

Pei

## **IN-CLASS PEER REVIEW OF STUDENT WRITING with some forms I use to structure the work**

### **Why have students do peer review of each other's writing?**

To have students play a more active role in the classroom learning process.  
To give students responsibility for critiquing writing (and thinking), rather than letting all the responsibility for that rest on you. The hope is that they will internalize this process and carry it on independently, to the benefit of their future work.

To make sure that all your students will get some feedback on a piece of writing immediately, the same day they bring it to class, rather than having to wait for you to write your comments. This, of course, does not prevent you from commenting as well, later.

The following forms are for use by students working in pairs during class time to give each other feedback on first drafts. I generally let students pair themselves up, though sometimes I have specific reasons for putting certain pairs together. I've learned, however, that the students may sort themselves better than I can.

The procedure is this:

1. Each student fills out what I call the "getting-thoughts-together form" about her own paper. This form guides the student to reflect in specified ways on her first draft (though there is room for her to bring up any issue she wants). When I know there are certain predictable challenges inherent in a given assignment, I'll make sure the form focuses the student on those issues.
2. The students then exchange papers and their "getting-thoughts-together forms." Student A reads student B's paper and her thoughts about it, and vice versa.
3. Each student now fills out a "peer review form" about the paper she received. Again, the purpose of this form is to guide the reader to give certain kinds of feedback. Space is also provided for the reader to respond to any questions the writer may have posed.
4. After the "peer review forms" have been filled out, the students have time to talk about the papers, ask each other more questions, elaborate their written feedback, etc.

The whole process takes a half-hour or more.

The following "getting-thoughts-together form" is of the most basic variety, with no special focus of attention. After it, on the third page of this PDF, is a corresponding peer review form of the plain vanilla variety.

GETTING-THOUGHTS-TOGETHER FORM

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Writer's Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is your favorite sentence in the piece?

2. How far along is this piece? Still coming together? Do you have a solid foundation for the next draft? Does the piece have a distinct center? Do you know what it's about? Are you satisfied with the way it begins and ends?

3. Where do you feel the need for further development?

4. What kinds of responses from a reader would be helpful at this stage?

[use the back if you run out of room on any question]

PEER REVIEW FORM for use with drafts

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Name of person writing this review\_\_\_\_\_

Name of author of draft being reviewed\_\_\_\_\_

Read the other person's draft and her thoughts about it.  
Use back of page for continuation of remarks too long for  
the space.

1. Point to parts of the draft paper (ideas, sentences,  
passages) that stood out for you. Indicate briefly why  
they struck you, stayed with you.

2. Write in your own words what this piece says, what it is  
trying to say, what it might say.

3. What do you want to know more about? What's implied  
here that might be said out loud? What needs to be more  
specific? What kinds of added examples or evidence do you  
need?

4. Respond to the author's request for help (on back of  
page)

The clearer the structure you provide for peer review of student writing, the more beneficial the exercise is likely to be. To make it work toward your teaching goals, you can always create forms that guide students to pay attention to whatever issues are uppermost in the course, or in the current batch of papers. By tailoring the forms to the prominent issues at a given time, you can make sure that students will find this use of class time relevant and to the point.

As an example, the following pair of forms, on pages 5 and 6, illustrate my effort to guide peer review to focus more narrowly, on the paper's central question, main idea, and use of evidence.

GETTING-THOUGHTS-TOGETHER FORM

Writer's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Re-read your paper and then take 10 or 15 minutes to answer the following questions.

1. What is the central question of your paper?

2. What is the main idea you arrive at in trying to answer this question?

3. Do you feel the piece has enough of a central focus?

4. What is the best thing about this draft, and what worries you the most about it?

5. What kind of feedback would you like from your reader?  
(Use back of this sheet)

PEER REVIEW FORM for use with drafts

Writer of paper being reviewed \_\_\_\_\_

Your name \_\_\_\_\_

1. BEFORE reading the writer's comments on her own paper, please write your own version of:

a) the central question of the paper

b) the main idea the writer arrives at in trying to answer this question

Is there enough of a central focus to the paper?

2. Do you feel that the assertions and conclusions in the paper are well-supported by evidence (quotations from the text)? If more quotation is needed, where, and for what purpose?

3. What in the paper intrigues you, makes you feel you learned something, makes you want more?

4. On the back of this sheet, reply to the writer's request for feedback and her thoughts on the piece.

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