🗣️ Use AI "act as if" prompts to talk to characters you're studying

AI image generated using Midjourney

What if a historical character you're studying -- like Abraham Lincoln -- could visit your class and interact with students?

What if your students could ask follow-up questions to a character in a book you're studying?

These are all at the heart of "act as if" prompts using AI assistants like ChatGPT, Microsoft Bing, and Google Bard.

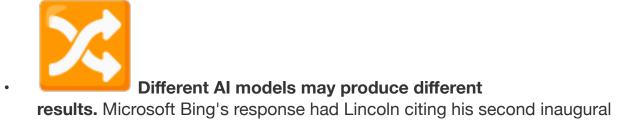**You can prompt these AI assistants to respond as if they're these characters, and they will!** Display ChatGPT/Bing/Bard on your projector or interactive display and give it some "as if" instructions (see below). Then, type the questions students suggest and react to the results as a class.

A few suggestions:

- **The more specific, the better.** AI models are good at representing specific people (like Abraham Lincoln). They're not as good at those they don't have much information on (someone obscure) or general people ("a nine year old girl on the Oregon Trail" ... I tried this one and was disappointed.)

- **Use a detailed prompt.** Here's a prompt I used to conjure Abraham Lincoln: "*I want you to respond to me as if you were Abraham Lincoln, using a similar style of language as he would. Use what you know about Abraham Lincoln's life, personality, and decisions to inform the responses you give. Do you understand?*"

- **Different AI models may produce different results.** Microsoft Bing's response had Lincoln citing his second inaugural

address in his answer ... but it also had Lincoln quoting Mahatma Gandhi, who lived after Lincoln. Swapping between Bing's creative and precise modes may impact your conversations, too.

- 🤔 **Use this as a critical thinking exercise for students.** Even if the AI response isn't perfectly accurate, it doesn't mean it can't be a learning opportunity. Encourage students to analyze the responses to see if they think that person would actually say those things.

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