



## Literacy at Hartford Public High School

December 13, 2004

Volume 2 Number 15

### Quick Writes

From Pre-reading Activities for Content Area Reading and Learning

Quick Writes is an easily implemented, lesson-based strategy that can prepare students for new materials to be learned or enable them to review previously learned material for new content. Quick Writes begins by posing a question to students and having them react to it in writing. Here are two examples:

- Today we begin a new unit on weather. In the next 30 seconds, write down all the words you know that you think of when you think of the weather.
- Before we begin talking about water conservation, write down everything you know about the concept of conservation. You have 1 minute.

The intent of these questions is to preview the topic and get students to access their prior knowledge and begin thinking about a topic. Additionally, it gives teachers an idea of what their students know about the topic. Once students have listed what they know, you may want to have them tell what they have written down as you list their thoughts on the board.

Quick Writes can also serve as a means to get students to synthesize what they learned from a previous lesson. In this case, consider the following questions:

- We have been learning about climates. In 45 seconds, list as many different climates as you can.
- Yesterday's history lesson had some difficult ideas to be learned. Write down at least one idea that you think you don't understand well enough.

Once this activity is completed and students share what they know, you will know if any re-teaching may be necessary before moving on to new material. Additionally, this helps students self-assess their own learning and monitor how well they have understood the material.

Quick Writes is motivating and enables students to improve their level of understanding. The strategy can be adapted easily to whatever is being studied and to the ability level of the students.

### Rubrics

The use of rubrics in a class provides students with a clear indication of how they will be scored on a particular assignment and provides them with a broad outline of what they should include in their work. A useful web site that provides many pre-made rubrics and that allows teachers to generate their own can be found at the following URL:

<http://www.rubrician.com>

This site provides general rubrics, language arts rubrics, mathematics rubrics, performing arts rubrics, physical education rubrics, social study rubrics, technology rubrics, science rubrics, and writing rubrics.

Navigating the site is very simple, and the variety of offerings ensures that everyone will find something of interest and utility. Best of all, teachers who do not find what they are specifically looking for can generate their own, lesson-specific rubrics in a few moments, print them out, and use them with their students.

Remember: NEASC will be looking at the way we use rubrics as we grade our students. Here's an easy way to get started.

