

**Writing Can Be Fun!**

Presented by:

Todd Evans

tevans@proliteracy.org

© 2015 ProLiteracy

# Focused Writing

## Instructions

1. Give students a single object to write about
2. Ask students to write for 3—5 minutes about the object

Focused writing is a good writing activity to use at the beginning of class. Asking students to focus on a single object and write about it can help students make the transition between class and the stress and demands of the outside world.

# Framing (adapted from www.readwritethink.org)

## Instructions

1. Ask students to get out a loose piece of paper.
2. Have students fold the paper in half at least once and tear or cut out the center.
3. Take the class outdoors. Ask each student to find a spot to place his or her frame.
4. Give students 15 minutes to freewrite about what they see in their frame. They are to focus only on what is in the frame.

Framing is another good writing activity to use at the beginning of class. Asking students to focus only on what is in the frame and write about it can help students make the transition between class and the stress and demands of the outside world.

# Mind Mapping

## Instructions

1. Write a word or topic in the center of the page and circle it.
2. Ask the student what comes to mind when thinking about the topic.
3. Write what the student says. Group related ideas using circles or lines to show connections.
4. Talk about the finished map and make additions or revisions
5. Ask the student to identify the parts of the map to include in the writing.
6. For beginning students, do all the writing and read the results back to the student. A more advanced student may be able to do the map.
7. To help the student get comfortable with maps, you might want to make a map of a reading selection.
8. As an intermediate step, you can ask the student to brainstorm thoughts about a topic and dictate them to you. You write them in a list. Go over the list and ask the student which ones belong together. Write these ideas in clusters and use them to prepare the map.

# The Unnamed Food

## Instructions

1. Ask students to think of a food. Explain that they shouldn’t tell anyone what their food is. Ask them to write the name of the food in the center of a piece of paper and draw a circle around it.
2. Ask students to write the word “ingredients” off to one side, draw a circle around it, and connect it back to the circle with the name of their food. Now ask students to think of the ingredients of their food and write them around the circle.
3. Follow Step 2 with the following topics:
	* How the food is prepared
	* How the food looks, smells, feels, sounds, and tastes
	* Why the food is good/not good for you
4. Now ask students to write a paragraph describing their food without naming it. When they have finished, they will give the paragraph to their partner and their partner will try to guess the food. The goal is to describe the food well enough that the partner can guess correctly.
5. This activity can be done with holidays, modes of transportation, clothing, sports, places to eat or visit, or any other common student experience.

# The J. Peterman Experience(from writingfix.com)

## Instructions

1. Visit jpeterman.com. Show students a selection of the catalog items on the website. Ask students to read aloud the descriptions that go along with the items.
2. Ask students what they notice about the descriptions: Looking for things like “written as if the author is talking to you, talk about specific famous people, talk about personal experiences, set in exotic places, describe a specific event or experience, describe the item.”
3. Give each student a picture of a catalog item.
4. Lead students through mind mapping. Who is the person wearing the item: you or someone famous? What is the person doing? Where is it taking place? What feelings/emotions are connected with the event?
5. Have students write a 100 word J. Peterman catalog entry.

# Writing With Ads(http://www.tengrrl.com/tens/017.shtml)

## Instructions

1. Choose an advertisement from the Classifieds section of the newspaper. The advertisement will be the starting point for the story.
2. Use mind mapping to help students come up with the story.
3. Ask students to think about the person who wrote the ad:
	* Who are they? Where do they live? What do they do?
	* Why do they have the item in the ad?
	* How did they get the item in the ad?
	* Why do they want to get rid of it?
4. Ask students about the person who wants to buy the item in the ad:
	* Who are they? Where do they live? What do they do?
	* Why do they want the item in the ad?
5. Ask students to think about what happens when the two people meet.
6. Have students use their mind maps to write a story.

# Lists of Five

## Instructions

1. Lists of five are a great way to generate writing topics. Ask students to generate a list of five. Examples are below
	* Five famous people, dead or alive, you would like to have dinner with
	* Five places you would like to visit
	* Five most important inventions of all time
2. Ask the student to pick one of the five items he or she listed and write about it.

# Switching Purpose (adapted from lessontutor.com)

## Instructions

1. Pick a topic for students to write about and chose a type of essay: narration, exposition, description, persuasion.
2. Use mind mapping with the group, or encourage students to use mind mapping, to think about the content of their essay.
3. Have students write, revise, and edit their essays.
4. Now, use the same topic, but pick a different type of essay.
5. Use mind mapping with the group, or encourage students to use mind mapping, to think about the content of their essay.
6. Have students write, revise, and edit their essays
7. Ask students to think about how the process and the essays are similar/different.
8. Talk about how the purpose (essay type) affects the content of an essay.

# Expanding Sentences

## Instructions

1. Ask the student to write a sentence of up to five words with a subject, verb, and object.
2. Ask the student to add an adjective for each noun.
3. Ask the student to add an adverb.
4. Ask the student to add a prepositional phrase.
5. Ask the student to add another adjective to each noun.
6. At this point, you can ask the student to change any words they would like to change. Perhaps they want to use a different subject, verb, or object; or replace pronouns with nouns.
7. To continue the activity, ask the student to use the idea in the sentence to write a short paragraph.

# Writing With Pictures

## Instructions

1. Divide students into groups of five. Collect five different magazine or newspaper pictures that depict just one person. Each person in the group will need a different picture. Note: the pictures should be of one person, not a group of people.
2. Give each student a picture with a blank sheet of paper stapled to the back of it.
3. Ask the students to look at their pictures and imagine who the person is and what the person’s background and life are like.
4. Write the first set of questions on a chalkboard where each member of the group can see them. Read the questions aloud.
	* What is his/her name?
	* How old is he/she?
	* What does he/she do?
5. Ask the students to turn their pictures over and write the answers to these questions (using complete sentences) on the attached piece of paper. Tell them not to worry about correct spelling or grammar. Encourage them to be as imaginative as possible
6. When they have finished writing, have them pass the picture to the person on the right.
7. Ask each student to look at the new picture, turn it over, and read the sentences written by the previous student.
8. Write the following set of questions on the chalkboard. Read them aloud.
	* Where does he/she live?
	* Who does he/she live with?
9. Ask the students to write the answers to these questions on the sheet of paper that is on the photo they are now holding.
10. When they finish writing, ask them to pass the picture to the person on their right.
11. Continue to do this for the following questions.
	* What does he/she like to do?
	* What doesn’t he/she like to do?
	* What did he/she do yesterday? Why?
	* What is he/she going to do tomorrow? Why?
12. When the students have answered all the questions, ask each person to pass the picture to the right one more time. At this point, ask students to read the story about the photo to the other students.

# Dice Game Add On Story

## Instructions

1. Put students in groups of 4-6. Give each group a dice.
2. The first student rolls the dice. Whatever number appears, he or she writes that many words to the beginning of a story.
3. The student passes the story to the person on the right. He or she rolls the dice and adds that many words to the story.
4. Let students write for 5 minutes, then tell them they need to wrap the story up in the next 2-3 turns.
5. Ask for volunteers to read their group’s story.

# Pass Along Story

## Instructions

1. Ask each student to take out a piece of paper and write three non-related words at the top. An example might be teapot, six shooter, and golf cart.
2. Ask students to hand their paper to the person behind them.
3. Students must now begin a story where they will try to incorporate all three of the words at some point.
4. Let students write for about a minute, then stop them and ask them to pass their story to the person behind them.
5. Give people an opportunity to read the story they now have, then tell them to start adding to the story.
6. Repeat this process until everyone has had an opportunity to add something to every story.

# Group Storytelling

## Instructions

1. Seat everyone in a circle.
2. Explain that you want each person to help create a story. Afterward, they will do some writing.
3. Start the story yourself. Talk about anything that involves people doing something. After about 30 seconds, point to the student on your right and ask that person to continue the story for about 30 seconds. Tell the student that he or she should have fun and not worry about how the story goes. Emphasize that there is no correct way to create the story.
4. After 30 seconds, signal for the next person to continue the story.
5. Depending on the size of the group, give everyone one to three turns to contribute to the story.
6. After the story is fairly well developed, stop and ask each student to write for a few minutes to continue the story. Tell them not to worry if they do not finish the story. Also, they should not worry about making mistakes; their goal is to continue telling the story in writing as they did in speaking.
7. After they have had several minutes to write, ask individual students to share their story.
8. Later you can use the stories to practice revising and editing.

# The Correction Game

## Instructions

1. Divide students into two teams
2. Write 10-15 sentences on the board. Tell students each sentence contains a mistake. Students should read sentences and start trying to identify mistakes as you write the sentences, but should keep quiet about the mistakes they find.
3. Give each team 100 points.
4. Team 1 chooses a sentence for Team 2 to correct.
5. Team 2 decides how many points they would like to gamble. After consulting, Team 2 gives their correction.
6. If they are correct, they get the points they gambled. If they are incorrect, they lose the points.
7. Team 2 chooses a sentence for Team 1 to correct. Play continues.

# Word Choice (adapted from www.readwritethink.org)

## Instructions

1. Begin by showing students the adjective synonym poem below:

FUNNY...

So amusing

So comical

So humorous

So mirthful

So laughable

Sooo... funny

1. Have students work in pairs. Give each pair a word and ask them to create their own adjective synonym poem. (Suggestions: happy, sad, good, bad, big, small,)
2. Have students read their poems.
3. Ask students to write each synonym on an index card.
4. Ask students to organize their synonyms according to connotation (the strength or weakness of the word). In the example above, students might rank comical as having a stronger connotation than mirthful.
5. Ask students to share their rankings. Ask for comments from others.
6. Ask students to organize their synonyms according to formality (some words are more formal than others. For example, policeman and officer are more formal than cop).
7. Ask students to share their rankings. Ask for comments from others.

# Word Matrix

## Instructions

1. Have students work in pairs or as a group. Give them a word and ask them to create a list of synonyms. Have each student write the words on index cards (one word per card).
2. Working in pairs, have students organize the words along a continuum according to the connotation of the word, with the left of the continuum being weaker and the right of the continuum being stronger. For example, the word amusing might have a weaker connotation than the word laughable.
3. Have pairs share their rankings with the whole group. Discuss differences.
4. Working in pairs, have students organize the words along a continuum according to the formality of the word, with the left of the continuum being informal and the right of the continuum being formal.
5. Have pairs share their rankings with the whole group. Discuss differences.
6. You can combine the two continuums into an “x” and “y” axis.

# Six Word Stories as Writing Prompts

## Instructions

1. Have students read a selection of six word stories from sixwordstories.net.
2. Pick one to use as a writing prompt
3. As a group, have students discuss what they think the story is about, who the characters are/might be, etc.
4. Lead students in a mind mapping exercise. Ask students to start by putting the six word story in the middle of a page and drawing a circle around it. Ask students to then think about the following elements of their story (each element should be a spoke on the mind map):
	* Characters – who are they? what is their relationship? how old are they? what do they look like?
	* Setting – where does the story take place? what time/time of year?
	* Conflict – what is the conflict in the story? how is it resolved?
5. Ask students to use their mind map to write a story for 15-30 minutes.
6. Ask for volunteers to read their story.

# Six Word Stories as Writing Activity

## Instructions

1. Have students write a story. Ideally, the story should be several paragraphs long.
2. Have students summarize their story. Give as a guideline that you want the summary to be 1-2 sentences per paragraph. After students have summarized their story, ask them to summarize it again, cutting the length of their summary in half (if summary was 6 sentences, it should now be 3). Make sure that students capture the conflict and emotions of their original story – the summary should not just be a short chronological listing of events.
3. Have students read a selection of six word stories from sixwordstories.net.
4. Pair students up. Have partners read each other’s story and summaries. Working in pairs, have them brainstorm words, word pairs, and short sentences that describe what happened in their stories.
5. Working individually, have students draft a six word story.

# Word Charts

## Instructions

1. Give students blank 4”x 6” index cards, one index card for each new word they will learn.
2. Ask students to write the new word on one side, then flip the card over and divide the other side into thirds.
3. In the first space, have students write a definition of the word in their own words. Ask students to think of antonyms or opposites of the new word. Ask them to write the antonyms in the second space.
4. Finally, ask students to think of the word in relation to their own experiences. Maybe a student has heard the word used in another setting or maybe a student has a life experience that is an example of the word. Whatever the association, ask the students to write it in the third space.

# Word Search

## Instructions

1. Write a word on the board. Choose a long word with a lot of different letters, such as “environment.”
2. Ask students to make as many words as they can using only the letters in the word. Students can work in pairs or teams. Decide ahead of time if you will count proper names (Tim, Ron), abbreviations (TV, MTV), and foreign words (noir).

# Word Race

## Instructions

1. Divide the class into teams of approximately 5 people
2. Draw a long grid on the board. The grid should have as many rows as there are teams, and 30-40 columns
3. A player from Team 1 comes up and spells a word of his/her choosing on the board. If the word is spelled correctly, he/she gets to write it in the grid.
4. Next a player from Team 2 comes up and spells a word of his/her choosing on the board. If the word is spelled correctly, he/she gets to write it in the grid.
5. Play continues with each team taking turns, until one team reaches the end of the grid.
6. Once a word is used, it cannot be used by another team.
7. Players may not add “s” on the end of a word to make it artificially longer. Other endings are OK.
8. If words become “game standards” they can be banned.
9. Students may start to study how to spell long words on their own to become better at the game. This is great, but they must be able to tell you what the word means.
10. An alternate rule is that teams must finish their row with the exact amount of letters.

# Resources

## WritingFix (writingfix.com)

Good place to get writing prompts, picture prompts, story ideas, etc.

## Verb Conjugator (http://www.verbix.com/languages/english.shtml)

Good reference website for students to conjugate verbs.

## Write Design Online Graphic Organizers (<http://www.writedesignonline.com/organizers/>

A collection of Graphic Organizers to print and use with students in prewriting.

## EnglishPage.com (<http://www.englishpage.com/>)

Collection of online grammar tutorials and exercises for students

## Photonovela.com (<http://www.photonovela.com/index.php>)

A collection of photonovelas created by students

## A Virtual Visit to the Lowell Mills (http://tech.worlded.org/docs/lowell/home.htm)

Example of a published multimedia writing project