

TRAITORS, REALITY SHOW TURNED INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY

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Abstract

The Traitors (US) is a popular reality game show on Peacock. This show has over a million views per episode. The purpose is to not getting voted off or 'murdered' by a traitor. The group is split up between Faithfuls and Traitors, except no one knows who is what. The Faithful need to find and vote the Traitors off between they get murdered. If there is a Traitor(s) along the Faithfuls at the end the show then the Traitors will be receiving the whole prize. The concept of this show could be an engaging and effective instructional strategy. It requires all students to be actively engaged in the content along with knowledgeable of the content they are learning. It will challenge students strategic thinking regardless whether they are a Faithful or Traitor.

Keywords: *Instructional strategy, gameshow, strategic thinking, reality television, prizes.*

1. Introduction

Teachers are constantly tasked with teaching the content in a engaging and effective way. Often times, teachers struggle to hold a student's attention span. This creates a need for innovative instruction. It can be difficult to constantly think of new ideas to hold student's attention and teach for mastery. The solution to that is to look at reality television shows. Reality television has become a huge part of society and some form of show is played on almost network and streaming platform. Teachers can take some of those concepts are apply it to an instructional strategy.

Before creating an instructional strategy, teachers need to have an understanding and data to show students' academic knowledge. This knowledge helps the teacher create the appropriate instructional strategy (McLeod, Fisher, & Hoover, 2003). Knowing student's interests, strengths, and weaknesses are critical part of the creation process. Teachers can implement an engaging instructional strategy but not targeting the appropriate content level could result in students not learning the content. Vice versa, the instructional strategy could be at the appropriate content level but it is engaging, resulting in the lack of mastery.

Traitors (US) is currently a popular reality television show. By implementing these concepts in an instructional strategy is will help create engage students in the content. This paper will explore the various methods for implementing Traitors for different content situations.

2. Instructional strategies

Instructional strategies are at the forefront on K-12 education. Teachers have a list or bag of instructional strategies they use to teach the content. Gropper (1974) explains an instructional strategy refers to prescriptive rules for designing instructional events that results in learning experiences. These learning experiences are used to enact behaviors to create mastery of the content. Teacher need to implement the instructional strategies that will advance students to a higher level of mastery (McLeod, Fisher, & Hoover, 2003). It is imperative that instructional strategy selected helps students learn and master the content being taught.

Traditionally teachers select an instructional strategy when they have the standard(s), central focus, learning objectives, and desired behaviors (Bannan, Dabbagh, & Walcutt, 2020). Ultimately, the teacher knows what material students need to know, at what level they need to learn, and how the students will learn the material. The instructional strategy can differ based on whether the teacher wants students to work in group, pairs, whole class, or individual. Those are all important for how a student will learn the content for select an appropriate instructional strategy.

Instructional strategies are used for a planned block of instruction, learning strategies are used to improve knowledge, skills, and experience. Instructional and learning strategies mirror each other (Bannan, Dabbagh, & Walcutt, 2020). The teacher will need to consider how they will teach the content and how students will learn. One can't happen without the other. Strategies for meaningful learning include collaborative, conversational, authentic, reflective, goal-directed, and active (Bannan, Dabbagh, & Walcutt, 2020).

Finnan (2009) found students experience success when they are actively engaged in their learning. This results in implementing active instructional strategies. Active learning includes activities which require students to do things and think about the things they are doing. The elements of active learning include thinking critically, collaborating, giving and receiving feedback, and reflecting upon the learning experience (Bonwell & Elson, 1991). Therefore, instructional strategies with active engagement increase content knowledge and mastery.

3. Traitors

Reality television is a common household show in the 21st century. Collins English Dictionary (2024) defines reality television as a type of programming which show how people behave in everyday life, or in situations. These shows can be cited back to as early as the 1940s with the show, Candid Camera (Rosenfeld, 2024). Throughout the years there has been a wide amount of various reality television shows, featuring games shows, living situations, survival dating, in the life of, etc. Reality television shows are growing exponentially each year. In January 2024, the reality television show, The Traitors (US) took the nation by storm.

The reality program began with the Dutch show De Verraders in 2021. De Verraders is Dutch for 'The Traitors'. The popularity of the Dutch show resulted in the The Traitors UK, following the year of its founders' debut. Following the success of the UK version The Traitors US began in 2023. The Traitors (US) is streaming on Peacock. Season two of The Traitors (US) began streaming in 2024. The show became wildly popular. The first week the show charted on the Nielsen streaming charts with 384 million views (Power, 2024).

The Traitors includes a cast of 20 members. Each cast member is a Traitor or Faithful. There are about 1-3 active Traitors on the game at all times. The goal of a Traitor is to remain undetected from the Faithfuls. While the Faithfuls goal is to eliminate the Traitors. There are round tables throughout the show allowing the whole cast to banish a someone. The Traitors are also allowed to collaborate to 'murder' a Faithful each night. If a Traitor makes it to the end of the show then they will win all the prize money. However, if all the Traitors are eliminated then the Faithfuls will split the prize.

3.1. Traitors as an instructional strategy

The Traitors is a popular reality show that shows little connection to the K12 classroom. However, the design of the game show can be applied to the classroom as an engaging and effective instructional strategy. As an instructional strategy, the teacher selects the Traitors before the class begins so the students know they are Traitors before they walk into class. The remainder of the class will be Faithfuls. During class, the Traitors have the goal is to not get caught giving the wrong information. However, they can also give correct information to throw the Faithfuls off of their trail. At the end of the class, the whole class will vote on who the traitors are. If the majority is correct then the Faithfuls will receive a prize, even if one Traitor makes it through the vote then that Traitor will receive the whole prize or it will be split among the other traitors. This instructional strategy can be implemented a few different ways. Below I will explore a few different implementation options.

3.2. Implementation for learning new content

When teaching new content, you can implement the Traitors instructional strategy by offering a flipped learning option for the Traitors. The students selected as Traitors will be required to learn the content before class. These students will need to be self-motivated and independent learners. Without creating more work for the Teacher, assign the Traitors videos of the instruction through Teacher tube, Khan Academy, etc. Students will learn the basic concepts of the new content. During the lesson, the Traitors are still learning amongst the Faithfuls however, they can distinguish what is and is not correct at a basic level. In order for this method to be effective, the lesson has to have multiple opportunities for students to work together and practice the content. The Faithfuls are tasked with learning the new content but also recognizing false information.

3.3. Implementation for reviewing content

When reviewing content, the Traitors need to be selected before the class begins but not too far in advance or you run the possibility of students telling each other. Reviewing content can be done in a whole group or small groups. If your classroom is reviewing the content as a whole group then you will need 4 students selected as Traitors for a class of 30 students. Questions will need to be interactive, providing students with an opportunity to collaborate together to use the content knowledge. There will need to be situations for students to work together with continuous different students. All Faithfuls will need the opportunity to work with all Traitors at least once. For whole group, all students will vote on the Traitors. The number of Traitors should be shared at the beginning of class. If the class successfully votes all the Traitors, then they will receive a prize. However, if a Traitor remains then they receive the whole prize or split the prize among the remaining Traitors.

If your classroom is reviewing content in small groups then you will need to select a Traitor for each group. The groups need to consist of at least 4 students, it is suggested to have an odd number for voting purposes. The group work needs to consist of students working together to practice and use the content. For small group, the group members will vote on the Traitor. Each group that successfully votes a Traitor will receive a prize and if every group successfully votes a Traitor then the whole class will receive a prize.

3.4. Implementation for a unit

This instructional strategy could be used for a unit or learning segment. This implementation would closely mirror the reality show. There are three students selected as Traitors, however they cannot know who the other Traitors are. At the end of the class period the whole class will vote on the Traitor (like a banishment). If a Traitor is banished then that student will become a Faithful. The Teacher will then select a new Traitor to be added to the group of Traitors, resulting in three Traitors every class. The prize system will work differently for the unit. If a Traitor is banished that class period then the Faithfuls will receive the prize. Each Traitor that makes it through the class period will receive a prize. The final day of the unit the class will need to vote on all three Traitors. If they get it correct then the class will receive the ultimate prize, if they not they the Traitors will receive it.

3.5. Prizes

Prizes are the essential part for this instructional strategy. Prizes are a high motivation for students. It increases extrinsic motivation and enhances learning (Sternberg & Baalsrud-Hauge, 2015). Earning a prize for something is considered extrinsic motivation. Students learning essentially depends on motivation. Motivation is defined as the act or process of motivating; the condition of being motivating; a motivating force, stimulus, or influence; incentive; drive; something (such as a need or desire) that causes a person or student to act (Merriam-Webster, 1997).

The prize students are aiming to receive needs to be motivational for both a Faithful and Traitor. By having an appealing prize, it motivates the Faithfuls to seek out the Traitors and it motivates the Traitors to keep the secret that they are a Traitor throughout the class. This could be candy, food, extra points, test exemption, etc. In order to make the prize appealing the Teacher must know what will motivates the students and ultimately their interests.

3.6. Benefits

This instructional strategy relies on the mastery of the content. Traitors can not successfully be a Traitor without knowing what is correct and incorrect. Reservedly, the Faithfuls can not successfully select the Traitor without knowing the correct and incorrect content knowledge. This will require students to fully understand the content in order to recognize the misinformation given. By students examining the possibility of errors they are using problem-solving techniques, reflective upon their work, provide justification among their arguments and can communicate ideas (Borasi, 1994). This instructional strategy is providing opportunities for students to think critically about the content. Students need to be continuously suspicious of other students answers and think about their own knowledge to confidently select misinformation.

4. Conclusion

Traitors can be implemented in various ways, new content, reviewing, and throughout a whole unit. Students have to be vigilant of other students. They need to be confident in their knowledge and be able to decipher the incorrect content to select the Traitor. This requires students to be constantly reflective upon their own learning. In addition, Traitors need to be able mastery the content in order to

share misinformation. They will have to logically distinguish the difference between correct and incorrect information constantly throughout the lesson or unit to be a successful Traitor.

The next steps are to conduct case studies on various implementations. These studies will show the successful implementation, the motivational prizes, and the level mastery of student success.

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