

Hot Paper

by Carolyn Ferrucci

Objectives: To encounter possibilities from collaboration and surprise; and to get students writing freely.

Education Level: Middle School, High School

Time: 20-30 minutes

This is a fun activity if students are feeling stuck or hesitant with writing, and is also a great way for the class to connect and collaborate. You can warm up with the Exquisite Corpse surrealist game (where everyone has a sheet of paper, it's folded into thirds, and everyone draws a head on the top third of the paper, then folds it so the next person they pass it to can't see the head but will draw a torso, and then folds it so the last person will draw the legs—you should wind up with an exquisite monster!).

Large classes can be broken up into smaller groups of five or so. Every student starts with a character (remind students that characters can be a person, or a trash can, or a wolf...), which can be the exquisite monsters they just made, and the character should be doing an action. The first words can be the same for everyone, so: "The sound of..." and then each individual student continues ("The sound of popcorn popping perplexed Erica as she walked into the cave..."). They should feel free to write a poem or a story, and encourage students to not put their pens down!

After a few minutes, say "Hot Paper!" and have everyone pass their papers to the person on their left. The new person will continue the poem or story wherever it left off. At this point you can tell students as they are writing to make sure there is a setting and to describe the character's surroundings. Let them write for a few minutes before calling out "Hot Paper!" again. For the next round ask everyone to add in another character, or a smell, etc, until it's gone around to all five or so students in each group. Once the papers are back to their "original" authors, have as many kids as possible share, they will love seeing all the unexpected places their poems can go!