

RELEVANCY EXAMINATIONS

AKA: RELEVANT CONNECTIONS

Students are to draw meaningful (relevant) connections between two or more terms in an academic subject area and do so in a limited space (a specified number of lines of paper).

Among the many advantages of this type of question is that it stresses the “engineering” of education: the combining of major ideas with the strategic proof of the subject matter.

It allows a compromise between pure essay examinations, while avoiding possible weaknesses of objective examinations. A student cannot turn a wheel without knowing the material then is called upon to use the knowledge...to think logically and consider options.

Other advantages: a range of “good answers”; there is no one correct connection, although the instructor should have at least one valid link in mind as a take-off point. Especially alert students will be intrigued by an obscure tandem designed to challenge their mental agility and imagination. On the other hand, a struggling or emerging student, given options to choose from, can feel they contributed something by crediting them with points for the identification of the terms even if they struggle to find a meaningful connection.

The system avoids the deadening effect on the grader that comes from all students writing on the same essay question or two. The system is also flexible in regard to timing since the number of required relevancies (relevant connections) can be expanded or contracted easily.

A further variation can be achieved through the use of “off-the-cuff” relevancies (relevant connections) in class for review or discussions. If one or two students seem to dominate the discussion, groups of three to five students can be organized to come up with collective answers. Competition among groups can be encouraged by allowing some of them to work the same relevancies while the rest of the class judges. Some good class discussion may follow small groups when one group “knows” it has the best answer is challenged by another group with different emphasis.

It may take some practice to develop the reasoning skills, so it is wise to “I do, we do, you do” a few examples before embarking on a full-fledged program. Following the first exam, examples can be read/shown to the class, allowing them to point out why some answers reflect more insight and information than others. A connection between Hamilton and Jefferson that discusses the role of the economy in government might be judged to be a better connection than one that simply notes both men served in Washington’s Cabinet.

In constructing the exam – it forces the teacher to be reflective as to what are the most important aspects of a subject that students should “know”. Relevant connections planned using the backward design model are usually the most successful.

Here are a few ideas that allow for variety in the method in class:

Using the terms from the columns below, select one term from **Column A** and one term from **Column B** and find the *relevant connection between the terms*. Each relevant connection should be no more than twelve to fourteen (12-14) lines of paper [no more than half sheet of lined paper]. Each term chosen should be correctly identified and the answer should discuss how the terms relate to each other and to the Mexican Revolution. You may use each term only one (1) time. You will complete a total of **two (2) relevant connections**.

Column A

Francisco Madero
Emiliano Zapata
Diego Rivera
Constitution of 1917

Column B

Plan of Ayala
corridos
Soldaderas
Porfirio Diaz

From each set of three terms, select any **two** terms and find the *relevant connection between the terms*. Each relevant connection should be no more than twelve to fourteen (12-14) lines of paper [no more than half sheet of lined paper]. You will complete a total of **two (2) relevant connections**.

Francisco I. Madero
Pancho Villa
Porfirio Diaz

The Constitution of 1917
Venustiano Carranza
Alvaro Obregon

Punitive Expedition
Christero Rebellion
Lazaro Cardenas

Create a *relevant connection* between any **two** of the following sets of terms. Each relevant connection should be no more than eight to ten (8-10) lines of paper.

Abraham and Islam
Vedas and Hinduism
Old Testament and Protestant Reformation
Martin Luther and Christianity
Dali Lama and Buddha

From the following list of terms, select any **three** terms and find the *relevant connection between the three terms.* Each relevant connection should be no more than twelve to fourteen (12-14) lines of paper [no more than half sheet of lined paper]. You may use each term only one (1) time. You will complete a total of **two (2) relevant connections** and have two terms left over to discard.

Martin Luther King Jr.

Malcolm X

Civil Rights Act of 1964

Brown v. Board of Education 1954

Letter from a Birmingham Jail

Black Panther Movement

March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom

Freedom Summer 1964