



Beyond the 20 Page Paper: Using Informal Writing to Engage Your Class

Dr. Deborah Lee, Co-Director, MSU Maroon & Write QEP

Examples of low-stakes writing exercises include:

- Journaling: either structured or unstructured journal responses.
- Freewriting: prewriting technique that is usually conducted in class and lasts for a specified period of time.
- Brainstorming: formal or informal session that may occur individually or in groups; the focus is on developing a large number of ideas in response to a given prompt.
- Mini essays (microthemes): very short essays conducted in or outside of class.
- Think-Pair-Share: often used as a speaking exercise but can be modified to work with writing. A prompt is provided, individuals work on a response and then partner with a classmate to develop a team response.

In the Literature:

Bahls, P. (2012). *Student Writing in the Quantitative Disciplines: A Guide for College Faculty*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Bean, John C. (2011). *Engaging Ideas*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Bonner, J. M. (2009). "A Biology course for the less-than-prepared prospective Biology major." *Journal of College Biology Teaching*. 35, 1 (May): 74-81.

Elbow, P. (1997). "High stakes and low stakes in assigning and responding to writing." In Sorcinelli, M.D. and Elbow, P. (Eds.) *Writing to Learn: Strategies for Assigning and Responding to Writing Across the Discipline*. New Directions for Teaching and Learning. 69. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Fernsten, L. and M. Reda. (2011). "Helping students meet the challenges of academic writing." *Teaching in Higher Education*. 16, 2 (April): 171-182.

Revised 7/29/15