

## What is Low-Stakes Writing?

- Frequent, informal assignments that make students spend time regularly reflecting in written language on what they are learning from discussions, readings, lectures, and their own thinking.
- They don't have a lot of weight in the final grade.
- Sometimes done **in class** and sometimes **for homework**.
- The goal of low stakes assignments is not so much to produce excellent pieces of writing as to get students to think, learn, and understand more of the course material.

### Low Stakes Writing Objectives Include:

- critical thinking about course content and issues
- independent thinking
- understanding multiple perspectives /finding the heart of the issue
- learning to compare and synthesize
- finding logical connections in experimental result or between concepts, events, themes
- learning how to generalize from data
- learning how to prioritize information
- learning how to ask good research questions
- learning to find and select relevant research materials
- comprehending and summarizing difficult reading material

*“In a sense, we get to throw away the low stakes writing itself but keep the neural changes it produced in students’ heads.” (Elbow, 5)*

### Examples of Low-Stakes Writing Assignments

Outside of Class LSW (Preparatory)	In-Class LSW
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study Questions</li> <li>• Triple-Entry Note Taking</li> <li>• Class Letters</li> <li>• The Position Paper</li> <li>• The Reading Response Sheet</li> <li>• Interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anticipatory writing about upcoming topic</li> <li>• Class Notes</li> <li>• Free-writing</li> <li>• Focused Free-writing</li> <li>• Imaginary Letter to Absent Colleague</li> <li>• Writing through Problem Solving</li> <li>• Visual Concept-Map</li> <li>• “Circulating the Question”</li> <li>• The 1-minute paper:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The main point</li> <li>○ The most important thing learned during class</li> <li>○ Questions remained unanswered or concepts still unclear</li> <li>○ One word/sentence from readings</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

#### Based on:

Anson, Chris M. and Deanna P. Dannels, “The Heart of the Matter. Writing, Speaking, and Inquiry-Guided Learning” 219-127. In *Teaching and Learning through Inquiry*. Ed. Virginia S. Lee. Stylus Publishing, 2004.

Elbow, Peter. “High Stakes and Low Stakes in Assigning and Responding to Writing.” *New Directions in Teaching and Learning*. 69 (Spring 1997). 5-13.

“Do the Write Thing: Teaching with Writing,” The Writing Center, University of Iowa.