

# THE 5-MINUTE TEACHER

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*How do I maximize time for  
learning in my classroom?*

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## About the Author



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of the Civil War and its causes. (Give the option to write on a class or personal blog or in a journal.)

Notice that not every minute of the class period is planned. This allows for transitions from one activity to the next and for a cushion to any part that runs long. In a student-centered classroom that is orchestrated by a master five-minute teacher, some segments run beyond their planned time because of intense student engagement or intelligent discourse. This should always be looked upon as a positive, and having a few extra minutes built in makes for smart planning.

## Harness the Power of Video

Years ago, I introduced my class website ([www.barnesclass.com](http://www.barnesclass.com)), which soon became a hub for my classes and a go-to resource for the entire school year. Although I had previously used video to augment lessons, the process was often more troublesome than helpful, requiring precious teaching and learning minutes to locate the desired video or have students type in extraordinarily long web addresses. The classroom website eliminated these hurdles and made video presentation a seamless support tool. The site serves as a dynamic repository of content that students can revisit at any time. Without obstacles impeding its efficiency, video should be

an integral piece of daily instruction and a pivotal tool for the five-minute teacher.

Recall previous lesson examples about the Civil War and *The Outsiders*. Both of these contained video supplements to direct instruction. A one- or two-minute video (from sources such as YouTube, TeacherTube, Vimeo, TED-Ed, Discovery Educator Network, and CNN) is easily embedded on a classroom website and can be quickly accessed by both teacher and student. The right videos can serve as invaluable springboards into student-centered learning activities, and they can prompt thought-provoking lesson starters or assets for further enrichment.

Although there are countless resources that contain material teachers can place on their classroom websites or blogs, TED-Ed goes a step further and provides a library of curated lessons that are built around the site's videos. This platform also allows users to take any useful educational video—not just one from the TED website—and easily create a customized lesson around that video. Many of these lessons contain quiz questions and discussion starters, which can be altered to best fit your needs. If you decide to use video as part of a lesson, TED-Ed is one of the best venues for locating existing material, and there is certainly nothing wrong with using something that's already made, especially when you can tweak it to fit your own lesson.

When used appropriately, feature-length movies can serve a similar purpose. According to Rafe Esquith (2007), "The judicious use of film to enrich history is a powerful way for students to learn about the past" (p. 90). Although

Esquith has his students watch entire movies related to the content he teaches, they watch each movie during one after-school session, which is much more effective than monopolizing several class periods. For in-class use—as part of a five-minute teacher’s toolkit—short movie clips are useful to engage students in content. For example, appropriate excerpts from films such as *John Adams* or *The Patriot*, used to supplement interactive lessons on the American Revolution, can be more effective than lecturing about the war from a textbook for four weeks and then watching the entire movie over three or four class periods.

Traditional teachers often follow this route: they “teach” through textbook readings, note-taking activities, rote-memory homework assignments, a test, and the movie. During the movie, they’ll sit back and grade the tests. Perhaps there might even be a worksheet for students to complete during the movie, which adds a nice sense of control over what is already a disengaging and fruitless endeavor. By contrast, a five-minute teacher uses short, appropriate, and well-timed movie clips as discussion and activity starters. As a result, students become interested in the film’s topic and more engaged in the activities that follow naturally. (An added benefit of this approach is that students need not be distracted by “bad” history or irrelevant material. No film is without flaws, particularly those that focus on historical periods.)

Though it is still relatively unknown in the education world, screencasting is one of the most powerful forms of video creation available. Creating a screencast video is also surprisingly easy, even for people who don’t consider