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| **Web Quest** | **Ill Structured Problem? Complex? Messy? No single correct answer?** | **Problem mirrors real life? Provides context, challenge, and motivation?** | **Students as decision makers with roles and responsibilities?** | **Teacher as a cognitive guide/coach?** | **PBL?** |
| **Rain Forest** | There is a clearly defined, structured problem: what do you need to survive in a rainforest. The task and process is clearly defined. There is no single correct answer, so students are able to stir up their own creativity | This problem may not real life for the students in your classroom but it definitely provides context, challenge and motivation. Students are asked to think about other people who live in rainforests. | Although there are several essentials that one would expect a student to bring with them to the rain forests, the responsibility still rests on their shoulders to be creative in what they bring. The students also have unique roles to choose from. | This teacher does a great job of being a coach and a guide. His expectations are clearly defined and communicated to the students, and he gives them enough structure to get them going. | Yes. I believe this is problem-based learning because it meets all of the aforementioned criteria. |
| **Radically Reduced Radiolarians** | The problem is clearly defined but it seems a bit more complex than the rainforest question. There are many parts (authorizing the budget, important information about radiolarians: historical, ecological, artistic). There is no single correct answer. | I can definitely see context and challenge present in this web quest. The task is connected to a real world example. Congress is constantly making decisions related to biology. This topic is very relevant. | Students have very distinct roles and responsibilities. In fact, each student literally has a different role within their group that is clearly defined in the “process” section of the web quest. | The teacher definitely provides guidance, but it may be a little heavy. Perhaps the teacher could back off a little bit and let the students have a bit more freedom. | Yes. I believe this is problem-based learning because it meets all of the aforementioned criteria |
| **Solve It With Logic** | Although this problem may be a bit messy, there is one single correct answer, so this does not meet the criteria for PBL. | This topic has connections to real life and may provide challenges and motivation to the students. However, this topic may also cause anxiety for some students and may be unpleasant for them to think about. | Students have roles and responsibilities in this web quest but everyone is doing the same thing. | The teacher is telling the students what to do instead of being a guide or coach. | This web quest did not meet all the PBL criteria. Therefore, I do not believe it is problem-based learning. |
| **Don’t Drink the Water** | This is a messy problem that could be solved in several different ways. There is not one correct answer. | Problems with drinking water are an issue that almost everyone can relate to and will most likely encounter at some point in their life. This web quest provides great context and motivation for the students. | Students are given much responsibility and autonomy to be researchers and investigators. They get to design and carry out their own experiments. | Although the teacher provides a lot of structure for the students, they still have the freedom to test their hypothesis however they choose. | Yes, I would label this activity as PBL because all of the criteria for PBL have been met. |