

# Quick Writes

"First write from the heart and the senses, then write from the brain."

Shawn Urban

*A quick write is a sponge or filler exercise designed to engage students in creative, improvised writing exercises.* Usually these unannounced quick writes are seeded by various emotio-sensory prompts: sounds, videos, pictures, props, mysterious props veiled in bags, comics, texts, poems, dictionary words, dictations, provided or random beginnings or ends, other prompts the teacher finds relevant and appropriate, or combinations of these.

The quick write gets students writing. It is a fun activity that reintroduces students to joy in writing. *There are only two rules:* 1) the student must keep his or her pencil moving on the paper even if he or she just draws squiggles, and 2) the student must study the prompt. With practice, in the five minutes the student works on the quick write, eventually squiggles turn to writing. By design, this writing is creative, rather than rationalized. The teacher can introduce rationalization as a mechanism of revision.

I use the sample, "[Picture Prose Poem](#)", to introduce quick writes and demonstrate what can be done with them.

The following [quick write tasks](#), with some student responses, have been successful in my classes. Usually, I have the students keep a quick write portfolio where they can keep their creations. My hope of course is that some students keep these portfolios.

## Quick Reads

Complementary to Quick Writes are [Quick Reads](#).

Fundamental to writing is reading; fundamental to both is story – the intelligent communication of ideas. Together, writing and reading form the dialogue of asynchronous communication and are arguably more important than speaking and listening because they realize 1) mass, 2) spatially sundered and 3) asynchronous distribution of a message.

In anthropology, technology is any physical and intellectual knowledge, skill and craft that is passed from person to person, generation to generation. Communication is at the heart of technology. Without it civilization is not possible and can not adapt to continuous change.

Students are highly inventive, intelligent, curious and communicative beings. They need to learn how to communicate in all forms using multiple means. This includes social media and ink-and-paper communication.

Quick writes get students playing with their story and language. Quick reads get them experiencing the story and language of others. Played off of each other, quick writes and quick reads engage students in practice in communication.