Students often write essays without taking notice of the sound of their writing. Frozen in their approaches, many students start writing from the beginning and stop when they get to the end. Mirroring this writing process, a common revision practice also includes rereading pieces of writing from the beginning to the end to check for grammatical errors. The activity I assigned flips this idea and includes reading the assignment from the end to the beginning. During this self-editing session, I required students to bring a printed draft to class. They begin by reading each sentence, slowly, starting from the last sentence first. Prior to this assignment, I provided students with different colored pencils and had the students color code their work, paying close attention to thesis, keywords, and paragraph contents. As such, the primary focus of this exercise is for students to self-edit. The proper timing for this activity would be closer to the submission of the final draft of a project.

Opposite Revision

Distribute a handout with the following directions:

* Read your sentences, line by line, from the last to the first, alone.
* Are your sentences varied in length and in pattern or type?
* Have you used active verbs and effective language? (Circle all of the 2B verbs in this piece in red)
* Are all sentences complete and correct? (Are you missing words? Verb endings?)
* Did you use spell check and double-checked its suggestions?
* Have you proofread word for word?

Instruct the students to use colored pencils to circle all uses of “to be” verbs within their essays after reading the essay from the end to the beginning. Once the students finish this part of the exercise, tell them to pair up and read their essays aloud. Student 1 reads his/her essay aloud to Student 2 while Student 2 looks on to the draft, as well. During this portion of the exercise, most students begin to take a more heightened notice of surface-level errors; however, sometimes the students realize organizational issues, as well. The purpose of this two-fold assignment is to give students a visual, auditory, and kinesthetic approach to revision that they may have not yet experienced.

Sources for Further Reading

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