

Some Fun Class Activities That Work:

“Coach” Descriptive Writing Activity

- Ask students to close their eyes; listen; open eyes and write; then close eyes again.
- Ask students to write a brief description of what they see when you say **“The coach”**
- Ask students to write a brief description of what they see when you say **“The coach went down the road”**
- Ask students to write a brief description of what they see when you say **“The stage coach went down the road”**
- Ask students to write a brief description of what they see when you say **“The dusty stage coach bounced along the rutted Texas prairie road”**
- Have students share what they wrote for each. Discuss why they are so different. Discuss the importance of description to guide your reader to see exactly what you intend them to see in your writing.

“Pretty Cat” Description Activity (Thanks to Nick Carbone of Bedford/St. Martins)

- Say, **“I have a pretty cat. Please describe him. You will receive an F on this assignment if you do not describe him exactly.”**
- Discuss why they would have difficulty doing this assignment.
- Discuss the importance of “showing, not telling” when writing anything that requires a description.
- Now, you can write “Pretty Cat” on student papers in places that need more description, as a grading shorthand.

Peer Review ideas:

- **“Say Back”** – ask students to “say back” to the writer what they understand from their paper (i.e., repeat the thesis, or summarize the main point, or outline the essay, or list the evidence for each topic sentence)
- **Next Two Paragraphs** – ask students to respond to the thesis statement and first body paragraph in a brief summary and then ask them to write the next TWO paragraphs of the paper.
- **Happy / Frustrated** – ask students to list two things that made them happy about the peer paper they are reading, and two things that made them want to pull their hair out.