

Reflecting on Diigo Annotations

One of the keys to really taking advantage of Diigo (www.diigo.com) as a student research tool is learning to make quality contributions to the conversations that your peers are having around articles. Use this handout—which includes a strand of conversation between sixth-grade students—to reflect on the characteristics of quality annotations and Diigo conversations. This strand addressed a current event article about a U.S. company's work in Peru.

Original Text Highlight: U.S.-owned Doe Run Corporation bought the smelter from the state in 1997 on the condition that it would reduce toxic emissions.

Comments Added to Highlight

- Interesting—this is another example of a U.S. company owning a factory in South America. Remember that South American countries often have natural resources but they don't have the tools to do anything with those natural resources, so companies from countries like ours come in to do the work. So the question is, should we feel bad about the fact that a U.S. company is polluting heavily in Peru? (comment by William Ferriter)
- I think that we should feel bad for the fact that we're putting other children at risk so we can earn more money. Just because those children are not our children, doesn't mean we shouldn't care about their health. Also, these factories emit lead into the air. So do you think it's ok for the U.S. to ban lead in our country, but then go and buy a factory that basically pumps lead into other children? Do you think it's fair that we're shortening these children's lives so our country can get more money? (comment by Caroline W.)
- Caroline said: *Do you think it's fair that we're shortening these children's lives so our country can get more money?* Absolutely not! We have enough money already. As one of the wealthier countries in the world, we don't have the right to bully the underdeveloped countries. We should be helping them not hurting them. If we want to make world peace, helping underdeveloped countries is a good start. The poor countries tend to fight more because they are in major need of money, natural resources, land, or something other than that. We also don't want the poor Peruvians to get mad at us. On the flip side, we are in an economic crisis. Do you think that the people leading the business need money or want to provide jobs? I still don't think that matters as much as helping out other countries. What do you think about this situation? (comment by Anna E.)
- I think the people who lead the business don't really care about the health of the people in Peru, near the smelter. They probably only care that they get money from the job that it provides. If they did care, they wouldn't even be over there pumping lead into the air and peoples' bodies. The U.S. banned this for a reason: it was harming the peoples' health who live around it. For us to go over there and do it to the people of Peru just isn't right. We already know what it does to our health, and we don't care. Do you think the extra money for the U.S. is worth harming other peoples' health? (comment by Kristen W.)

Questions for Reflection

1. What do you notice about each of these comments? Are there any shared strengths to the comments? Shared weaknesses? What impresses you? What turns you off?
2. What kinds of things do each of the participants in this conversation do to encourage their peers to share their thoughts? How important do you think that is for groups reflecting on articles together?
3. Which comment in this strand of conversation adds the most value to the thinking and work of the group? Why?