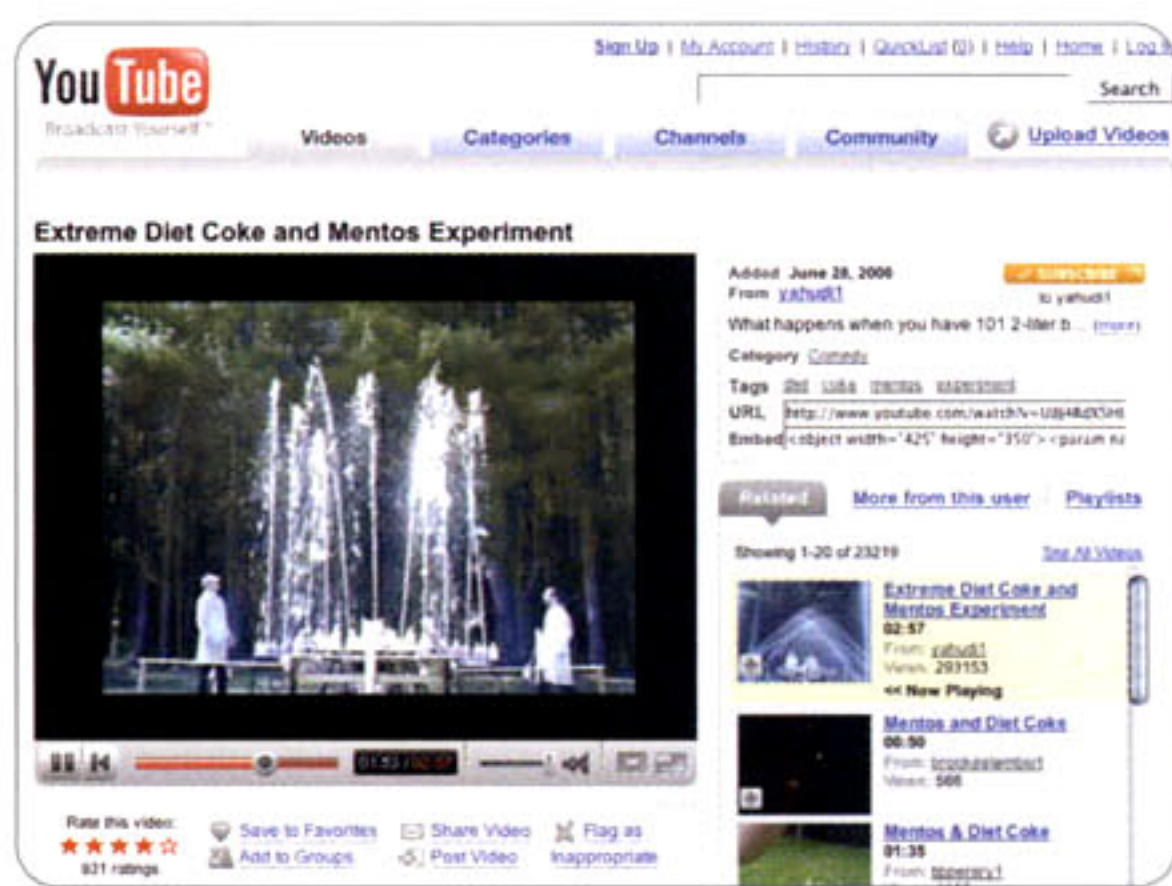


# Did You Just See That?

Online video sites can jumpstart lessons.



Although self-proclaimed “mad scientists” Stephen Groltz and Fritz Grobe pioneered the trick, free video sharing Web sites allowed millions of people to witness and try their “experiments” at home.

YouTube is the most popular of these sites, ranking 7<sup>th</sup> in the world for Internet traffic and showing up to 100 million video clips a day. According to a Nielsen/NetRatings report in July 2006, 12–17 year olds are 1.5 times more likely to visit YouTube than the average Internet surfer.

YouTube’s “cool factor” with kids has great potential for the classroom. Videos are free and can be viewed immediately without having to download any software. It’s easy to incorporate them into a lesson if you have a broadband Internet connection.

The “Mentos and Coke” phenomenon shows how a wacky clip can generate excitement that standard educational videos usually do not.

If you go to [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) and search for “Mentos and Coke,” you will find a host of videos featuring teenagers dropping Mentos candy into bottles of soda and dancing gleefully as geysers of fizz shoot through the air.

A science teacher could show how operant conditioning works with a housecat or springboard a physics lesson by showing a martial artist jumping over 14 teammates (“How to Train a Cat To Operate a Light Switch” and “Physics of Martial Arts: Kinematics”).

These videos don’t provide content, but they can stimulate the interest that makes curriculum relevant. If you can’t find the perfect clip for your lesson, create and post your own material. With enough people contributing educational videos, the effect could snowball, creating a multi-disciplinary, international community with vast resources. Your original footage of foreign travel or experiments could introduce a lecture or ignite a discussion (“Tamil Nadu (India) Public Bus Trip,” and “Rubin’s Tube: the Physics of Music”).

Reconstructions of what is already available are also valuable. Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton has footage on her own YouTube channel, and those sources can be used to build or expose an argument.

Participating in online journaling could encourage students to critically

evaluate sources and appreciate the perspectives of others. The YouTube video blog of World War II veteran “Geriatric1927,” for example, doesn’t always discuss the war, but it gives you a feel for daily life as an elderly survivor. Feedback options also give students the opportunity to share their thoughts with a global audience or post their own video responses.

Because most online video databases are not intended for education, they contain material that is inappropriate for minors. Teachers should select clips carefully and supervise use of the sites. In the future, it is likely that indexes of educational material and designated student-safe areas will make access to appropriate material easier. Users should also be careful to avoid copyright violations, because some of the material comes from commercial broadcasts. In addition to YouTube, Google Video and Revver.com provide similar services, and Zudeo.com offers a growing collection of higher-quality videos with longer playback times (with a download). & **Lindsay Oishi** is a graduate student in learning sciences and technology design at Stanford University.