

The World's Most Boring Topics

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I cannot recall how many exchanges I have had like this with students over the years. Boredom seems to be a constant refrain among many – though not all – of our students.



The students tend to claim school is the cause... but then admit that it's not just school that is boring. This boredom tends to manifest itself in two ways at school: one, most of what we ask them to learn is boring, and two, a lot of what we ask them to write they find boring. Sadly, even when given more autonomy to write about what they are interested in, many students say they can't think of anything. They find the world around them boring...



My students tend to think boredom is an inherent trait of the thing they view as boring rather than a stance within themselves. Given that many of us hope to inspire curious, inquiring minds in our students, this pervasive boredom can be a bit frustrating. After many years of challenging them to find things more interesting, many years of proclaiming that I was never bored because I found something to be interested in everywhere I went, I decided to stop battle boredom and lean into it. I decided to stop telling and start showing.

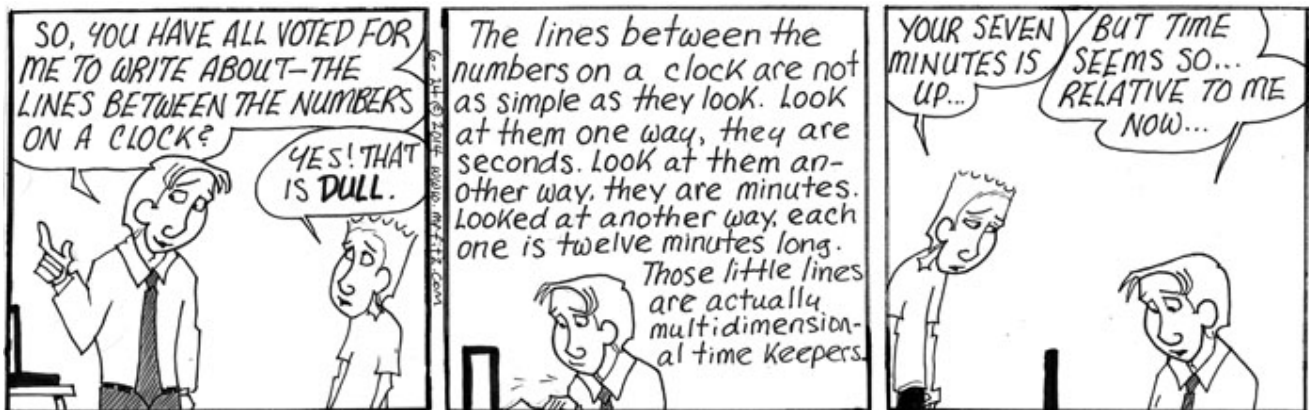
I challenged them to find a topic that would bore me – a topic that would make me unable to find anything interesting to say.



This eventually led me to an activity that was a bit like walking a tight-rope live in front of the class. I let them get their revenge on me for assigning *them* topics: they got to propose boring topics as a class, and I listed them on the board. The only condition was that they had to be subjects that were general knowledge – subjects more people would know about – including me. They couldn't be too specific. They then voted on which topic was *most* boring, and I would get 7 to 15 minutes (depending on how the class was going) to write about it on my computer, projecting it live and talking through my drafting process as I did so.



The lines in between the numbers on a clock was the topic one class gave me.



I tell them that just as a good standup comedian can read out of the phone book and make it funny, a good writer can take a dull topic and make it interesting. So after I write, I turn the tables on them...

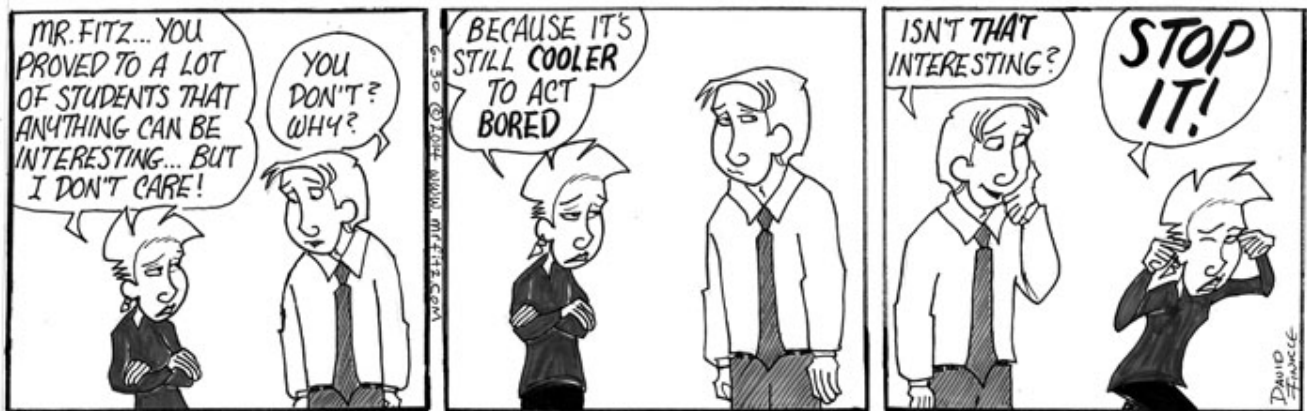


They cry foul, but nearly all of them do it – and eagerly share with each other – and with me!



Not only do they write about these boring topics, many of my students usually claim their “boring paragraph” is one of the best things they’ve written all year! I feel as if it challenges their idea of boredom better than any argument I could make. It shows them that boredom is in the eye of the beholder, and that with the right attitude, any topic can be fascinating.

When I do this assignment early in the year, I feel like it sort of inoculates them against boredom for the rest of the year. If they can write about the world’s most boring topics, they can write about *anything*.



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How do you deal with student boredom? What do you do inspire curiosity and creativity? You can connect with me on Twitter @DLFinkle or on Facebook at [facebook.com/movingwriters](https://www.facebook.com/movingwriters) or at <https://www.facebook.com/mrfitzcomics>.

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