

YOU'RE THE FIELD REPORTER #3

(Time Maximum)

Quality of Life around the World: Evaluative Arguments

Lesson Sketch

Skills: Students *define* quality of life; *establish criteria to measure* quality of life; *read* articles on the cultures, demographics, and governments of countries around the world; *compare and contrast* the quality of life of countries within a region; *present an evaluation* of which country within a region has the best quality of life; and *evaluate in writing* which country has the best quality of life overall.

Grades: 11–12

Time: Five 90-minute classes

Featured Resources: AtoZWorldCulture.com or AtoZtheWorld.com articles including Maps, Country Snapshot, Cultural Overview, The People, National Cuisine, Points of Interest, Language, Government, Economy and Trade, Religious Freedom, Human Rights Report, and Threats to Safety.

Inspirations

United Nations Human Development Report

The Economist Intelligence Unit Quality of Life Index

Lesson Overview

Students become sociologists, then travel journalists as they work together to define quality of life; determine how to measure it; read articles about different countries' cultures, demographics and governments to measure quality of life for various countries; identify which quality of life measurements are most salient in each country's case; evaluate which country has the highest quality of life overall; and present their arguments to the class. Along the way, students work both collaboratively and individually, presenting arguments verbally and in writing.

Lesson Steps

The teacher leads class discussion toward student consensus on a working definition of "quality of life" (QoL). The teacher leads class discussion toward a working list of criteria by which to measure QoL. The teacher directs students to browse AtoZWorldCulture.com or AtoZtheWorld.com articles to find those article categories that are likely to yield QoL data; students share promising article categories in class discussion. The teacher assists students in forming interest groups organized by region. In pairs, students pick neighboring countries to compare and contrast in terms of QoL. Each student researches QoL data within AtoZWorldCulture.com or AtoZtheWorld.com for one country; students report to their partners what they've found so far. Each student then prepares a verbal report arguing that her/his assigned country has better quality of life than the other. Students

present their reports to the class, with those working on neighboring countries presenting one after the other, in point-counterpoint style. Students take notes during other pairs' presentations in order to complete a written evaluation of which country has the best QoL overall.

Standards Met

1. **Common Core State Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects: College and Career Readiness Anchors for Reading**
 - a. Key Ideas and Details 1
 - b. Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 7
 - c. Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity 10
2. **Common Core State Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects: College and Career Readiness Anchors for Writing**
 - a. Text Types and Purposes 1, 2
 - b. Production and Distribution of Writing 4, 5, 6
 - c. Research to Build and Present Knowledge 7,8,9
 - d. Range of Writing 10
3. **Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts: College and Career Readiness Anchors for Reading**
 - a. Key Ideas and Details 1, 2
 - b. Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 7
 - c. Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity 10
4. **Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts: College and Career Readiness Anchors for Writing**
 - a. Text Types and Purposes 1, 2
 - b. Production and Distribution of Writing 4, 5, 6
 - c. Research to Build and Present Knowledge 7,8,9
 - d. Range of Writing 10
5. **Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts: College and Career Readiness Anchors for Speaking and Listening**
 - a. Comprehension and Collaboration 1, 2
 - b. Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas 4,6
6. **Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts: College and Career Readiness Anchors for Language**
 - a. Conventions of Standard English 1, 2
 - b. Knowledge of Language 3
 - c. Vocabulary Acquisition and Use 4, 6
7. **National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Standards for the English Language Arts**
 - a. 1, 3, 4, 7, 8
8. **National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies**
 - a. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

Supplies

- Computer access for each student
- Access to AtoZWorldCulture.com or AtoZtheWorld.com
- Access to supplemental online quality-of-life references like the United Nations Human Development Report

- Access to supplemental online language references like BBC Languages, Omniglot.com, and Forvo.com
- Access to supplemental online travel references like Gadling, BBC travel, and Lonely Planet
- Dictionaries
- Notebooks, pens, etc.
- Flashcards or other supplies for presentation notes
- Printer access

Instructional Plan

Student Objectives

Students will:

- Improve reading comprehension skills, note taking skills, abstract reasoning skills, speaking skills, and writing skills.
- Research independently, determining which sources are most likely to be helpful in addressing specific research questions.
- Recognize key pieces of information and share them with others in both verbal and written forms.
- Persuasively connect evidence to assertions.
- Practice taking notes, prewriting, drafting, and other preparatory strategies for writing; combine preparatory steps into finished presentations and essays.
- Increase geographic knowledge, geopolitical awareness, and awareness of global interconnectedness.
- Begin to develop a sense of which languages are spoken in what regions, and have a brief encounter with a language other than English.
- Become more sophisticated global citizens able to engage in dialogue with those different from themselves.

Session One

Teacher introduction

Introduction

- Introduce the idea of "quality of life," and the idea of measuring quality of life quantitatively and qualitatively.
- Ask students to brainstorm about what quality of life (QoL) might be, and how one might measure it.
- Consider taking students on an online tour of the United Nations Human Development Report and/or The Economist Intelligence Unit Quality of Life Index (the former being both more entertaining and easier to comprehend than the latter) to see examples of what researchers measure to assess QoL-related questions: access to education, access to healthcare, gender equity, and so on.

Defining terms

- In class discussion, ask students to refine their ideas of QoL until they achieve consensus regarding a working definition of QoL.
- Ask students to discuss toward consensus regarding a working set of criteria for measuring QoL. (If they are stumped, suggest a couple of starter measurements: physical items such as sufficient food or pleasant climate, and/or social items such as religious freedom.) Keep this list of QoL criteria visible on the board, or in a handout to students, or otherwise accessible as students read about countries and prepare their presentations and essays.

Seeking research sources

- Direct students to visit AtoZWorldCulture.com or AtoZtheWorld.com. Ask students to explore the site, looking at any country or countries, to discover which article series contain QoL-related information.
- If students are stumped, get them started by pointing out indicators such as those contained in the Religious Freedom reports, or the literacy rates noted in The People.
- Based on students' discoveries, generate a class list of QoL-related article series.

Setting expectations

- Establish that all readings, prewritings, and discussions are note taking/prewriting exercises toward a final verbal report and final essay assignment—if students complete all steps along the way, the final assignments will be a snap.

Inspiring curiosity

- Using a large wall map or other resource, get students thinking about which countries in the world they are curious to know more about.

Assigning research mission

- Direct students to organize themselves into pairs. Students who already know what region/s they are most interested in should seek out likeminded partners—pairs will be researching neighboring countries.
- Explain to students that they will:
 - Choose a region.
 - Choose two countries within that region.
 - Divide and conquer: each student will be the primary researcher for one country.
 - Read independently within articles for her/his assigned country and take notes on information pertinent to QoL criteria, whatever the class has determined those to be.
 - Gather with partners to share findings for assigned countries.
 - Present to the class an argument for why the assigned country has a higher QoL than the partner's assigned country, using evidence/information drawn from country articles for both countries.
 - Take notes during other students' presentations.
 - Write an argument declaring one country to have the highest QoL of all countries studied, offering evidence drawn from notes taken during other people's presentations.

Research with purpose

- Oversee students' efforts as they choose their two countries, read articles, and take preliminary notes on their countries' QoL data, using the class-generated list of QoL criteria.

- Students should gather notes on each criteria item on the list.

Session Two

Teacher introduction

Comparing notes with partners

- Oversee students' efforts as they present their findings to their partners.
 - According to teacher discretion, presenting findings might take the form of students walking each other through the salient points of the articles themselves, or presenting information from notes in the absence of the articles.
 - Remind students that they will make their presentations based on their own research and on their partner's research—they should be taking notes while their partners are sharing their findings.

Considering argument strategy

- Direct students to look over their notes and decide, considering the class's QoL criteria list, how they could make the case that their country has a higher QoL than their partner's country.
- For some countries, this will be a comparatively simple task.
 - For example, wealthier countries next door to poorer nations may be able to boast longer life expectancies, higher literacy rates, and other positive QoL indicators.
 - Students representing such countries can make their case successfully by giving listeners the impression that the evidence in favor of their countries is overwhelming. They should be thorough in making and presenting their list of all the evidence in favor of their assigned country.
- For some countries, this assignment will be more challenging.
 - Poorer countries next to wealthier nations, or wartime countries next to peaceful nations, will be particularly challenging to represent.
 - Students representing such countries can make their case successfully by focusing on the one or two things that their country really has going for it, and by making a convincing claim that those one or two positives are so strong that they overcome negative factors. For example, Suriname is poor in money, but rich in world culture and fusion cuisine. Therefore, a student representing Suriname might be arguing for the overwhelming QoL value of cultural diversity and innovative cooking.

Preparing presentations

- Ask partners to informally present their arguments to each other.
- What objections can partners make to each other's arguments?
- Ask partners to debate the matter, making notes about any points their partners bring up that they aren't sure how to address.

Persuading with logic and emotion

- Discuss with students the value of persuading with both logic and emotion. In class discussion, ask students to suggest potential logic-based and emotion-based responses to QoL-related information.

- For example, gender equity is associated with positive economic outcomes for communities, a logic-based argument; on the other hand, lack of gender equity is associated with domestic violence and other issues likely to provoke heartfelt responses. Therefore, a presenter could address the value of gender equity in terms appealing to both logic and emotion.
- Suggest to students that they include some information in their presentations designed to appeal to logic, and some designed to appeal to emotion. If the same piece of information can appeal to both logic and emotion, students should make sure to specifically address both categories of response in the way they present the information.

Revising presentations

- Direct students to return to the articles for their countries in order to a) fill in any holes in their arguments that their partners pointed out, b) look for any remaining QoL data that they might have missed, c) address both logic and emotion in their presentations.
- Direct students to prepare to make their arguments in five-minute presentations.

S e s s i o n T h r e e

Teacher introduction

Presenting to the class

- Remind students that they will write an essay based on the notes they take during other students' presentations. Consider asking students to discuss note taking strategy before presentations begin.

Transitioning to written persuasion

- Direct students to turn their case-making energies from verbal presentations to a written argument.
- Based on the notes students took during presentations, they will evaluate which country has the highest QoL overall, and make the case for the selected country to the reader.

Writing Assignment

- Written arguments will be five-paragraph essays in the style of travel articles.
 - Arguments will begin with enticing first lines that draw the reader in to learn more about the country.
 - After beginning with “hooks,” first paragraphs will offer context and background information as necessary to allow the reader to understand the essay's purpose and argument.
 - The argument's thesis will arrive around the end of the first paragraph.
 - The thesis will articulate the three most compelling reasons to crown the selected country as the highest QoL in the world.
 - The subsequent three paragraphs will review the three compelling points in greater detail, one point per paragraph, offering appeals to both logic and emotion.
 - The conclusion will summarize the argument, and leave the reader with something memorable and compelling to consider about the country.

- Throughout, the prose will be lively. Specific expectations for greater and lesser degrees of diction formality and/or stylistic freedom will vary according to teacher discretion.

Session Four

Teacher introduction

Model Articles

- With students, review some model travel articles online at Gadling, BBC travel, and/or Lonely Planet.
- Ask students to share some of the best opening lines they can find. For example, here's a good hook from a Lonely Planet Magazine article on Yellowstone:
 - "I sat there in amazement while my companions came up, and after that, it seemed to me that it was five minutes before anyone spoke.' So wrote Charles Cook in 1869, recording his expedition's dumbstruck arrival . . ."

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/magazine/2012/04/yellowstone-the-greatest-outdoors/>
- Ask students to identify in the articles some evidence for a writer's assertion that appeals to logic, and some evidence for a writer's assertion that appeals to emotion.

Outlining an evaluative argument

- Ask students to brainstorm five opening lines with which they might tempt readers to learn more about their preferred countries.
- Ask students to share their five potential hooks with an expanded peer-review group of four students.
 - Students should give each other feedback on which opening lines they find most enticing.
- From their verbal presentation notes, ask students to identify and highlight the top three reasons why their selected country has the highest QoL.
- From their verbal presentation notes, ask students to identify and highlight any additional compelling information that they might like to leave the reader with in a concluding paragraph.

Session Five

Teacher introduction

Drafting an evaluative argument

- Direct students to draft their essays.

Peer review

- Direct students to gather in groups of four.
- Review the value of and ground rules for constructive criticism.
- Direct students to read each other's essays, and make written notes in answer to the following questions, which they will then share verbally:
- How engaged are you by the essay's opening lines? How would you recommend making the article's hook more exciting?

- At what point in the first paragraph is the essay’s purpose and argument clear to you? If you were reading this article in a magazine, would you need to learn this information faster in order to be enticed to keep reading, instead of turning the page to look at the next article?
- What is your understanding of the writer’s three main arguments in favor of her/his chosen country having the highest QoL?
- Where does the writer use evidence appealing to logic, and where does the writer use evidence appealing to emotion?
- How convinced are you by the writer’s evidence? What could the writer do to make the argument more convincing to you, personally?
- How’s the conclusion? Does it summarize the argument successfully? Does it do more than summarize, and leave you thinking about some amazing, compelling fact about the country? If not, what do you recommend?

Revision

- Direct students to revise according to peer feedback.
- Discuss the possible dilemma of having received conflicting feedback from different readers. Explain to students that it is OK to overrule reader feedback—each writer must follow her/his own writerly instincts. That said, students should know that if more than one reader identified a specific place in the essay as a problem, whether or not they offered the same solution, the fact that one place in the essay is problematic for readers is probably significant—students should take a second look at this place in the prose.

Finish

- Direct students to turn in their essays and congratulate themselves on their forays into travel journalism.
- Consider asking students to complete a culminating reflective writing exercise in which they write address the following questions:
 - What have you learned that surprised you the most?
 - Do you want to travel more now than you did before, or less? Why?
 - Would they ever want to work as a sociologist or travel journalist? Why or why not?