

***Grab-and-Go Writing Activity:
Writing with a Purpose: Inspiring Creativity and Teamwork***

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Timeframe: 15-20 minutes

Materials needed (including preparation): computer, access to the internet (YouTube), LCD projector (with optional laser pointer), whiteboard and markers, lined paper and pen (for students), and information from “What Makes a Commercial Memorable?”

Objectives: After the activity, students will be able to

- analyze and solve a complex problem while working in a team.
- develop strategies to perform well in a fast-paced environment under time-pressure.
- share duties with partners and multitask to achieve goals effectively.
- practice composition and oral communication skills.

Introduction: [2 minutes]

“To help you develop skills working in a team—skills that are often required by many employers—we will perform an activity that will allow you to evaluate your strengths and weaknesses as team players and will let you work effectively with your classmates. The activity draws on your problem-solving and critical thinking skills as well as on your work ethics and diplomacy. You will practice your written and oral communication skills as you compose and present the most memorable commercial.”

Procedures: [12-15 minutes]

Step 1 [1 minute]: Make small groups of 3-5 students.

Step 2 [1 minute]: “Let us have a look at one of the most memorable commercials by Volkswagen, ‘The Force’ (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R55e-uHQna0>). As you watch the clip, think about what features make this ad appealing to the audiences.” (If you have time, discuss what those feature might be before watching the video.)

Step 3 [2 minutes]: Ask students, “What makes this and any other commercial captivating and memorable?” On the projector, show highlights from “What Makes a Commercial Memorable?” (see below).

According to the results of the query, published by *Forbes* online, “What Makes a TV Commercial Memorable and Effective?” some of defining features of a successful commercial are

- **humor.** (Comment on the humorous aspect of “The Force” commercial.)
- **tagline.** (Company’s famous motto, “Das Auto,” serves as the tagline in the ad.)
- **iconic-type character.** (Darth Vader from *Star Wars*)

Step 4 [5 minutes]: “Using these guidelines, create the most memorable commercial with your teammates. You have the freedom to decide what you advertise and how you do it. Write a script of a short commercial (about 30-60 seconds long) and discuss how you will present it to the class. Decide on how it should look and sound: will you use different voices, sound effects, and/or creative movement? You have five minutes to complete the task.” Students should not just read their notes but rather act it out.

Step 5 [5 minutes]: Groups take turns presenting their commercials. The instructor can provide brief comments and point out the defining features to reinforce the concept.

Closure/Evaluation: [1 minute] “I hope this exercise has shown you that working effectively as a team under time pressure requires many skills and qualities such as active listening, critical thinking, collaborating, composing, evaluating, imagining, visualizing, and presenting. At the same time, this kind of work provides a creative outlet and an empowering learning experience for all the participants.”

As a follow-up activity, the instructor can assign (in class or as homework) a written reflection, which can be focused on any of the following questions:

- What was particularly difficult about working in a team?
- What have they learned from this exercise?
- What skills do they still need to develop?

Activity Analysis:

The strength of the activity is that it is adaptable to any course or discipline and adjustable in terms of content and duration. For example, the instructor can assign a specific tagline or product for the groups to work on.

Since practicing team-building skills requires students to be present in class and to be part of a group, they can appreciate the advantage of a traditional classroom environment compared to that of an online course. However, this activity would be hard to do in a larger class unless time and space allow for an extended version of this exercise.