

The Versatility of the Y Chart

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The Y Chart Analyser

Teachers have been using the Y Chart as an effective tool in the classroom for many years. Essentially it serves as an analytical tool since students and teachers strive to discover more and more about a topic using the sensate approach of what does this topic Look, Sound and Feel like (and even taste and smell and move like). It is usually completed as a pre-product stage or a brainstorm exercise from which one can start creating a product such as a written report, bubble maps, Power points, interviews and more.

Some basic considerations to encourage students to get more out of the Y Chart are as follows. The examples are taken from people abandoning a sinking ship torpedoed in a war.

Looks Like:

Encourage them to start with the concrete, the obvious, what ever is easy to see or imagine as a visual. Then encourage them to look for ideas and more abstract images. Ask them to imagine what it looks like before, during and after the event being examined or what is behind the issue. For example, in discussing a rude shop assistant (looks rude), one could also 'see' poor management, no training, a monopoly with no concern for customer satisfaction, an unhappy or unwell shop assistant. In other words, ask them to look beyond and below the obvious. In the Abandon Ship scenario, examples are, people scrambling desperately, listing ship, lightning, burning oil on water, lifeboats bobbing in sea, desperation on faces, chaos, fear, flotsam

Sounds Like:

Too often students are limited to recording actual sounds related to an event, such as thunder and lightning sounds in a storm. To get more out of your students, ask them to record what was actually said or what they could imagine people saying, and allowing for some artistic license, ask them to imagine what people would say to themselves, i.e. the internal dialogue. Use as many speech marks as possible. Examples could be cries for help, "who will save us?", "we are in trouble", "hurry, swim to the life boat" burning ship, gurgling boilers, hissing steam.

Feels Like:

This is clearly the zone for tactile and kinaesthetic imagination and expression. However, ask them to be 'in the zone', empathetic as if they were there, and ask them to record how people would also feel emotionally. Examples could be desperation, fear, oily water, freezing cold water, pounding heart, hopelessness etc

However, the Y Chart is far more versatile than a simple analytical tool!

This article will explore how to add value to the Y Chart, making it far more useful in the daily classroom. It will introduce greater breadth and depth and explain how it can be used for Analysis, Evaluation and Design-type activities

One value-adding idea is to examine the completed Y chart on the white board, ask students to use a **Think:Pair:Share** (**Think** on your own for a set time, let's say for 1 minute, then **Pair** up with the person next to you in order to swap notes and see if you can generate more ideas or insights, then each pair **Shares** this with the teacher) in order to detect categories of responses. For example, if this was a Y Chart dealing with an examination of the recent school camp, students are likely to detect categories such as 'team work', 'physical activities', 'self-esteem', 'environmental issues', 'organizational matters', 'transport' etc. Once these categories have been established, students can then be asked to classify the numerous entries on the Y Chart under each of the categories. The result is that students have reorganized the myriad entries into a manageable structure.

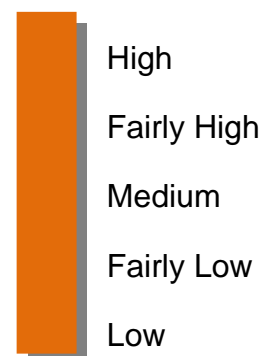
For example, under Physical Activities, one may find ropes course, canoeing, cross-country running, and many more. Once each of the categories has had the various entries assigned to them, students are in a much better position to write their reports. However, the danger is that this may become simply a list in the end and though this has given more Breadth to the analysis, there is no real depth.

This now offers an opportunity for more in-depth analysis before starting on the final product. Another way to add value to the Y Chart is to ask students to examine each category in turn, say 'Physical Activities' and to use a Pros and Cons T chart for each entry in that category. Let's say that the Pros and Cons examination reveals that most of the events were seen as very positive (Pros) with few negatives (Cons), the student would now be in a position to offer a more in-depth paragraph or chapter on that category. This can now be repeated for each category, allowing students to offer a far more substantive report or product.

School Camp		
Physical Activities	Pros	Cons
Ropes Course	Great coaches, fun, every day, greater challenges, safe	Sometimes windy
Canoeing	Plenty of canoes, good training, learnt new skills, good competition, exciting water	Sometimes a bit cold
Cross Country Runs	Realistic, great scenery, different tracks,	None
Orienteering	Great fun, learnt new skills, team work	Not enough compasses at times

The Y Chart Evaluator

The Y Chart can also be used as an **Evaluation** or **Assessment** tool as per Bloom's Taxonomy of the Cognitive Domain. The students can look at each entry in the Pros and Cons T Chart and then employ the **Extent Barometer**



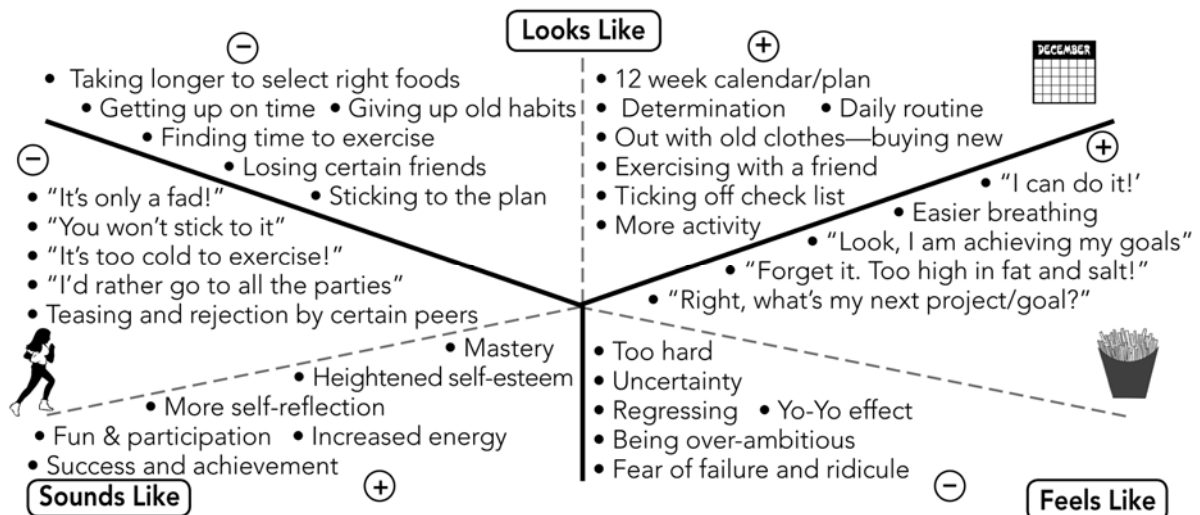
If all or most of the entries in Physical Activity are positive, it is likely that the result would be Very High. This can be marked as a horizontal line on that Extent Barometer. This exercise can be repeated for each category. If all or most of the categories reflect a High rating, then it is clear that the student can conclude that this was indeed an excellent school camp.

The Y Chart Designer

To further display the versatility of the Y Chart, it can also be used as a **Design** tool in that the student could ask, “**What could a wonderful school camp Look Like, Sound Like and Feel Like?**”. In this case, we would use the Y chart to plan an even better camp next time, especially if we have the material from the Analytical Y Chart **Analysier** and the **Y Chart Evaluator**. Here we would be looking at the Cons and deciding how we could remove or minimise the Cons in this year's school camp to ensure greater success in the future.

The Split Y Chart

To add even more value to the Y Chart, we have developed the **Split Y Chart** which gives greater substance to the Analysis, Evaluation or Design. In the Example below which is used in the 2009 editions of the Innovative Teachers' Companions (www.itcpublications.com.au), both primary and secondary versions, the split used is Possible Success and Possible Failure when thinking more deeply about a Personal Health Plan. In the example below, it is clear that the students have decided which ideas deal with Possible Failure (the – sign) and Possible Success (the + sign). The result is a far more balanced analysis



From this point, students can use the ideas in the earlier part of the article to discern categories and classify this information, then employ the Pros and Cons T Chart and then the Extent Barometer to determine their possible chances of succeeding in the quest for a personal health plan.

Other splits could be safe-unsafe, healthy-unhealthy, sustainable-unsustainable, fair-unfair, ethical-unethical, legal-illegal, practical-impractical, fact-opinion and so on.

Conclusion

If you haven't used the Y Chart for a while, it may be time to pick it up again, dust it off and try some of the ideas above. What is certain, it is student-centred and simple, leading to student product and hopefully a sense of ownership and greater motivation.

This strategy and many others are to be found in the 2009 editions of both the primary and secondary Teachers' Innovative Companion, teacher diaries containing hundreds of practical ideas for the classroom. For details where to order this in New Zealand and Australia, please go to www.itcpublications.com.au.