



Classroom Activities or Homework Assignments Writing Outside the Essay and New Openings

Introduce Activities

As we move through the content phase of the essay, into the structure, phase, it can be helpful to explore the essay's topic from a few different angles. These two exercises will help you do that. Completing these activities not mean you do not have the right content or your essay doesn't have a strong opening. We're just trying to help ourselves see the essay from a new perspective.

Share an Example: Writing Outside the Essay

- Share a first draft of an essay (with student permission)
- Note three ways the writer could explore more deeply.
- Explain that they are going to help each other do this too. There are no right answers; just opportunities.

Student Pairs: Writing Outside the Essay

- Divide students into pairs.
- They should share their draft and any feedback they have received so far.
- Ask them to identify three spots where their partner could write more. Some possibilities:
 - Find general statements. Ask your partner to expand on what it means in more specific terms.
 - Find spots that might benefit from more detail. Even if the essay “works” encourage your partner to fill out some of the detail for the sake of exploring the essay.
- Allow 10 minutes for this activity. If students are unsure what to pick, remind them that anything is ok. We are looking for new ways to see the essay, not best openings or most valuable spots to explore.



- Tell students to return the essays to their partner.
- Students should answer their partners' questions and/or free write on the areas they recommended.
- Make sure students understand that they are intentionally writing outside the essay. They are not trying to fix the paragraph the question came from. Instead, they are generating new material, which they might or might not use later.
- Allow 15 minutes for this activity. If students don't finish, you can encourage them to write more later.

Share a Sample: New Openings

- Share a first draft of an essay (with student permission).
- Note three new places where the writer could enter the essay.

Student Pairs: New Openings

- Ask students to give their draft back to their partner, along with the free writes from the last activity (writing outside the essay.)
- Ask them to identify three alternative entry points for their partner's essay. Some possibilities:
 - Choose a spot from the middle of the essay.
 - Choose something from one of the free writes.
 - Choose something that wouldn't be an obvious choice. Even if the essay "works" encourage your partner to be willing to play with the draft for the sake of exploring the essay.
- Allow 10 minutes for this activity. If students are unsure what to pick, remind them that anything is ok. We are looking for new ways to see the essay, not best openings or most valuable spots to explore.



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- Tell students to return the essays to their partner.
- Students should take the openings their partner suggested and try writing a new opening paragraph for each, as well as some notes about how the essay might develop if they were to begin in that spot.
- Make sure students understand that they do not have to decide which opening they prefer at this point. They should just explore for now.
- Allow 20 minutes for this activity. If students don't finish, you can encourage them to continue later.