

Student Guide

Prewriting Activity-Free write/ Quick writes

Introduction

There are many different prewriting techniques to help writers “get their creative juices” flowing.. What follows is a different version of free writing, called quick writes, created by Donald Graves and Penny Kittles as found in the book, *Inside Writing: How to Teach the Details of the Craft*. Quick writes are different from free writing in the sense that free writing is more stream of consciousness writing without a writing prompt; whereas, quick writes have at least a leading topic. First, is a summary of the activity, then, a detailed demonstration of how this prewriting technique might be completed by you alone or in a small group using a poem as the writing topic.

Objective: after you complete this activity, you will have generated enough text to use it as a springboard for writing a rough draft of a piece of writing. You might write a narrative essay, or an interpretive literary analysis, or you could even write a poem. These kinds of writing are all found in the English III TEKS.

Supplies and possible resources:

- A collection of colored pencils for students to use after the quick write has been completed.
- A poem for reading to the class which will serve as the prompt for you to write a response-the quick write. (For this activity, Billy Collins’ poem, “The Lanyard” from *The Trouble with Poetry and other Poems*.) You should have your writers’ notebooks or whatever place your daily writing is stored.
- One such technique can be found on The Owl at Purdue writing lab website under Owl Materials: Invention Presentation where it discusses ideas for prewriting. <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/695/01/>
- It might be helpful to you to review the literary term, imagery. A useful website is English Works sponsored by Gallaudet University. <http://depts.gallaudet.edu/englishworks/literature/poetry.html#imagery>

Step by step:

1. Have your writer's notebooks ready to record the quick write and three different colors of colored pencils or markers

2. Listen to and watch American Poet Laureate, Billy Collins read his poem, "The Lanyard." You might also have a copy of the poem to look at after he reads it.

Here is a link for a copy of the poem and the link of him reading the poem.

http://www.billy-collins.com/2005/06/the_lanyard.html

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/poetryeverywhere/collins.html>

3. Think about this, using all five of your senses, what could you see, hear, feel, taste, or touch in your mind's eye as you listened to and/or read the poem? Possible responses might include: I can see typewriter, piano, a lake, the red and white lanyard, I can hear: a breathing body and breathing heart etc. Think of as many responses as you can that involve imagery.

4. Now write about the poem; however you wish writing in sentences as best as you can. You might write about the imagery used or you could recall a treasure you may have made for a parent, or if you haven't what would you have made. Or you could address anything this poem brings to mind and pen. Write for as long as you can, as long as you are writing more than pausing to think. Try at least 2 minutes or you could write up to 10 minutes.

5. After you have written for specified time, read what you have written, and as you read circle words that jump out at you or that you like. Now, re-read your piece, and this time with a different color, underline sentences that sound good to you. After you have identified favorite sentences, and underlined them with yet a different color, circle the one or two sentences that you feel represents you most as a writer.

6. When you have completed this step, with that sentence, the one you feel represents you most as a writer, as the lead, begin a new quick write. This is your new "heartbeat" sentence-it is the one where you feel the closest to what you can do as a writer. If you, the writer, don't feel like you are satisfied with your new "heartbeat", complete this process after often as needed.

7. You can now use this quick write as a starting point in drafting many different genres of writing ranging from interpretive literary analysis to poetry.

Works Cited

- Collins, Billy. 2005 "The Lanyard." in *The Trouble With Poetry: and other Poems*. New York: Random House.
- Graves, Donald and Kittle, Penny. 2005. *Inside Writing: How to Teach the Details of the Craft*. Heinemann: Portsmouth, NH. 2005. 56-62.
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- Lawrick, Elena and Allen Brizee. "Invention Presentation-Freewriting, Slide 20." November 15, 2007. The Writing Lab and OWL at Purdue and Purdue University. June 2009. <http://owl.english.purdue.edu> .
- Smith, Vivion, "What is Poetry?" June 2001. English Works! at Gallaudet University, Washington, DC. June 2009. <http://depts.gallaudet.edu/englishworks/literature/poetry.html#imagery> .