can my students draw or make that would help them understand and retain this information?
- Can they make some kind of non-linguistic representation of the material (A photography project or 3-D art, for example)?
- Can they create visuals of key information as a way to review for the upcoming test?
- Can they design word pictures in which the way the word is written reveals its definition?
- Can I create an art-based option that students could choose instead of another assignment?

-The Mozart Hook

- How can I use music to aid my presentation?
- What would be the perfect song or type of music to create the right mood and proper atmosphere?
- How can I use music to wrap up my lesson and send them out into the world in a positive and upbeat mood?
- Can I offer an alternative project that would allow my students with musical talents to be creative?
- Can I allow students to create songs/raps that demonstrate their understanding of the content as an alternative to essays and standard reports?
- Can students change the lyrics to popular songs to reflect course content (Think "Weird" Al Yankovic)?

-The Dance and Drama Hook

- Can I provide the opportunity for my students to do skits or appear in videos related to what we are learning?
- Can they learn and perform a relevant dance?
- Can some of the students teach a dance to the class?
- Can they impersonate key people from history in a panel discussion or interview format?
- Can they reenact historical events?
- Can they write a script and create a video to play for the class?

-The Craft Store Hook

- How can I incorporate a craft into this lesson?
- What can my students make that relates to this material?
- Is there an origami fold that I can teach to the class for this content?
- Can I provide some basic supplies such as craft sticks, pipe cleaners, and duct tape, give them an open-ended creative project, and turn them loose?
- Could there be craft skills my students already possess that could enhance my curriculum and simultaneously allow them the chance to be an expert for a day?

-The Student Hobby Hook

- How can I incorporate the hobbies and outside interests of my students into this material?
- Do I even know the hobbies and outside interests of my students, and if not, how can I find out?
- How can I harness the power of connecting my content to what students are already interested in?

-The Real World Application Hook

- How can I show my students why learning this content is important in the real world?
- How will they possibly apply this in their life?
- Can we increase motivation and engagement by offering reasons to learn that go beyond "because it's on the test?"
- Can they create something "real" that will be more than a classroom project but actually allows them to interact with the world in an authentic way?

-The Life-Changing Lesson Hook

- How can I use this lesson to deliver an inspirational message?

What type of life-changing lesson can be incorporated into the content?
What type of essential questions can I ask that allow students the opportunity for personal reflection and growth?

-The Student-Directed Hook

How can I provide opportunities for autonomy and choice in this unit/lesson?
Can I allow student interest and learning while still covering what we need to address?
How can I release some of my control and provide students the chance to be the experts and directors of this subject?

-The Opportunistic Hook

What current events are related to this lesson?
Is there a hot topic in the news or on campus that I can use to capture student interest?
What aspect of current pop culture can I tie into this material?
In what ways can I incorporate currently popular trends, fads, TV shows, and movies in order to make this relevant and engaging for my class?
Can I put intriguing images of current events on the walls with QR codes underneath that link to more information?

-The Interior Design Hook

How can I transform my room to create the ultimate atmosphere for this lesson?
Can I change the lighting for the mood?
Can I block out all light and just use accent lights to emphasize certain things?
Can I cover or decorate walls, the ceiling, or the floor?
Can I change the entrance so no one can see into class?
How can I rearrange the desks for this lesson to be most effective?
Can I create more space by removing desks?
Can I add partitions to break the room into areas or to create maze-like corridors?
If I were throwing a theme party at my house for this subject, what would I do?
If a theme park were opening up a new attraction based on my lesson, what would it include?

-The Board Message Hook

What can I write on my board or have projected on my screen that will immediately spark curiosity and interest as the students enter my room?
What type of message will create a buzz and provoke students to point it out and begin to talk to each other about it before the bell even rings?
What can I write that will be intriguing and mysterious and compel students to approach me and ask questions before we get started?
Can I just put a QR code on the board or screen and see what happens?
Can I have an intriguing image projected that will eventually tie into my content?

-The Costume Hook

What can I wear as an outfit or costume for this lesson?
Is there an existing character that I can impersonate?
Can I create a character that is relevant to this lesson?
Can I invent a superhero or super villain for this subject?
What accessory (something as small as a hat or glasses) can I wear to enhance my presentation?

-The Props Hook

What physical item can I bring in to add to my presentation?

What image can I show?

Instead of just talking about a book, can I bring it in?

Instead of just mentioning a person, can I show their picture?

What can I bring that students could actually hold in their hands and pass up and down the aisles?

-The Involved Audience Hook

How can I consistently keep the audience feeling involved?

Can I cue them to make certain motions or sounds at key points?

Can I incorporate call and response into this lesson?

Can I, unknown to their classmates, cue certain students to play a pre-arranged role?

Can I bring students to the front of the room as volunteers?

-The Mystery Bag Hook

How can I gain engagement by openly hiding something from the class?

Can I have a closed box or a package on the front table?

How can I build up the suspense of the unveiling?

Can I cut a hole into a box so that students reach inside and feel the contents but not see?

Can I give hints and open the floor for guesses?

What can I put into the mystery box or bag that would tie to my lesson?

After displaying the item, how can I get students to try to figure out the relationship between it and the lesson?

-The Storytelling Hook

What captivating story can I tell that would draw students into this lesson?

Can I create a high-interest story to fit the lesson?

What techniques of the master storytellers, such as dramatic build, can I use to enhance this presentation?

How would speaking in character, using accents, changing intonations, and varying volume for effect (even whispering) have an impact on the class?

How can I use facial expressions, dramatic pauses, and gestures to improve the power of my lecture?

-The Swimming With the Sharks Hook

How can I enter the audience and break down the barrier between teacher and class?

Can I participate in the activity?

Can I storm up and down the rows and use the whole room as my platform?

Can I enter the physical space of key areas in the room where attention is waning?

Is there a different place, or multiple places, that I can present from for the sake of novelty?

-The Taboo Hook

How can I use the fact that students are fascinated by that which is taboo and forbidden?

How can I position my topic so that it seems like a little-known secret?

How can I take advantage of the fact that students (and adults!) are intrigued by things they aren't supposed to hear?
Can I position my topic as if it is illicit, even though it isn't?

-The Mime Hook

How can I use the mesmerizing power of silence to spark interest and engage?
Can I use nothing but written messages to deliver my lesson or opening hook?
Can I use mime techniques and gestures to get my point across?
Can I incorporate charades and/or Pictionary-type activities?
Can students be asked to get their messages across without words, as well?

-The Teaser Hook

How can I spark interest in this lesson by promoting it ahead of time?
What can I do to create a positive expectancy in advance?
What aspect of this lesson can I tease beforehand to provoke curiosity?
If I were creating a movie trailer or preview for this lesson what would it include?
If I were planning a marketing promotion for this lesson what would I do and when would I begin?

-The Backwards Hook

How can I gain an advantage or increase interest by presenting this material out of sequence?
Can I tell them the end of the story and let them figure out and discover the beginning and middle?
Can I show them an end product that will make them want to learn the skills to get there?

-The Mission Impossible Hook

How can I design my lesson so that students are trying to unravel and solve a mystery?
How can I incorporate clues that can only be decoded by learning or researching the relevant subject? (Think *The Da Vinci Code* and *National Treasure*.)
Can they be provided a treasure map or sent on a scavenger hunt through your content?
What type of entertaining plot can I use as an overlay or backdrop for this unit?
What fictitious character or role can they play?
What crisis must they prevent?
Can I change this from a standard assignment to a daring and impossible mission?

-The Reality TV Hook

How can I design my lesson to take advantage of the popularity of reality TV?
Can I create a *Survivor*-style challenge and divide the class into tribes?
Can this be configured as an *Amazing Race* partner lesson?
How can I incorporate a *Fear Factor* type of challenge?

-The Techno Whiz Hook

How can I tap into the technological prowess of my students?
Can I give my students the option to create projects and turn in assignments digitally?
Can I create a paperless lesson, unit, or class?
How can this lesson benefit from the fact that many students have more computing power in their pockets and backpacks than I have in my class or lab?

How can I take advantage of the fact that most phones now have camera, video, and Internet capability?

How can I leverage the power of social media to empower my students to engage in their education beyond the standard school day?

How can technology be used to bridge gaps between school and the real world?

How can technology help to connect my students to people from all over the world and help them gain a global perspective?

-The Contest Hook

How can I include a contest in this lesson to build excitement and motivation?

What type of review game can I design to ramp up the entertainment level of my class?

What kind of in-class challenge can I create that would take advantage of their competitive instinct?

Can I be a part of the challenge or contest?

-The Magic and the Amazing Hook

What amazing principle can I demonstrate as part of this lesson?

Is there a magical effect that could help to deliver this message?

Can I teach my students an amazing skill that they will go home and show others?

-The Chef Hook

How can I enhance this lesson by adding food or drinks?

Can I cook something for the class?

What type of food would be a perfect match for this lesson?

How can I use food or drinks to demonstrate a point, serve as an incentive, or just help create a positive atmosphere for a special lesson?

-The Mnemonic Hook

Are there key bits of information I want my students to know cold?

Is there a pattern to point out?

Can the point of the lesson be tied to previous knowledge?

Does a mnemonic exist for the material?

Can I design my own mnemonic to help them remember this material?

Can the students create their own mnemonic?

How can I embed a mnemonic theme throughout my presentation to aid retention?

-The Extra Credit Challenge Hook

What high-interest and motivating challenges can I create that relate to this unit?

What intriguing mission can I send students on to allow them to extend their learning in a unique way?

How can I provide my students the opportunity for an experience that will create life-long memories?