

Amazing People Library

Inspirational Learning



The Amazing People Library Program Toolkit

From podcasts to role-play, from hot-seating to balloon debates, Amazing People Club resources lend themselves brilliantly to active engagement strategies. Our Amazing People Library Program Toolkit is full of inviting activities to inspire and enhance services and programs at your library.

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All of these strategies can be used successfully with any of our featured biographies or BioViews® to actively engage patrons in learning about the lives of an extensive range of the world's most amazing people – William Shakespeare, Marie Curie, Albert Einstein, Walt Disney, Michelangelo, Frederick Douglass, and hundreds more. Critical thinking and logic are fundamental building blocks of each activity and encourage program participants to interpret, question, speculate, and justify through co-operative group work.

(This kit has been authored by Penny Alexander - a Secondary School Drama Teacher and former Head of Media and Film Studies. She has trained educators across all subjects in the use of Active Engagement strategies.)

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Amazing Starters

60 Second Challenge

Participants write down everything they can already think of to do with the amazing person.

Verbal Tennis

Divide the group into two teams who then take it in turns to say a word associated with the amazing person. No word can be repeated. The game can be scored as in tennis or football.

Post-It Note On The Head

Participants work out who the amazing person written on their Post-it note is by, asking yes/no questions of their neighbour.

Taboo

Describe a famous person to a partner without saying the taboo words e.g. their name and occupation.

Welcome To My World

Playing a BioView® as patrons arrive for the program can be a powerful way to get them thinking about what the program will be. Write a key question or simply Who, What, When, Where, Why on the board.

Set The Amazing Scene

Lay out props or costume suggesting the amazing person for patrons to consider as they arrive for the program, actively engaging them in questioning from the beginning. It could be Newton's apple, Coco Chanel's perfume or handbag, Alexander Graham Bell's telephone...

Who might they have belonged to? Why they are here? What they are for? Where did they come from? When were they used?

Tune In

There are lots of great ways to help participants 'tune in' to a BioView®. Ask them to close their eyes and take some deep breaths. Let your voice calm and quieten as you narrate the BioView® while they listen. Describing where the BioView® might be taking place on a sensory level can be really powerful.

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To help them focus, ask participants to pull out key moments, facts, or questions to share with the group, or give pairs or small groups a focus question to discuss and offer feedback on, after listening.

Pairs Discussion BioView® Clip

In pairs discuss: What do I already know? What did I learn from the BioView®? What do I want to find out?

Bingo

Participants listen for key words in the BioView® and mark off on a card.

Word Cloud

To open up a theme or issue ask everyone to quickly say one word that comes to mind after listening. Create a word cloud on the board to reflect on as the program goes on.

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Main Activities

On The Amazing Hot seat

Putting the library program leader on the hot seat in the guise of an amazing person can be incredibly powerful. Some program participants may also be keen to take on being hot seated by the group.

Hot seating tips:

- Explore possible questioning lines beforehand as a group.
- Focus on a key dramatic moment in time.
- Make it clear that the participants are responsible for making the guest welcome and addressing them as a guest in the room. If they take responsibility for this, the librarian can promise to concentrate on really bringing the character to life for them.
- Signal you are going into role. E.g. a countdown before sitting down in the hot seat or re-entering the space.
- There's no need to put on an accent or act, unless you feel completely comfortable doing so, in which case it's worth warning participants you will do this. Often simple changes to your body language, the tone and pace of your voice can quickly and effectively signal, you are someone else without provoking giggles.
- A simple prop or small piece of costume can also help to signal you are another character.
- If you don't know the answer, change the subject, ask them why they want to know, say no comment, or say pause, step out of role to double check and count back into role.
- Pause the questioning if anyone loses concentration, refocus and then count down again.

Amazing Interviews

Once they know the amazing person a little better, participants can also work in pairs and take it in turns to hot seat each other. Counting down or starting with a still image or focusing on a dramatic moment from the BioView® helps with engagement here. Participants can use the 'pause button' if they get stuck.

Putting participants 'in role' as journalists or TV researchers can help deepen the interview. Interviews Educational, Engaging, Entertaining - Meet Amazing People at www.amazingpeoplelibrary.com



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can be recorded as podcasts or videos or turned into newspaper articles.

Amazing Still Image

Ask participants to crystallize a key moment or moments within a BioView®. These are also sometimes referred to as tableaux, freeze frames, living pictures or frozen pictures. Still image tips:

- Encourage participants to use facial expressions, different levels and gestures.
- Ask them to use space carefully so everyone can be seen.
- Give them a tight time limit and count them down to freeze.
- Still images can work in groups, pairs, individually or as a whole class.
- They can be used to summarize learning.
- Still images can be interesting if 'framed' by the librarian as newspaper photographs, paintings, sculptures or monuments, or what another character witnessed.
- They can be used to quickly decide upon the casting and agree the start, middle and end point for a role play.
- The group could be asked to bring their images to life spontaneously for a 20 second burst. Participants could then sit down and one or two of them could 'spotlight' or replay their scene to the group.

Writing In Role

Ask participants to write as the amazing person, in a letter or diary entry.

- Give the document a very tight focus and discuss the character's aims and feelings first.
- To allow their subconscious minds to really flow, put a tight time limit on the task and tell pupils not to worry about neatness, spellings, grammar and layout.
- Narrating participants into role, before they write, can be really helpful.
- Don't forget social media. What if this person could have sent a text, tweet, facebook update or written a blog post at a key moment? What would they have said?

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Narration

Librarian narrates the participants into a situation they are about to role-play, write about, or imagine. Describe the setting using all the senses and use pace, volume, and tone of voice, to help set the scene.

Amazing News Report

Participants share a section of the BioView® as a radio or television news report. Tips:

- Discuss the conventions they might use beforehand. E.g. reporter in studio, reporter on location, studio interview, action clip or replay, voiceover, vox pops.
- Agree a basic structure, e.g. reporter in studio, THEN reporter on location interviewing, THEN action replay with voiceover.
- Designate a 'screening' area when participants perform using chairs or tables as markers.

These could be recorded to allow participants to evaluate their work on a particular issue or event.

Podcasting

Amazing People BioViews® can be a powerful way to inspire participants to use their own voice, whether it's to record an interview or radio show around a character, to speak in role as an amazing person, to give their opinion on an amazing person, or to make their own lessons or resources for other participants to use in the future.

Podcasts are a great way to share library programs with parents, caregivers, and other educators and participants. With careful planning and a little editing, valuable and engaging resources can be created. Librarians can create revision podcasts or resources to use each time a new Amazing character is introduced. Like BioViews®, podcasts communicate quickly and effectively, freeing up more time in a program.

Librarian In Role/Whole Group Role Play/Simulation

Press conferences, meetings, court rooms, debates, and community gatherings can all be explored as whole group role play. They are most useful when the participants are feeling confident with the amazing person and the issues they have raised. Tips:

- Question what the room/space you are meeting in looks/smells/feels like.

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- Ask your participants how you could rearrange the room to make the role-play believable.
- Question how the participants would behave.
- Consider using prompt cards and allowing participants time to prepare arguments in pairs or small groups in advance.
- Start with a still image and ask participants to show their character through facial expressions, and body language to help build belief.
- Choose a role that will allow you to control the drama from within. Low status roles can also be very powerful if ground rules are agreed beforehand, particularly if a more willing participant leads in and introduces the 'character' to the rest of the group.

Amazing Role-Play

Role play can be spontaneous or rehearsed, although very often a 30 second burst of spontaneous role play that comes out of a focused still image, is much more powerful than a scene that is rehearsed.

- Pairs –Divide the group into A's and B's, and brief them as characters separately to explore a difficult, emotional or tense moment in an amazing person's life. Give the group who isn't being briefed questions to discuss while you attend to the other group. Role play cards are another way to brief different characters. Pairs are also great for TV or newspaper interviews. Count participants down into role and use a still image to help them focus on being a different character.
- Small groups - Using still images (see above) as a tool to structure role play can be a way to illuminate a key moment in an amazing person's life, without losing the accuracy of historical events. Be careful to ensure there are enough characters for everyone in the group when determining number of program attendees.

Amazing People Balloon Debate

Balloon debates are an exciting way to debate the skills, influence and inspirational qualities of Amazing People. Balloon debates can work as a whole group where individuals, pairs, or small groups can be allocated different characters to 'defend'. Librarian in role as the owner of the balloon can help to steer and prompt debate and add tension.

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Alternatively, for older participants or groups who are more familiar with the amazing people involved, balloon debates can happen in small groups with a presentation in order to feedback on the decisions made. Role cards based on the BioViews® can help participants prepare.

Participants are told - *You are in a hot air balloon that is losing height rapidly and therefore you need to lose some weight. In what order do you throw people out and why?*

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Amazing Plenaries

Finish the program in a way they will remember next time they see you...

Just A Minute

Participants talk on a topic without hesitation for a minute.

Vox Pops

Pairs have 30 seconds to interview each other about their feelings on the amazing person or the theme or issue they have raised.

Whole Group Still Image

The participants make a 'monument' in recognition of the key moments or achievements in the amazing person's life.

Word Cloud

Participants write down all the words they associate with today's program.

Timeline

Participants create a timeline of events. This could be a physical time line of images or people, a washing line across the library, a line on the a white board, post-it notes on the wall, or an individual timeline in participants' own notebooks.

Character Summary

Summarize the amazing person in five bullets, or with words inside a character shaped outline.

Statements

Compose two statements to explain what we have learned about this amazing person and how we have learned it.

Social Media

Write a text, tweet or status update this character would send (if they were alive today or had one last message to send). These could be collected on post-it notes and used to start the next program.

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Epitaph

Write the amazing person's epitaph.

Book Jacket

Write the blurb for a book about this person's life.

Hot Seat The Group

Ask questions of the whole group in role. When did you? Why did you? What made you?

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