

## Writing for Stamina, Creativity, and Critical Thinking

### THE “RULES” & THE BENEFITS

I do "free writes" with quotes or images and start at maybe 3 minutes, working up to 4 or 5, then 10, etc. They canNOT stop writing.

If they get stuck, they simply copy the last word they wrote over and over. If that means they write the word "pink" 16 times until a new thought comes, then that's what they do.

This is in no way a punishment.

If anything, we laugh about it and it's fun!

Students will say things like, "Hey, I wrote *microphone* 21 times but then I got an idea, ha ha ha."

They like to show each other where they got stuck, what word they got stuck on, how many times they wrote it before figuring out what to write next, all that fun stuff.

The really cool part is when you have kids realize they didn't ever get stuck. Or they only had to write a word twice. Or when the timer goes off and they ask for just another minute or two!!

The goal was to do this type of free writing every Friday but you know how that goes! Really, as often as you can do so is best because it does build stamina.

When it's time for academic writing, and they get stuck, its ok.

I'll say, "You're stuck on what to write for your commentary on that text evidence? Just keep writing that last word over and over until a better thought comes to you."

It keeps them from breaking the cycle of thinking & writing and just giving up. You can set the timer for just a few minutes and assign only one small aspect of their paper that they have to write. Use the same strategies for this that you used for the free write. The kids will be used to it, and it really helps move them along in the writing process when it comes to the more formal, academic writing.

Something else is to talk about how they're gripping their pens. They grip them so hard!!! It's like, guys, you can relax! You really do have to tell them this because they don't even realize they're doing it.

## IDEAS FOR REGULAR, CONSISTENT FREE-WRITING IN CLASS:

### OPTION A: Using quotes

How to embed a little more writing each day is a struggle sometimes since there's NO TIME, no matter how many minutes you have in your classes.

**I've had really great results with giving my students independent writing time based on quotes, and here's how:**

- Quick writes
- Discussion starters
- Student choice (provide several and let students choose)
- Connections to reading selections
- Establish a simple writing routine each day (set a timer, play some music, let them write!)

**I collect and curate TONS of quotes for classroom writing [on my Pinterest board](#) you can access by [clicking here](#).**

Check it out, and use them in class as needed in order to help build stamina and consistency in writing. I'm also adding more quotes to the board all the time, so you'll have plenty to choose from!

## OPTION B: Using images

IMAGES are perfect for embedding a little more writing each day in your classes with little to no prep work on your part!

**I've had really great results with giving my students independent writing time based on quotes, but I've also had amazing results from using [IM-AGES](#), too!**

- Quick writes
- Imaginative writing (and critical thinking!)
- Discussion starters
- Student choice (provide several and let students choose)
- Connections to reading selections or to LIFE
- Establish a simple writing routine each day

**I collect and curate TONS of IMAGES for classroom writing [on my Pinterest board you can access by clicking here!](#)**

## OPTION C: Using text excerpts

Whether it's a magazine article, a novel your class is about to read, or something else, throw in some excerpts from reading materials you come across. Even an interesting introduction in a short story will work. Here are a few good ones to get you started!

[ Tip: I recommend using text excerpts like the ones below only after your students have built up some stamina for writing about the quotes and images explained above. Why? I learned over time that students can become lost or anxious or tend to hit those blocks when presented with paragraphs too soon. Using quotes and images help create a safe environment for writing and for building stamina. I've found that once students can—for the most part—write for 7 - 10 minutes about a quote or an image, they're ready for text excerpts like these. . .]

### \* Text Excerpt #1

#### ***The Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison**

*I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids—and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me.*

### \* Text Excerpt #2

#### ***The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak**

*First the colors.*

*Then the humans.*

*That's usually how I see things.*

*Or at least, how I try.*

*\*\*\* HERE IS A SMALL FACT \*\*\**

*You are going to die.*

**\* Text Excerpt #3**

**1984 by George Orwell**

*It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen. Winston Smith, his chin nuzzled into his breast in an effort to escape the vile wind, slipped quickly through the glass doors of Victory Mansions, though not quickly enough to prevent a swirl of gritty dust from entering along with him.*

**\* Text Excerpt #4**

***Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston**

*Ships at a distance have every man's wish on board. For some they come in with the tide. For others they sail forever on the horizon, never out of sight, never landing until the Watcher turns his eyes away in resignation, his dreams mocked to death by Time. That is the life of men.*

*Now, women forget all those things they don't want to remember and remember everything they don't want to forget. The dream is the truth. Then they act and do things accordingly.*

**\* Text Excerpt #5**

***The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger**

*If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth."*

## OPTION D: More ideas from interesting, helpful online sources

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Corbett Harrison's Website > > [corbettharrison.com](http://corbettharrison.com)

[http://corbettharrison.com/SWT.htm?fbclid=IwAR3RmZvBObU4Jh25IsVGHK31N2Sy-NWcYOLshfMqGkNZA\\_sFI96RNq14E\\_k](http://corbettharrison.com/SWT.htm?fbclid=IwAR3RmZvBObU4Jh25IsVGHK31N2Sy-NWcYOLshfMqGkNZA_sFI96RNq14E_k)

"I do sacred writing and wove in stamina by making the writing time longer each session. We begin with four minutes and end up writing for about 18. Kiddos need to feel what it is like to write continuously. I give many options for prompts ( a quote, a new word, a picture, plus writer's choice). It has been well received by my 8th graders."

— Monica Ortman (FB Group)

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Scholastic has a whole series of options for various types of writing (it goes beyond free writing)

<https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/25-ways-get-kids-writing/>

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From "We Are Teachers" comes a really interesting set of writing prompt ideas for middle school!

<https://www.weareteachers.com/best-writing-prompts-for-middle-school/>

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Categorized: Expository / Informative & Persuasive Prompts for Discussion and Writing

<https://my.hrw.com/support/hos/hostpdf/hostmsprompts.pdf>

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