

In the Last 24 Hours

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Education Level: Middle and high school

Time Frame: 45 minutes

Materials: Notebook, pencil

I like to call this exercise “In the Last 24 Hours” and it is one I have written from several times in my own practice. This exercise asks us writers to think of the sights/sounds we experience in our day to day that we might overlook. One of the prompts, for example, is to make a list of 8 things you’ve seen in the past 24 hours. Whenever I do this exercise, I am surprised by all the things I come up with. The most boring, uneventful day turns out to be full of exciting images, colors, objects, shapes—so much happens in a day!

This exercise helps students sink into the world around them—to be in touch with their senses and how they move about the world.

Before stating any of these prompts, I ask the students to close their eyes and think of their past 24 hours. I ask them to consider the moment they woke up, when they got ready in the morning, their commute to school, their classes before this one. This exercise encompasses the past 24 hours, so asking them to consider their evening the night before can be helpful too.

Tell the class to draw a line down the middle of their paper.

Step 1:

On the right half of your paper, make a list of 8 things you’ve seen in the past 24 hours.

Be as specific as possible. If you think of your friend’s face this morning, what did you notice *first* about their face? Fewer words but more specificity is best.

Step 2:

On the left side of your paper, make a list of 5 sounds you’ve heard in the past 24 hours.

Step 3:

Now write a poem of 6 lines using at least 4 sounds and images from your list *and* the color yellow.

Step 4:

Share!