dy/dan

less helpful

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#anyqs

Posted in anyqs on May 5th, 2011 51 Comments »

I was working with Wisconsin's math teachers this afternoon, making the case that good storytelling is a first cousin to good math instruction. I challenged them at the end:

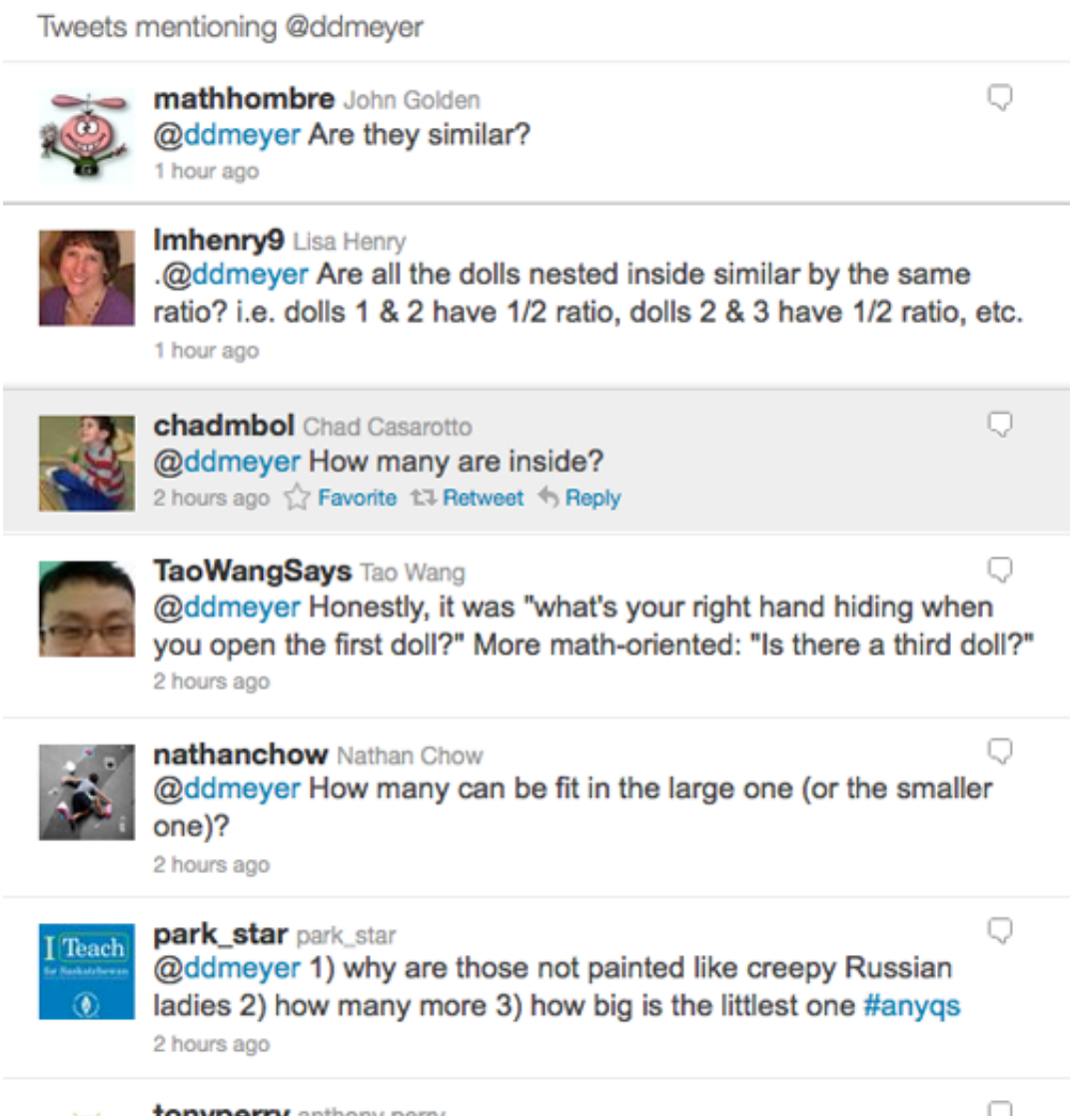
> Give yourself one photo or one minute of video to tell a mathematical story so perplexing that all of your students will want to know the ending, without you saying a word or lifting a finger.

I'm talking about photos and video that provoke a vast majority of your class to wonder the same question without any explicit prompting. For instance, minutes before the presentation began, I tweeted:

> Dear Twitter: what's the first question that comes to mind? http://vimeo.com/23242866 #anyqs

[anyq] Stacking Dolls from Dan Meyer on Vimeo.

In the last minutes of my presentation — nervous as hell — I showed the group my Twitter feed. Here's what we saw:



This kind of user feedback is invaluable. The results are mixed. There is a degree of consensus around one question but I still may head back to the drawing board to reshoot the problem in a way that makes "How many are there?" the most natural, perplexing question to ask.

So I'm pitching the same challenge to you. I have my hawk eyes on the #anyqs hashtag and I can promise you'll get a question from me, at the very least.

PS:

You know which group of students seriously *doesn't* hate it when you pose intriguing mathematical questions *without words*? English language learners. I know it's some kind of cliché to say that a picture is worth a thousand words, but seriously: the more scene-setting you can embed in a photo or video the better for everybody.

PPS:

Consider how bizarre the #anyqs challenge would appear to your textbook's publisher. They work in a world where it's totally normal to take some cheap clip art or stock photography and ask a question about it that would occur naturally to *nobody else in the world*. I'm challenging you to flip every aspect of that around.

2011 Dec 01. Essential follow-up reading. Don't try to get your students to guess the question in your head.

« Prev

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Categories

- 3acts (21)
- anecdotes (80)
- anyqs (21)
- assessment (34)
- classroom management (45)
- conferences (57)
- contest (37)
  - four slide sales pitch (14)
  - mtt2k (1)
  - my annual report (20)
- design (232)
  - digital instruction (76)
  - digital storytelling (19)
  - information design (49)
  - keynotecamp (1)
  - presentation (28)
  - redesigned (12)
- dissent (4)
- guest blogger (9)
- help wanted (2)
- howto (2)

- interview (3)
- itgotaway (3)
- lessons (86)
  - advisory (1)
  - algebra (37)
  - ela (9)
  - geometry (29)
  - review activities (4)
  - science (4)
  - social studies (3)
  - vapa (4)
- loa (7)
- mailbag (19)
- new teacher lab (6)
- ontheroad (4)
- pseudocontextsaturday (29)
- series (133)
  - design for educators (3)
  - dy/av (20)
  - how i work (6)
  - how to present (7)
  - what can you do with this? (99)
- show and tell (30)
- tech contrarianism (85)
- tech enthusiasm (61)
- uncategorized (361)

Archives

- August 2012 (9)
- July 2012 (10)
- June 2012 (9)
- May 2012 (16)
- April 2012 (13)
- March 2012 (10)
- February 2012 (10)
- January 2012 (9)
- December 2011 (9)
- November 2011 (10)
- October 2011 (10)
- September 2011 (11)
- August 2011 (10)
- July 2011 (10)
- June 2011 (14)
- May 2011 (12)
- April 2011 (14)
- March 2011 (11)
- February 2011 (11)
- January 2011 (18)
- December 2010 (11)

- November 2010 (14)
- October 2010 (19)
- September 2010 (10)
- August 2010 (15)
- July 2010 (7)
- June 2010 (13)
- May 2010 (12)
- April 2010 (11)
- March 2010 (13)
- February 2010 (16)
- January 2010 (10)
- December 2009 (16)
- November 2009 (6)
- October 2009 (10)
- September 2009 (14)
- August 2009 (12)
- July 2009 (8)
- June 2009 (11)
- May 2009 (11)
- April 2009 (25)
- March 2009 (15)
- February 2009 (19)
- January 2009 (14)
- December 2008 (19)
- November 2008 (10)
- October 2008 (16)
- September 2008 (17)
- August 2008 (21)
- July 2008 (19)
- June 2008 (20)
- May 2008 (18)
- April 2008 (25)
- March 2008 (32)
- February 2008 (25)
- January 2008 (44)
- December 2007 (33)
- November 2007 (36)
- October 2007 (32)
- September 2007 (41)
- August 2007 (42)
- July 2007 (22)
- June 2007 (19)
- May 2007 (23)
- April 2007 (21)
- March 2007 (21)
- February 2007 (35)
- January 2007 (29)
- December 2006 (4)
- November 2006 (8)
- October 2006 (7)

- [September 2006](#) (2)

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I don't speak for Stanford University.