

# Prewriting, Freewriting, Collaboration

## RELAXED WRITING EXERCISE

(I must give credit to Michelle Ferrante who introduced me to this idea).

If a day occurs when you know the students will have a difficult time concentrating, such as the class before spring break, and you have time, the following exercise works great to relax them and make them examine themselves, life, literature or writing in a fun way. This takes anywhere from a ½ hour to an hour, depending on how much time you would like to allow:

Turn all the lights out and make the students close their eyes and lay their heads on their desks. Numerous categories are possible and will change depending on your end goal in doing this exercise. If it is merely for fun, you may ask them to imagine their box of crayons when they were young and have them shout out the color names they remember (periwinkle, carnation pink, burnt sienna). You can have them shout out the experiences of life (birth, death, marriage, divorce, school, etc...). And, perhaps, feelings (anger, elation, surprise, passion etc...). Take each category, one at a time, and as students shout words out, write them all over the board at different angles, mish-mashing them together in no particular order. When the board is filled, turn the lights back on. Have the students open their eyes and write a paragraph or two using five-ten words that jump off the board at them. Then have students share what they wrote.

If you would like this exercise to be connected to readings or class discussion, simply change the categories. For instance, have them name the themes raised by stories read over the semester or in a novel that you are studying. The possible categories are endless and depend on what connections you would like your students to make. My only suggestion is that one category is always included that connects their lives to the other images and words appearing on the board. For example, if exploring the themes of stories read over the semester, include a category about experiences in the first year of college. Many times these separate categories will overlap. In doing this, you achieve a bridge between learning and real life and students see what they are reading and learning is closely connected to their personal lives.