This strategy is a great way for students to interact with each other through writing. It can be used as a before, during, or after reading strategy. It can also be used as a way for students to respond to questions related to classroom content. Best of all, it helps keep students engaged by making a connection to something currently important to teenagers – social media!

In its most basic description, Tabletop Twitter has students “tweet” responses to one or more questions/text excerpts/visuals that are written on a big sheet of paper. They then travel around the room and respond to other people’s “tweets” and create threads. As a closure to the activity, students go back to their original table, and with their group members, pick the most interesting thread to share out with the entire class.

**What prerequisite skills are needed?**

Before engaging students in this strategy, provide some background information about what Twitter is. Make sure they know that Twitter is an online social networking site that allows users to send and receive short messages, known as “tweets.” Also, introduce the following Twitter Terminology to them:

- **Username**: the name each person selects to use Twitter; it must contain fewer than 15 characters and is always preceded by the “@” character with no space between the symbol and the word (ex: username: @LitCoach).
- **Tweet**: a standard message on Twitter containing 140 characters or less.
- **Reply**: a response to another user, usually to answer a question or in reaction to an idea that has been posted. To reply, users type in the ‘@’ sign followed by the username of the person they are replying to and then follow with their message (ex: @LitCoach Thanks for sharing this strategy with me!).
- **Hashtag**: a keyword or phrase in a tweet that is preceded by the ‘#’ sign; these are “little extras” people add to their tweets to express the way they feel or to make a comment about what they just tweeted (ex: @LitCoach I love this strategy! #TabletopTwitterRocks)
- **Thread**: a series of messages that have been posted as replies to each other; by reading each message in a thread, you can see how the discussion has evolved over time.

**What materials are needed?**

You will need several large pieces of butcher paper and markers for the students. You will also need to prepare the questions/passages/visuals for the activity on the butcher paper before the lesson.

**How does this strategy work?**

1. **Decide how you want to use this activity.** You can use Tabletop Twitter to have students:
   - respond to questions that activate prior knowledge about an upcoming unit of study
   - analyze a visual image, such as a photograph or painting
   - respond to open-ended questions related to classroom content
   - debate controversial issues
   - respond to text excerpts before, during or after reading

*Please note that this list is not all encompassing. Feel free to use the strategy in a way that works for you and your students!*
2. **Prepare the materials and space needed for the activity.**
   - Before the lesson, develop your questions/text excerpts/visuals. Write/paste each one on a separate sheet of large poster or butcher paper. Make sure you write/paste in the center of the paper so that there is plenty of room for students to respond in any direction.
   - Make sure you have enough markers for each student to have their own. Pencils/pens will also work, but markers are preferred.
   - Make sure your classroom setup is conducive to this activity, as you will need a flat surface to lay the poster on and the students will need room to travel around the room.

3. **Review the activity guidelines with the students and make them visible in the room.**
   **Remind the students that:**
   - nothing on social media is anonymous, so this activity isn’t either. Tell them that their “twitter” username for this activity will be their first initial followed by their last name. They will need to begin every “tweet” they make with their username and underline it. Their comment should then be listed underneath their username.
   - “tweets” should be brief and to the point. On Twitter, tweets must be 140 characters or less, so they should try to do the same with their comments!
   - they can either add new comments or reply to a classmate’s comment by using the ‘@’ symbol followed that classmate’s “username”.
   - they will have no more than 3 minutes to write each time they move to a new piece of paper
   - they are permitted to add hashtags to their responses, however they must keep in mind that a good hashtag encapsulates the emotion/feeling connected to their comment.
   - no “retweets” are allowed, which means students need to come up with new ideas each time they come to a new piece of paper.
   - they should write neatly so that others can read what they wrote!
   - their marker should do the talking – not their mouth! This is a SILENT activity.

4. **Get the groups ready and materials passed out.**
   - Arrange the students into groups based on the number of papers you have prepared. No more than 5 students in a group is preferred – this ensures that there is enough space for all of the students in the group to “tweet” at the same time.
   - Send each group to a table/area of the room where a different piece of paper has been prepared.
   - Make sure each student has working marker or writing utensil.

   **Note:** Ensure you have reviewed the twitter terminology and activity guidelines with the students before moving on to step #5!

5. **Engage the students in the activity:**
   - Give the students a minute or two to read the question/view the image/reread the text excerpt, etc that is on their current piece of paper.
   - Set a timer for no more than 3 minutes and have groups rotate to a new piece of paper each time it goes off. The number of different pieces of paper the students get to will depend on how much time you want to take for the activity. It is preferred students get a chance to respond to the information on all of the papers, but is certainly not necessary.

   **Note:** Ensure students are following all guidelines mentioned in step #4 above during the duration of the activity.
6. **Have groups synthesize the information.**
   - Ask groups to return to the table in which they began the activity.
   - Give group members 2-3 minutes to read the different threads on their paper.
   - Groups should decide upon the most interesting/relevant thread and share it out with the class.

**Why should I use this strategy in my classroom?**
- EVERY student is actively participating at once.
- It capitalizes on students’ desire to talk to each other.
- It guarantees every student reads, writes, and demonstrates thinking for a sustained period of time.
- It forces students to write a concise and pithy response, which is a critical skill!
- It prepares every student for whole class discussions.
- It builds classroom cohesion as students work together in groups.
- It helps keep students engaged by making a connection to something currently important to teenagers – social media!

**Tips and Variations**
- As with anything new, model the strategy with the whole class before expecting students to do the activity on their own. Take them through the process and show them how you expect them to organize their thoughts, respond to others, etc.
- The first few times you facilitate this activity, you should direct students on which order to move – for example, groups of students might rotate clockwise around the tables after a pre-determined period of time. However, as the students get better with the activity, allow them the opportunity to freely roam from paper to paper.
- Consider having groups come up with their own questions/passages and write them on the paper for the activity!
- Instead of having individual students “tweet” responses, provide each group two minutes to talk, come to a consensus, and “tweet” a group response on their piece of butcher paper. They should then travel and tweet as a group for the entire length of the activity.
- Feel free to tweet along with the students – just make sure you are actively supervising the activity and holding students accountable!
- Consider using the actual Twitter platform to engage students in classroom tasks (see links to the articles in the section below).

**Additional professional articles/resources:**
- Online Article: *Using Twitter in High School Classrooms:*
  [http://www.edweek.org/tm/articles/2011/12/13/tln_ferriter_twitter.html?tkn=ZZSDduGK%2F7uBctp8vHBZ1cMy0HsJN5ucF1%2F%2F&print=1](http://www.edweek.org/tm/articles/2011/12/13/tln_ferriter_twitter.html?tkn=ZZSDduGK%2F7uBctp8vHBZ1cMy0HsJN5ucF1%2F%2F&print=1)
- Online Article: *50 Ways to Use Twitter in the Classroom:*