

Integrative Exercises

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English

Both of these exercises are predicated on the theory promoted by composition experts that writing is an act of discovery. We figure out what we think as we try to put our ideas into language. Zull's book confirms that taking action on a concept is part of the process of integrating it into the material that one already knows.

QUICKWRITE AT THE START OF CLASS

Start class off with a writing prompt and have student write for a few minutes on it.

- Open-ended questions ("What is still puzzling you about the book?")
- Focused questions ("How does Chopin use bird imagery as a metaphor for Edna's condition?").

Once they have written, have them explain their idea to a neighbor before convening entire class.

Goals:

- Loosen students up by trying out an idea initially on one person instead of entire class
- Provide students another opportunity to discover and develop an idea by putting it into language
- Provide students an opportunity to integrate knowledge by explaining themselves to a neighbor
- (Provide me an opportunity to eavesdrop and know whom to call on)

ONE-MINUTE PAPER AT THE END OF CLASS

This exercise is particularly effective in introductory-level courses where students are often a bit more reluctant to ask questions and where some of the material is new and challenging.

In the final minutes of a class period, ask student to answer two questions anonymously:

- What is the main thing you learned in class today?
- What is still unclear? What are you still struggling with?

Goals:

- Provide students with a safe opportunity to identify what they have and have not grasped
- Provide an opportunity for students to discover what they do and do not know by putting it into language
- Provide students an opportunity to integrate knowledge by explaining themselves to me
- (Provide me a chance to gauge student learning and to know what needs to be reviewed)
- (Provide me feedback on how well an exercise designed to enforce some concept achieved its goals)

Caveat:

Be prepared to slow down and to return to concepts multiple times. You will find that the idea that you explained and discussed in class is still unclear to several students, but you will be able to address those issues in the opening of the following class.