

Introducing the Zettelkasten in Secondary ELA

Purpose

- Individual notes prioritize ideas over chronology, which...
 - makes information retrieval faster and more efficient
 - makes it easier to find connections between ideas, creating new ideas
- The zettelkasten is tool for keeping and organizing individual notes
- For my personal philosophy on why such tools are so important, you can read [my blog post here](#).

Material

- [“Zettelkasten Note-taking method: Simply Explained”](#) Shu Omi, YouTube
 - [Watch Guide](#) / [Answers](#)
- [Zettel template](#)

Method

- I. Before class
 - A. **NB:** It is best to introduce the zettelkasten shortly *after* you have already begun a unit and have defined some key terms or heuristics which the students will be using, eg, typical characters or tropes in fairy tales, characteristics of genres, etc.
 1. This way, Ss will be able to immediately make use of this tool to organize their thoughts about the unit’s information.
 2. More below in “II. D. Apply” and “III. After class”
 - B. Assign HW: Ask an adult 2 questions:
 1. How do you remember important information?
 2. How do you come up with new ideas?
- II. During class
 - A. Review HW to set context (small groups, whole groups, etc.)
 1. T highlight similarities and differences on board (groups can do this on own as well) for...
 - a) Chronology
 - b) Finding connections between ideas
 2. Turn to Ss → how do *they* take notes and come up with new ideas
 - a) Add to board

- B. First video viewing
 - 1. Ask Ss to find similarities/differences in what they learned from asking adults and/or sharing answers with the “zettelkasten” method in video
 - a) Play Shu Omi’s video
 - 2. Discuss what’s similar/different
 - C. Second video viewing
 - 1. Ss complete Watch guide (below)
 - a) Make clear Ss are able to watch more on own time – video title is on sheet
 - 2. Assign Ss to complete sheet for HW
 - D. Apply
 - 1. Summarize and Find importance: Ask Ss what they have learned about your current unit’s topic, eg, fairy tales what what *they think* is important about that information
 - a) Now, hand out zettel templates and have Ss record what they wrote
 - 2. Connect with personal experience:
 - a) Once Ss have made first zettel, ask them to see *themselves* in that content, eg,
 - (1) What fairy tale character-type are you like?
 - (2) Is your life more tragic or comic? How?
 - b) Write a new zettel connecting to the first one.
 - (1) They are now building a web of knowledge
- III. After class
- A. The zettelkasten is a tool which requires regular maintenance.
 - 1. Ss must be expected to turn their annotations into zettels, review their zettels for connections and questions, and ultimately work towards building a web of knowledge
 - 2. Ts should provide relevant prompts and time for Ss to both crystallize and connect with their knowledge
 - B. The zettelkasten allows every student to participate in a community of learners
 - 1. Ts can create activities for Ss to share their knowledge with each other, eg,
 - a) Knowledge scavenger hunts
 - b) Knowledge bingo
 - c) Speed-sharing
 - d) Hyper-connecting
 - C. The zettelkasten means that Ss never need to begin with a blank page
 - 1. Ts can create (or co-create with Ss) summative projects that enable Ss to use their zettelkastens productively

[Watch guide] “Zettelkasten Note-Taking Method: Simply Explained”

Shu Omi

<p>1/ This video is about the “zettelkasten,” a “knowledge management system.” <i>Before watching</i>, what do you think a “knowledge management system” is?</p>	<p>2/ What did the first zettelkasten look like? Ss have to infer based on footage -- it was wooden drawers with paper cards</p>
<p>3/ What 4 things did the zettelkasten allow Niklas Luhmann to do? @0:51: build web of knowledge; find connections among topics; retrieve right memory; develop ideas and arguments</p>	<p>4/ What is and is not important about permanent notes? Is not: writing as many as possible Is: add value to your existing knowledge, ideas, arguments, and discussions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting what you just learned to what you already know
<p>5/ What questions should you ask yourself as you take permanent notes? @2:50: How does this fit into what I already know? Can this be explained by something else? What does [this] mean for [another idea]? How can I use this idea to explain [something else I know]?</p>	<p>6/ Why are keywords important? @3:12: these will help you find your ideas (and new connections) later</p>

7/ Write the **4 steps** of maintaining a zettelkasten with some **important information** about each step.

<p>1/ Take literature notes</p>	<p>2/ Take reference note</p>	<p>3/ Make permanent notes</p>	<p>4/ Review and repeat</p>
<p>In your own words, write interesting ideas as reading -- keep it short!</p>	<p>Basically write what you're reading [teacher note: I don't have students do this]</p>	<p>These are how you build your "web of knowledge"</p>	<p>Look at what you wrote and ask questions. What would help you answer those questions?</p>

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Shu Omi

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3/ What 4 things did the zettelkasten allow Niklas Luhmann to do?	4/ What is and is not important about permanent notes?
5/ What questions should you ask yourself as you take permanent notes?	6/ Why are keywords important?

7/ Write the **4 steps** of maintaining a zettelkasten with some **important information** about each step.

1/	2/	3/	4/

zettel # _____

Keywords

What "big ideas" are you learning or thinking about?

Source

From whom or what text did you learn this?

Your ideas

What do you think? What's interesting? How can you use what you've learned in a new or different way?

Summary

What are the key ideas of what you've learned?

Connection (zettel number + how)

Look at your other zettels. How does this idea connect with your other ideas?

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