Response Lenses   - DRAFT -

Center of Gravity ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Reply ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

More About ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Sayback ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Play-by-Play ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Audience ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Two-Step Summary ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Conversation Map ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Skeleton Feedback ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

How to Get Started with a Prompt

Gather context from the student about this prompt— what class it's from, when they got it.

Taking turns, **read the prompt aloud**.

Now ask, "What things will they have to do?" and **communally, make a list of tasks** (if you have trouble sifting the tasks from a long, complicated prompt try highlighting verbs)

Don't worry about listing every possible task, just get the bulk of them.

Now, **divide a paper into 3 sections** and,

Roughly, **place the tasks** in order that they will probably need to be worried about:

Early		Later		Laaaaater

Again, don't worry about placing every task from your communal list, just get most placed. This isn't a scientific timeline meant to bind the writer to these exact tasks, but a way to sift through a lot of information and find a place to start.

Now, **just get a toe-hold** to get started, pick something the whole group can explore and either:

Quicklist   **Mindmap**   or   **Focused Short-write**
then   then
focused short-write   focused short-write

Choosing a Lens

We've tried to put the lenses in this booklet in the order that's best for learning them. This isn't absolute; you could shuffle the order a bit and it would probably be okay. But we've found students have an easier time responding in some ways than others, for example asking for amplification (More About), and initially we want to take advantage of that strength. We're also aware that most students come to us with a very different experience of responding to texts, or more likely having their texts responded *to*. Most of them have been taught that writing is about products and evaluating whether those products are good or bad. We want to help students see beyond this, to see writing as a process, drafts as a possibility, and response as an invitation to revision. So we've found we need to be careful about starting with lenses that deal closely with what's on the page (2-Step Summary, Where & Why) because those lenses tend to reinforce the students' ideas of product, and it can make it very hard to ask them then to back away from the text and to do a lens like Reply. So, you might see the order of the lenses in this booklet as a progression from gathering context and discussing of ideas, toward choices and organization in a particular text. And in deciding which lens to use on a draft, the next lens in that progression is a good choice.

Another thing to keep in mind is that the different lenses make different features of texts more visible – development, claims, organization, voice – so **we want students to experience as many of the lenses as possible**. Which means, we'll tend to choose lenses based on which ones we haven't learned yet and not necessarily on what a particular draft "needs." Again, this isn't absolute. You may have a strong urge to use, let's say, Sayback to help you as a reader understand a particular draft, and as long as you're careful about the issues mentioned above, it should be fine. But, in general we'll try to work through the lenses in the book, introducing and practicing them all by the end of a semester. Our goal is to get to a place where readers and a writer negotiate which lens to use on a draft, but we realize students need to try all the lenses before they can even make that kind of choice.

And it's okay to learn the lenses in order without too much worry about drafts, because **all the lenses help readers look more closely at a text**. Even in the worst case, doing a lens will probably give you a better sense of what lens you'd rather do, and *can* do next. That said, the lenses *do* differ and will probably be of benefit for different kinds of writing or, especially, texts at different stages in the writing process. Lenses that can create a discussion about content and ask for amplification (Reply, Center-of-Gravity, More About), for example, for earlier drafts, responses that look at the organization of ideas for later drafts (2-Step Summary, Where & Why). So, once we've learned all the lenses we'll keep this in mind when choosing how to respond to a draft.

Using a Lens

　　While the lenses are based on things we do in our day-to-day conversation, using them on writing is new to students. So, **introducing a lens is very important**. We need to take our time and pay attention to what we're doing, not just what we're doing it *to*. The first time you do a lens, make sure you go through the whole lens page: Name it, read how to ask for it, how to give it, and what it's like. And even then, we'll probably need to use some lenses multiple times to get the hang of them.

　　Also, we want to **make sure students are actually using the lenses**. The way most people are used to responding to texts is a binary liking or disliking followed by directives for revision. It's really easy for people to fall back into that kind of response if we don't insist they try the response of the lens we're doing. If someone does go off lens, we'll define the kind of response they are giving "*Ah, you're telling us whether you like it,*" and then remind them of the kind of response we're all trying to give "*but we're only writing what we want to hear More About right now.*"

　　It's essential to give these responses in writing rather than just saying them. Writing and then reading that same feedback aloud prevents one person from dominating the conversation and ensures that all members of the group have an opportunity to gather their thoughts, formulate a response, and share them equally. Also, sharing impromptu writing like this teaches students to have faith in their own ability to use writing as a means of exploring and communicating ideas.

　　It's best if you can assemble a group to give these responses. What better way to find out what an audience might think of a text than sharing it with a small group, hearing them respond, and having a discussion with them? And not just for the writer, hearing several other readers asking the same questions of a text you just read can give you a sense of what audience can mean. Responding in groups also reinforces the idea that students have their own thoughts and expertise to bring to a conversation, and, in fact, the idea that writing is a part of an academic conversation, not just a solo performance.

　　Because we want students to get that sense of audience in our groups **it's important that we all respond to the same text using the same lens,** because different lenses bring different features into focus. If we are all using the same lens, when we share, we're all taking part in the same conversation.

　　The experience of our kind of responding is new in several ways to most students so **it's important to reflect on the experience after responding.** What was it like to respond this way? What did this particular lens show you? When might you want this kind of response on your own writing?

After Doing a Lens

What do you do after responses are all read back? Hopefully discussion about the responses will come naturally and easily and opportunities to explore in writing will arise organically from that discussion.

If discussion doesn't come easily, though, one thing you can do is **ask students if they noticed any similarities** about their responses. Hopefully they will notice **patterns, or categories of response.** If tutees aren't able to, you can help. *"Ah, you two wrote about celebrity deaths and we both mentioned betrayal by friends."* After doing that and talking a bit, **look for something else you can write about**. *"So, which interests you all more right now, this idea of betrayal, or celebrity deaths? Ok, let's write about that, then: What celebrity's death had a big impact on you?"*

If there's no obvious way to take the discussion back to writing, put it to the group:

What could we write about right now? Let's all write two possible questions we could explore in writing right now, and then we'll share them.

Have tutees read their draft shortwrite questions one-by-one and help re-shape them so they are open-ended, specific, and personal. Then decide together on one to write and share.

If you're teaching a lens for the first time, make sure to leave time at the end of the writing and discussion to take time to reflect on using the lens:

What was it like giving this kind of response?

This is useful early on to highlight how the kind of responding we do at the Writing Center is different than the way students have responded to texts before. It can also help them draw distinctions between the different lenses.

One question that is always good to end a session on is to ask a writer:

Do you have something you could work on now?

If they say no, you can spend a little more time writing as a group about how the responses the group gave might lead to choices for the writer.

Center-of-Gravity

After reading this, what really sticks in your mind?

One center of gravity for me is …

A Center-of-gravity is simply what sticks in your mind after reading a text. It could be something new and interesting to you as a reader or a pattern that you notice running throughout a draft. These don't have to be main points. Doing Centers-of-gravity is a great way to start a conversation about a text, but it can also be helpful to a writer, letting them know what an audience notices most, whether that happens because something is interesting, distracting, or moving. What a writer does with that information depends. It might just feel good that people are hearing what you said, or it might show you something you didn't even realize was in your draft and that you want to emphasize now.

When you write a center-of-gravity for a draft, first, read the whole thing, then put it aside and thinking back over it, make note of the one or two spots that stick in your mind most.

It's Like:

Center-of-gravity is a lot like what we do after we watch a movie and are walking out with friends or family. Don't we usually talk about the moments that, for whatever reason, still stick in mind after the whole 2 hours of the movie is over? Maybe a particularly bad actor, a cool digital effect, or a romantic tension that ran through the whole thing, is the first thing that springs to mind. And these can lead to a conversation about the movie as a whole.

Example:

"I think one center of gravity for me is the idea of worry. You say before you never really worried about anything but when you saw the university syllabus you didn't know if you could do all the work: you worried. I wonder if this means college was challenging you in positive ways. Is it okay to worry? Or, maybe you should have been better informed about what to expect?"

Tutor Notes on Center-of-Gravity

The Writer Can:

Do the lens

Watch out for:

Background & Theory

First appeared in Peter Elbow's Writing Without Teachers.

If you ever teach in a classroom, this is a really effective way to have a class discussion about a text. Have students get in small groups, write their "centers", share in their groups and discuss, then ask each group to provide one as you put them on the board.

Reply

  When you ask for Reply you're really inviting readers to enter into a conversation with you about your topic. Many times what's most helpful from an audience isn't whether they think our draft is good or bad, but whether their experiences with the topic are different than ours and in what ways.

  To give a writer a Reply, first, read the whole draft, then, putting it aside, simply say what comes to your mind. A Reply might be a personal experience or memory you have, but it might just be something you've read or heard about. Sometimes it may be directly related to what the author said, other times it won't.

It's Like:

  Reply is a lot like what you do when your friend tells you they just found a little mom-and-pop taco stand and how good the food was. That makes you think about a little hamburger stand in your home town, and you tell them about it and how good the cheeseburgers were. What you share is relevant and comes from your own experience, even though it isn't about the shop your friend mentioned or even the same kind of food.

Example:

  A Reply to an essay about the death of a famous female singer:

  "This makes me think of Kurt Cobain. He was a young artist at the top of his popularity and I remember being shocked at the news of his death. It was totally unexpected. And I did have all of Nirvana's albums. Now there would be no more songs, no more albums. It's odd to be so moved or affected by the death of what is basically a stranger, someone who didn't even know you."

Tutor Notes on Reply

The Writer Can:

  After sharing this, I also think of …

Watch out for:

Background & Theory

Reply assumes not just writers, but readers have expertise to bring to conversations. It puts aside the writer's text for a while so we can take a moment to take stock of that expertise and have a conversation about the topic. Even if our replies don't offer a clear direction in revision it is a powerful way for a writer to get a better idea of audience. Not only are people paying attention to what you have written, they also have experiences and ideas of their own.

By using the personal you are better able to get at the general, the abstracted ideas that show up in texts.

Reply is actually a good response to use for poems because the subjects are often emotional and personal, and getting a sense of the audiences experiences rather than what they think of your poem is a respectful way to start a discussion.

More About

Doing More About for a draft lets the writer know what questions you have and what you're curious about. It's good for writers to know what readers want to know because often what we want to know are the things that will help us be convinced and satisfied. But just because you want to know more about something doesn't mean the writer has to put it in their draft. They still have to make decisions about which things are most important.

When you give a writer More About read the whole draft first. Afterwards, just write down whatever you want to know more about. It's okay if you also write a sentence or two to explain *why* you want to hear more about those things.

It's Like:

More about is a lot like when your friend is telling you about a fender bender they saw on the way to school. You might ask *"What color was the car?"* because you're curious. The color of the car might not matter at all as far as your friend is concerned, but it's okay for you to be curious about it.

Example:

"I want to know more about how the foster system works; when do kids
enter, just as infants?

I want to know more about where kids that age out live, do they have to get
their own apartment? How do they make money? Are they on their own or
still assisted in some way?

I want to know more about how you think we might help the young people
aging out.

I want to know more about if there are different challenges in aging out in
different areas. I mean, do young people have it easier aging out in, say,
Ventura than Oakland?"

Tutor Notes on More About

The Writer Can:
I could write more about …

Watch out for:
"I want to know more about your thesis." What the responder is getting at here (not knowing the purpose of the text overall) would probably be better served by giving a Sayback. More About should be about things you are interested in as a reader, not veiled advice based on some criterion you have in mind (i.e *all essays need a thesis*).

Background & Theory
Amplification, adding to a text, is the easiest kind of change for learning writers to make, probably because it's the simplest of all revision— once you decide where, just add a few sentences answering the reader's questions. Because of this, when asked what kind of response they would like, student writers will often *only* ask for More About and we, as readers, may need to reserve the right to respond with a different lens; if we are more puzzled about what an essay is even about, giving a More About response might help, but a Sayback would be a more straightforward way to start a conversation about that.

Sayback

With Sayback we're basically checking with the writer to see if what we understand the writer's draft to be saying is what the writer meant to say.   But this is also really helpful for us as readers in *figuring out* what a piece of writing is saying.

To give a writer a Sayback for their draft read the whole thing, then, try to sum up in a sentence what you feel the writer is "getting at." Feel free to try this with several "draft" sentences. Write your response in a mildly questioning tone that invites the writer to respond. Think of yourself as inviting the writer to restate and get closer to what they want to say.

It's Like:

Sayback is like what we do sometimes after we hear a teacher give a lot of instructions about an assignment. We ask to clarify, *"Are you saying this draft will be due next week, but* also *due later as part of the final portfolio?"*

Example:

"Are you saying overall that injustice has always existed and still exists?
Are you saying overall that injustice is usually about the majority oppressing the minority, like with Martin Luther King Jr.?
Are you saying overall that the fight against injustice starts within the minorities being oppressed?
Are you saying overall that justice can't be revenge, and that usually laws are about revenge?
Are you saying overall that injustice is when a government *says* it grants people rights but doesn't actually live up to what they say?"

Tutor Notes on Sayback

The Writer Can:
I think I'm saying overall …

Watch out for:
Just listing back smaller claims of the draft, or responding paragraph by paragraph. Sayback should be about what the whole text is saying overall. Use Skeleton Feedback to look at individual claims.

Background & Theory
Used by Sondra Perl and Elaine Avidon of the New York City Writing Project. We revised the lens to add the word "overall" because some students would just make lists of topics or claims in the paper, rather than trying to get at the crux of what the writer seems to be trying to say.

Play-by-Play

With a Play-by-play we do our best to record our raw reactions as a reader *as* we read a draft. These reactions are the basis of all other responses.

To give a writer a Play-by-play: pause after reading each paragraph and write the story of how that paragraph made you feel. Use "I" statements. Predict what might happen and check on your predictions every now and then.

It's Like:

Play-by-play got its name because it's a lot like what a sports commentator does when they give a play-by-play: *"Wow, they're going to throw a pass instead of punt. I'm really surprised, but if this works I predict they'll throw again and they might be able to turn this game around."*

It's also a lot like live tweeting, if you've ever seen someone tweeting during a political debate or new electronics launch, and they are commenting and predicting as the event unfolds, they are giving their Play-by-play.

Example:

"I'm hesitant to agree with you that we're a classless and hindrance-less society— I'm hoping you return to that point in more detail. I'm unsure who has told me to put down others to boost my own self-esteem. Again, I'm not agreeing with you and hope you explain this more. I'm curious too what forms of success you mean and I'm interested in your opinion of how our advancing society has or has not changed the ideal of success. Is success now different than 50 years ago? I want you to explain. I'm not trusting your voice yet because I'm hesitant to agree with the points you bring up, but I'm interested in how you will back up this introduction."

Tutor Notes on Play-by-Play

1. Take turns reading the lens description page.
2. Shortwrite: **"What reactions do you have while reading that make you like a text?"**
3. Share and place communally on a sheet of paper.
4. Shortwrite: **"What reactions do you have while reading that make you dislike a text?"**
5. Share and place communally on a sheet of paper.
6. Read the first paragraph aloud.
7. Write Play-by-Play for that paragraph & share.
8. Define and correct off-lens responses.
9. Repeat 6-8 until you finish the essay.
10. Discuss the overall response a little. Which places in the text elicited the most reactions? What reactions weren't on your communal sheet?
11. Post Response question: **"What was it like to give this kind of feedback?"**

It's okay if you need more than one session to complete a play-by-play, you can pick up where you left off. Just have everyone start the next session by reading through their previous responses to have them fresh in mind.

Possible Reader Reactions:

Lost	Curious	Surprised	Amused	Persuaded	Doubtful
Content	Confused	Resistant	Impatient	Bored	Put Off
Pleased	Trusting	Interested	Questioning		

The Writer Can:

Do the lens. The author's will be from a slightly different angle, for example *"I'm worried that I come across as angry here?"* but still a Play-by-Play.

Watch out for:

"You should …"   *"You need …"*   *"I want …"*
And fake feelings; which are really traditional evaluations of a text or its parts framed as if it is a feeling. *"I feel like it's lacking an argument,"* should really be something like: *"I'm feeling unconvinced because . . ."*

Background & Theory

This was Peter Elbow's Movies of the Reader's Mind that appeared in his Writing Without Teachers. We had some students confused by the movie metaphor, they would think they were supposed to describe scenes from essays as if they were appearing in a movie. We finally changed the name of the lens to Play-by-Play to try to avoid that confusion.

Audience

Who you're talking to about something will probably change *how* you talk to them and what you say. With Audience we're trying to see if the draft is written for a particular group of people, and if it is, who? What we can also do is come up with a clear idea of who the writer *wants* to write to and how they might write better to that audience.

To do Audience first read the whole draft and then write who you think the author is writing to and what things led you to think that.

It's Like:

Audience is a lot like how you talk differently about a band you really like with a friend who likes them too, with a friend who's never heard of them, and with your grandpa (if it ever even comes up). With the fellow fan you expect them to know a lot of things you do, the names of the people in the band, the albums, the names of songs. With the other friend you might have to fill them in on a lot of that. With grandpa you might have to explain why your band isn't just "noise."

Example:

"I imagine you writing to an audience that is only minimally aware of modern farmers. I imagine these people don't personally know any farmers, and like you said, only think of farmers as being hokey, overall-wearing, hay slingers. I imagine this audience is young too, given the casual sound and tone of the paper."

Tutor Notes on Audience

After exploring who the audience of a draft might be, the group can:

-Generate a list of potential audiences and write about what those audiences might know,
    need to know and want to know.
-What does the audience want to hear?
-What do they not want to hear?
-What does this audience already know?
-What does this audience care about?
-Who do you know who's part of this audience?

The Writer Can:
        Do the lens

Watch out for:

Background & Theory
   This response lens was our own creation.

   While many of our lenses are about making group members as audience more apparent, the writer's intended audience, or first imagined audience, or even potential audience might be very different then their group mates. The Audience lens allows us to think about these other possible audiences and maybe make revision choices.

Two-Step Summary

Writer:

For each paragraph: What things does it talk about?
What does it *say* about them?

Responder:

The things this paragraph talks about: …
What it says about them is …

___

Two-Step Summary looks at what each paragraph of a draft is about and then zooms out a little bit to see what it says about that topic.   This can be helpful for a writer wanting to see the structure of a draft, but it can be *really* helpful for us as readers to know what a complicated text is saying, before having a discussion about the ideas or choices the writer might make in a revision.

To give a writer Two-Step Summary, list the things that are talked about in a paragraph. After that, write a sentence in your own words that sums up what it's saying about those things. Repeat this for each paragraph.

It's Like:

Two-Step Summary is a lot like, if you're helping a friend unpack boxes after a move and your friend asks *"what's that one?"*—you might say *"it's got silverware, some cups, a vase, and other stuff."* And then, *"I think it must be a kitchen box."*

Example:

"**Paragraph 1**

Things: teachers, teacher pay, school, children

What it says about those things: Teachers are an essential part of our kids' lives so we need to pay them well.

Paragraph 2

Things: parents, school, education, parents' jobs

What it says about those things: It's good for parents to be involved with their kids schooling but they are busy and tired from just trying to make a living."

Tutor Notes on Two-Step Summary

1. Read aloud.
2. Write individually, **"What things are in this paragraph?"** These can just be lists of nouns or noun phrases, but they should be things *in* the text and not implied.
3. Rotate around the table sharing from your lists.
4. Write individually, in a sentence, in your own words: **"What does it say about those things?"**
5. Share.
6. You may want to ask **"What did you leave out?"** especially if responders are ignoring whole parts of paragraph. Or, you may need to say **"Show me where that is in the paragraph,"** if they seem to be inventing things that aren't there.
7. Repeat for each paragraph.

The Writer Can:

Do the lens

Watch out for:

Responders projecting ideas they know about a topic but that aren't actually in the text. A complicated paragraph about institutional racism might yield a says sentence something like *"racism is bad and we shouldn't do it,"* because the reader is familiar with those ideas, notices the topic and plugs in what they know. These are called commonplace narratives.

Background & Theory

This response was developed when we broke up Kenneth Bruffee's "Descriptive Outline, what Peter Elbow later called "Says and Does." We found that students would rarely get to the "whys" of a text's paragraphs because they were struggling so much with actually knowing what paragraphs were saying. And we found that summary is often more complicated and difficult then people assume. So, we broke the summary step into two, and made the "what is the paragraph doing?" step into a separate lens called "Where and Why."

Conversation Map

_____

Writing is often presenting what different people are saying about an issue and how all their claims and statements relate to each other. This can get complicated if there a lots of voices of if the people disagree in small ways. One way to help us understand these conversations as readers is to map them out, actually draw out the relationships on paper. Who is speaking first? Who are the different speakers responding to? Another thing we can do to help us understand the relationships between what all the speakers are saying, is to imagine them together in the same place talking to each other. What if all the sources quoted in a draft were sitting in a coffee shop talking to each other? What would they say to each other?

To do a Conversation Map first read the whole draft and then establish who the speakers are in this particular conversation and write them on a piece of paper. Figure out what things each speaker is talking about, what each speaker seems to be saying overall.   Then try and draw connections between them on the paper. To try and figure out language to explain how the speakers' ideas are related to each other, you can also imagine the speakers having a conversation in a coffee shop, and write out a script of what they would say to each other.

It's Like:

Example:

Here is an imagined conversation for a sample paper about inequality in our society:
"**Malcolm X:** The message of your paper is exactly what society wants you to think— pull yourself up by the bootstraps, quit your whining, anyone can make it if you try—while the truth is the brightest blacks and women might have to struggle just to achieve the middle class, while for whites you practically have to be a spree killer to be thrown out of it. From the start your better schools and safer neighborhoods make achieving anything easier.
Richard Rodriguez: Yes, I agree, but I would add that even those women and men of color that make it, they will pay a price, sweating, working, fearing, that the average white male student will never have to endure.

Tutor Notes on Conversation Map

1. Take turns reading the draft aloud.
2. Take turns adding the speakers in this conversation to a communal list.
3. Pick one speaker and individually list things they talk about (like 2-Step Summary).
4. Share with the group.
5. Individually write in one sentence, in your own words, what that speaker says about those things? (Like the 2nd step of 2-Step Summary).
6. Share with the group.
7. Repeat for each speaker from your list.
8. Use arrows to draw relationships between these speakers on a communal piece of paper. Use the questions below to help:

Who's talking to whom?	How are they talking to each other?
Who's asking questions?	Who's loudest?
Who's saying yes, and…?	Who speaks most?
Who's saying yes, but…?	Who's angry?
Who's saying no, but…?	Who's more formal?
Who has evidence?	Who do you want to hear more from?

9. Finally, imagine the sources quoted in the draft sitting in a coffee shop talking. Write out a dialogue of specific things they say to each other?

Watch out for:

This lens is not meant to just map out the conversation as it happens in the draft in front of you, but to map it as is happening out in the world.

Background & Theory

We invented this response lens here. A common assignment was to have three voices talking about some subject and students would place quotes in their papers without any kind of explanation about how they related to each other. Mapping out who was talking like this seemed to be a good way to help students see relationships between stances and speakers.

Skeleton Feedback

Skeleton Feedback is a way to try and look at all the claims a draft is making and which evidence and examples are meant to support those claims. It doesn't worry about paragraphs so much as the claims and evidence wherever they fall. One claim may span several paragraphs and evidence for a claim might be located at many different places in a draft.

To give Skeleton Feedback read the whole draft first, then, list the claims as they come to you in any order. Don't worry about which is the most important, or which comes first in the paper, just try to get all the big claims. Then, pick one of those bigger claims and go back through the draft to find examples and evidence the writer is using to try and support that claim. Repeat this for all the claims.

It's Like:

Example:

Here are some of the claims a group came up with together for a draft about the use of the word "basic" in social media and pop culture:

   A basic woman is a predictable millennial woman.
   Basic is a term appropriated from black culture by white people.
   Basicness may be inevitable based on where you live.
   Basic is used against a particular type of woman.
   Basic is a stereotype.
   Using basic is a form of misogyny.
   Avoiding basicness is an upper-class privilege.
   People who make fun of basicness show a fear of conformity.

Tutor Notes on Skeleton Feedback

1. **1.** Read the whole text first.
2. **2.** Individually, write a list of the points or claims you remember as they come to you— they don't need to be in order of importance or appearance.
3. **3.** Take turns adding points, one by one, to a communal list.
4. **4.** As a group, think about which of the claims seem bigger or more important.
5. **5.** As pairs, take one of these bigger claims and look through the text for evidence and examples supporting that point. Colored highlighters can be really useful here, different colors for different claims.
6. **6.** Take turns reporting back what your pair found.
7. **7.** Repeat this for other big claims in the text.

The Writer Can:

Do the lens

Watch out for:

Background & Theory

This lens can lead to conversations about what a claim is, what can be evidence. But it can also make visible the relationship of claims to one another and the location of these claims and the evidence for them throughout a text.

While there is a lens in Sharing and Responding called Skeleton Feedback, it is very different from ours. It consists of six different questions that touch on everything from the main point, to claims, to suggestions. With our version we have gotten rid of the requirement to determine a main point which can be a difficult task on its own, and better served by Sayback. We've also removed a lot of the other questions and focused on claims in general. This allows us, along with Two-Step Summary, to have two tools that look closely at the content of texts, one from the angle of what paragraphs contain, and the other (Skeleton Feedback) from the angle of ignoring paragraph boundaries.

Voice

When you tell an author how their Voice sounds in a draft, you're giving them that immediate reaction we often have to a text because of the way the writer is coming off to us. The Voice of a writer might seem angry, condescending, hopeful or sympathetic. Finding out how readers are hearing your voice in a draft can be really useful, you may want to revise in order to sound more reliable or sympathetic. You may want to adjust things so you don't sound too frustrated or angry, it depends. And, keep in mind, that Voice can change throughout a draft, perhaps starting hesitant and becoming confident.

To give a writer Voice, read their whole draft and then write how they sound to you, including how their voice changes throughout the draft.

It's Like:

Voice is not necessarily someone sounding different, squeaky or fast, but the sense you get from what they're saying. When your friend is apologizing about breaking something he borrowed—*"Sorry I broke your backpack, that brand is really cheap, and I barely put any weight in it when we went camping. You should just buy a better one."* —and you get a sense that he doesn't really feel sorry or responsible, you're paying attention to Voice.

Example:

"I hear your voice as dreamy, kind of romantic, at first. I imagine a soft voice, almost like a therapist or a hypnotist. But then it seems to escalate into something a little more aggressive. At first this kind of sounds like you're trying to be honest with us, especially when you start talking about competition and how everyone is out to win. But as you go on it turns from honesty into arrogance. You seem to be aware of this though, as you question your own conceited tone in the third paragraph. The last two paragraphs, however, sound angry, hateful, even sociopathic, almost as though you're the only person in the world that really matters."

Tutor Notes on Voice

1. Take turns reading the lens description page.

2. Shortwrite: **"In my writing I want to sound…"**

3. Share, discuss, and place traits communally on a sheet of paper.

4. Pick one of these voices and Shortwrite: **"How do you make a text sound _____?"**

5. Share and discuss.

6. Read the whole draft aloud.

7. Write your response: **"I hear your voice(s) as…"**

8. Share and discuss.

9. Look back at the text to try and pinpoint where exactly responders started noticing/feeling the voice(s).

10. Post Response question: **"What was it like to give this kind of feedback?"**

The Writer Can:

In this writing I want to sound …

Watch out for:

Background & Theory

This lens appeared in Sharing and Responding.

Almost Said

Writer:
What am I almost saying, but not quite?

Responder:
You're almost saying …

When you give Almost Said for a draft, you're pointing out assumptions the text seems to be making, but also what connections are almost made. It's good to know about our assumptions, because they may be wrong, but it might even be more helpful to hear about possible connections that could be made that we didn't notice ourselves.

When you give a writer Almost Said for their draft, first read the whole piece. Then, looking back over it, make note of any assumptions, implications or ideas "hovering around the edges."

It's Like:
Almost Said for a draft is a lot like when a friend mentions an upcoming party and when you ask about it says: *"Oh, it's just a little get together. You wouldn't like the people coming, they're all from my work."* You friend is Almost Saying that you aren't invited.

Example:
In response to a draft about how women rappers fight stereotypes with their
lyrics the reader's Almost Said was:
"You're almost saying rap lyrics are the way they are because rappers are mostly
male.
You're almost saying that rap lyrics are misogynistic because of the   environment
rappers come from.
You're almost saying this is a cycle: male rappers have stereotypical ideas about
women and then male rap listeners learn the same stereotypes from their songs.
You're almost saying you like rap but you want rap lyrics you can enjoy without
being insulted.
You're almost saying that music should have a positive social message.
You're almost saying that musicians are role models."

The Writer Can:

Do the lens

Watch out for:

Background & Theory

We moved this lens back in the booklet because they rhetorical moves it asks of readers are pretty sophisticated. This is a powerful lens for more experienced readers, but learning readers might need to do something like 2- Step Summary before looking under the surface for assumptions.

Where & Why

     To do Where & Why you really need to know what's in a draft, so you need to do another lens that helps look closely at the draft first (like Two-Step Summary or Skeleton Feedback). Once you have an idea of what's there, you can start thinking about why the quotes, examples, paragraphs and chunks of ideas are arranged in the way they are. Is it a story and things are told chronologically? Is it laying out a problem before exploring possible solutions?

     To do Where & Why, once you have an idea of what's in a draft write in a slightly questioning tone *"Is this arranged … ?"* Feel free to offer several possibilities if you aren't sure.

It's Like:

     Where & Why is a lot like how you have the furniture in your room arranged. There could be several ways to arrange it in your room, but you'll have a reason for where you put each thing. Maybe you want light by your desk where you read. Maybe you want your dresser in the closet so it's out of the way. Drafts are the same way. You might put paragraphs and ideas in different orders for different reasons.

Example:

     "Is it arranged this way because this is the order you read the articles in class?

Is it arranged this way because Ehrenreich starts us in America, Zakaria goes outside the U.S., and Friedman even more global?

Is Ehrenreich giving the effects of globalization and Zakaria and Friedman the history and how of it?

Is it arranged like this because Ehrenreich is more critical, setting the tone of the piece while the others are less so, even excited about the changes?"

Tutor Notes on Where & Why

1. Take turns reading the lens description page.

2. Shortwrite: **"What are different ways the ideas in an essay might be arranged?"**

3. Share and discuss.

4. Read the whole draft aloud.

5. Write your response: **"Is this arranged this way because…?"**

6. Share and discuss.

7. Post Response question: **"What was it like to give this kind of feedback?"**

Not sure if we should do this at some point: Communally generate a list of ways texts and arguments are arranged
(by importance, by chronology, by similarity)

The Writer Can:

> I think it's arranged …
> I put this here because …

Watch out for:

Background & Theory

While the original Descriptive Outline would look at each paragraph and ask what it was doing, and this would often get to why it was in that location, there was often no clear answer to that question (student responders would say "It informs" about every paragraph). With this lens, we changed it so we look first at how things are arranged and then move to talking about why they might be arranged that way, what it does. In a way we added a second step to the process to help readers/responders much the way 2-Step Summary does for summary.

So, now we don't ask, *"What is this paragraph quoting Source A doing?"* but *"Why are your sources arranged in this order?"* If there was no purposeful decision made by the writer in putting the essay in its current order, then this response can at least lead to a discussion about possible orders and how they might affect the draft.

Help! – When Something Goes Wrong

Groups are meant to be a comfortable place, if tutees are disrespecting you or other tutees, or making people feel uncomfortable in any way, come talk to us! We need to help with that. Now, some other problems that might come up:

My group talks too much

Sometimes tutees know each other and will happily talk to each other but exclude the third student. Try switching up the seating. Try to give the excluded student more spotlight by letting them be tutor for the day or by letting them choose a shortwrite topic.

For general talkativeness, you need to reign in conversations that are purely social. It's okay, even necessary, to socialize, to form a healthy group rapport, but the reason we're here is to get comfortable communicating with writing. Try having tutees write and share about exciting social events. Be on the look out for possible shortwrite topics that come up in discussions, then stop everyone to write.

My group won't talk

If you have one student that is quiet or shy, you can treat them similar to a student being excluded. Direct some questions toward them, let them choose a shortwrite topic, or ask them to lead one of the sessions.

If your whole group doesn't seem to want to talk, you could try similar techniques. Ask open ended questions that require them to elaborate, or directly say something like "so tell me about that." Start the session off by writing about something lighthearted and fun like your favorite movies, instead of a private write. Be mindful of the things the group has in common as well as ways you can make them laugh.

My group won't write

There can be several reasons why a student is reluctant to write. Sometimes they get **hung up on correctness** and can't produce much writing because they are worried about each sentence they put down. Try Invisible Writing.

Sometimes **they see writing as completely different than speaking**. When they start telling you something, say "Stop . . . write what you are saying." Before they've even finished their utterance.

Sometimes **they don't know what they *can* write.**   Try Looping

Sometimes **they don't want to write for cultural reasons.** I see it most commonly when young men are in a small group together and don't want to seem uncool, or too invested in this school thing. Try Challenging them to write certain amounts.

My group won't bring drafts

You can take a session to look at the calendar, the tutees' syllabi, and actually schedule sessions they will promise to bring in drafts. Discuss what a "draft" can be; papers that have already been graded, or that aren't quite done, or from other classes are OK.

Generating Techniques

Quicklisting

Quicklisting is a way to generate by tapping into associative thinking. This means, not logical connections between things or ideas, but the leaps our brains can make. If I say "apple," you might think of the fruit, the computer company, or your grandma cooking pies. Because of this, Quicklisting tends to be strong for personal topics.

Also because of this, it is important not to edit your thoughts as you make your quicklist. It is also important to not worry that someone might see your list. So, **we never share our quicklists**. This gives us the freedom to write goofy and embarrassing things. Some pointers:

Have a clear question to list about.
Only list for 30 seconds or less.

Look for patterns in what you've listed to generate more lists.
Ask students if they see patterns in their results.

Think of times: past/present/future.
Think of opposites.

Once you have a bunch of quicklists done pick something that surprises or interests you and write a little explaining it. Then everyone can share that writing with the group.

Mindmapping

There are many ways to generate visually and they are called a lot of things. You may have used clustering or bubbles before, but we'll call this Mindmapping.

Mindmapping is about generating by looking for logical relationships between things. Because of this, it is strong in relationships between us and society, between organizations, communities, and hierarchies.

Start communally, every person can write their own bubbled idea on the same page. Once a bubble is on the page try to push more ideas off of it. After a bit, pause and try to see if there are any patterns or relationships between the ideas we have so far. Our goal is to then use that knowledge to put even more bubbles down.

Tips For Short-writes - What

So, what should we write?...

It's okay to take a few moments to pick something to write. Better yet, involve the group. Even if student suggestions have problems, you may be able to reframe them to make them work. Here are four tips for fruitful short-writes.
  Keep them:

Focused

> **Ask it as one clear question**. If you say "*let's write about writing in your past, maybe how it affected who you are as a student, or what your relationship to writing has been—whether you've hated or loved it.*" Each amendment makes the task I have as a writer more vague. If I'm not completely confused, I'll just focus myself on the last thing you say.

Open

> **Phrase it as an open-ended question**. Who, What, When, Where, Why, How, are good ways to start. Don't start with "do," or "are," or "was." "*Do you like writing?*" or "*Are you a confident writer?*" really limit the ways I can respond. Do you want me to just write "*No*"?

Real

> **Explore something you don't know**. Beware of setting a short-write up as a venue to demonstrate your expertise. If you are going to be writing with your group about a topic you are knowledgeable and/or opinionated about, try to find a question that you really are unsure of. Short-writing is meant to be an exploration, not just a new formulation of a canned response.

Personal

> **Make it about me**. I don't think all our short-writes need to be personal, in fact sometimes it would be better to avoid that, but it is an easy way to make short-writes both specific and relevant. So, this is probably related to being focused and real. Don't ask me "*Why is writing important?*" or "*How do people write?*" ask me "*Where do you write?*" or "*What kind of writing do you do?*"

Tips For Short-writes - When

So, when should we write?…

Some places to write are built into our small writing group processes—after prompts, after sharing and discussing responses—but what about other times when we're just having a verbal conversation, what are good times to stop everything and go back to writing?

Watch for:

A student asks about writing

Instead of feeling the need to be an expert on anything students might ask, **when someone asks a question turn it into an opportunity for the whole group to explore in writing**. You may have to reshape the question a bit, but if one person asks a question there's a pretty good chance that others may be wondering about the same thing. And even something that seems trivial at first *"How long should a college essay be?"* might lead to a really fruitful discussion in writing.

A student asks about revision choices

Some questions will be obvious to explore after reading a prompt, but keep in mind the questions you explore in writing that will help the group be a better audience.

Something interesting arises in discussion

Certain phrases can signal a good point to stop and explore something in writing: *I wonder why that is?, Has that ever happened to you?*

Reading Strategies

Survey

    If you were to go to a party with a friend but didn't really know what to expect I'm guessing you would pay close attention when you first walked in. You might notice how many people are there, what they're doing, and what the gender ratio is. You might pay attention to what they're wearing, if you recognize anyone, and what kind of music is playing.

    That's pretty much what you do when you Survey, or scan a text. It's quickly looking over, around, and through a text to get an idea of what to expect from it. There are many things that might be worth noticing. It would be impossible to list them all and really depends on the text you're looking at. But there are some pretty straightforward questions you can ask to help get you started.

Who, What, Where, When, & Why

Who

    Who wrote this? Is there any biographical information about the author before or after the text? Have they written other things?

What

    What kind of text is this? Is it a textbook, a novel, a scientific article? How long is it, one page, ten? But also, **what** parts does this text have-- is there a table of contents, an index, pictures, headings? Keep an eye out for different kinds of font here; a different font probably means a different part.

When

    When was this text written, the 1930s, the 1980s, last week?

Where

    This could mean where was the piece written-- is the author from the south, from New York City? It could also mean where did this text originally appear, was it an article in a newspaper? Which one? Was it a chapter from a book? Which one?

Why

    Why do you think the author wrote this? Why do you think you are being asked to read it?

Reading Strategies cont.

Take Stock

Imagine I said we were going on a trip next week. I'm guessing the first thing you'd want to know is *"Where to?"* Because, if I said Vegas, or Disney World, you would probably have different expectations about what a trip to each would be like and different questions about how to prepare for each.

When you take stock, you take a moment to check what you know about a subject, either from your personal experience or from reading or hearing about it somewhere.

So, if I said Las Vegas, you might think of casinos, hot desert environment and late nights. If I said Disney World you might think of amusement park rides, waiting in lines, and flying to Florida.

Experienced readers do the same things with texts. When they see an essay about undocumented immigrants in California they quickly think about all the things they might know about undocumented immigrants and the things they've heard said in conversations and arguments.

Predict

Once you've taken stock of what you know about the subject a text covers you can start to predict what the text might say. What you know and what you expect go hand in hand. Taking stock and predicting are both important so that as you begin reading a text you have a scaffolding to hang ideas on. As you read along you might be thinking, *"Arguments about immigration usually say X so I'll keep an eye out for X."* Whether your expectations are met or not, you are more likely to understand and remember what the text is actually saying: *"Yep, he did say X about immigration, just like I thought he would."*

Dealing with Polarized Issues or Binaries

Whenever you hear someone talking about "sides," or "pro-" and "anti-" anything, you've probably stumbled into an issue that has been oversimplified into two opposite positions.

Usually there are gray areas between any two positions or, in fact, more than two positions possible. But we have to keep in mind that people often feel very strongly about these kinds of issues and might react with emotion to anything other than agreement.

Keep in mind that **just listening to a paper doesn't mean you agree with the ideas in it**. So, listen to the paper with an open mind, then, look at the questions below as ways to help start a conversation with the writer about the topic:

How did you decide to write about this?

When did you become interested in this topic?

How is this topic important to you?

How are you affected by this problem?

Who do you imagine your audience to be?

How would your audience be affected by this problem?

What would you like to happen because of your piece of writing?

What questions would you like to ask your audience?

Sometimes an instructor or assignment will ask a student writer to include a "naysayer" in their paper which can reinforce thinking of issues in binaries. One way we might help them do what the teacher and prompt are most-likely wanting— a paper that does not ignore complexities— is to use a version of one of the questions above *"Who would be affected by this issue?"* and then write about how each of those parties might think differently about the issue.

Why We Always Read Exactly What We Wrote

You talk every day. You might get nervous in some situations– in front of a big crowd, when it involves a subject really important to you– but **I'd guess you feel comfortable overall with talking.** But what about writing?

If you're asked a question, do you feel comfortable enough to write an answer, read what you wrote out loud, and then feel confident that people listening will understand you and have a good sense of your ideas about that question? **We want you to be that comfortable with writing by the end of the semester.**

Writing like that can be a powerful tool. It allows you to gather your thoughts before you have to share them with others. And because you have those thoughts down on paper, it allows you to come back to them, remember what you said, add to them, or even rethink them.

In order to reach that level of confidence, we have to read exactly what we wrote. Each time you look up from your page of writing and start talking about it, you are allowing yourself to add and explain things that you didn't have in your writing or that you couldn't quite get to make sense.

Imagine the opposite: You're trying to get more comfortable talking and, in the middle of a conversation, get flustered and start reading from cards you prepared ahead of time. You would never gain confidence in your ability to talk without ditching those cards, and you'll never gain confidence in your writing without ditching your verbal explanation. **Let the writing explain.**

It can be tough to just trust what you write because all of the writing in your life has been judged, graded, marked up, and scored. When you think of writing, you think of that. Nobody likes to feel constantly graded and judged, so you're probably reluctant to produce writing because of it. But **we don't grade, score, or mark up anything you write.**

While it's true we might ask questions or ask for clarification, which implies your writing didn't have everything we wanted or confuses us, it's the same kind of thing as asking a friend you're talking with to clarify something they just said– it's a natural part of communicating, not a judgment.

In a way, you might say we treat writing like talking, so you don't need to talk after a shortwrite, **just read what you wrote and "talk" through that.**

Why We Don't Talk About Grammar in Group

Errors are important. Some people will judge you if you have errors in your writing. They might consider you lazy or ignorant if you have grammatical errors or even just typos in your writing. We understand that. But it's hard to work on errors in a group.

One reason is that **errors are individual**. I tend to mix up my "there" and "their." You might not. If you speak a different language than English at home, the structures of that language can show up as errors in your writing in English. But if the language you speak at home is Spanish the errors will be different than if the language you speak at home is Hmong. So we can't assume the kind of errors you make are the same kinds I make. And talking about your errors in a group with people that make different errors is hard to make useful for them.

But even if everyone in the group made the exact same errors, **dealing with errors is only one part of the writing process**. We may have all kinds of questions and confusions about your paper that need to be clarified before it feels convincing or satisfying to us. It can be a waste of your time to look at every single error you have in a paragraph if you decide to cut that paragraph later. Also, carefully polishing and fixing errors in your paper can make it feel done, when you might have bigger issues that still need to be worked on. Dealing with the errors may get in the way of dealing with all those other issues we have. Polishing and fixing errors make a text feel final and so should be handled later in the writing process.

And that's okay because research in linguistics has shown that **many errors get corrected when drafts are revised**. So, you might catch and fix a lot of your errors when you go back to revise your paper after getting your group's feedback.

But, if the group isn't the best place to address grammar what do you do? Well, if you have time, revise for clarity and to answer the questions your group had for your draft then **sign up to meet with a one-on-one tutor** to look *only* for errors in that draft before you turn it in. Our one-on-one tutors are trained to look for patterns of grammatical errors. That way you can get, not only personalized help on the of errors you made, but a sense of the kind of errors you tend to make over and over. This can put you in a better position to try and learn how to avoid them in the future.

Why We Don't Tell You What to Change in Your Draft

It might seem frustrating if you think that your tutor is knowledgeable, experienced, and a successful student and yet is keeping something from you. Why don't they just tell you what is wrong with your paper and how to fix it? **But, as a tutor, I don't really *know* what you need to do to make a paper successful for your class.** I haven't read what you've read in your class or been there for your class discussions, I don't know what interests you most, or your background, and how those things shape what you want to say.

And it might seem like a research paper, or a term paper, or an argumentative paper is a clearly defined, certain thing like a pine tree or a rose. And so, if your assignment is a research paper it should be easy to talk about what you need to do to make it and what it needs to have to be a good research paper. But different teachers want, expect, and are interested in different things, so **just like not every pine tree is identical, different teachers see different things in their head when they say research paper**. And that means your tutor can't know exactly what your paper should look like or what you should do next.

What good is a tutor then, if they can't tell you what you should revise in your papers? Well, **a tutor is an experienced reader and can ask questions that help you know what you have in your draft**. And you need to know what you have before you can figure out what you need to do next. Also, if one reader, like your tutor, is confused there's a pretty good chance other readers, like your teacher, will be confused too. So it can still be helpful to learn what response or reactions your tutor is having to your draft in order to help you decide what changes to make.

That's also why **feedback from your group members can be just as useful** even though they might not have any more knowledge or experience about writing than you, the writer do. Our response lenses are designed to help everyone in the group give clear, focused responses. And if your group members want to know more about something in your draft, there's a good chance your teacher will want to know more about that thing too.

In the end, **you'll have to make decisions about which responses are the ones you most need to address** when you revise. It could be, for example, that if the tutor and both of the other group members are really confused by your draft you need to make things clearer somehow. But it could also be that you realize they're only confused because they haven't read the articles your class read and that no one in your class, including your teacher will be confused, so you will focus on other things when you revise. It just depends.

What You Learn by Working on Someone Else's Stuff

For prompts and readings it's pretty straightforward, when we look at someone else's stuff, **you're learning tools you can take home and use on *your own*** prompts and readings. But what about when you don't bring anything and the group works on another group member's draft? What do you get out of that?

A big part of being a writer is imagining a reader as you write. It's hard to write something convincing if you never think about what will be convincing to a reader. What is it that will make a reader trust us, understand a complicated argument, or at least not be bored when they're reading what we wrote?

One way to find is to write something, have someone read it, and then *ask them* about their experience. And that's exactly what we're doing in our groups when we write out our responses and share them—we're helping the writer learn about audience. So, **you can learn a lot about readers by hearing the questions and comments of your group members** even when they are responding to someone else's draft.

But, **a powerful way to learn about what readers want, is to pay attention to *yourself* when you are a reader**. By reading someone else's draft and exploring your response in writing you can get a better idea of what it takes to convince you, what kinds of things make you laugh, or even just how much information you need to follow along in a paper. Now, the audience you're writing for isn't always going to be just like you. They might be older, for example, or from a different country, or have a different amount of education. But paying attention to yourself as a reader is a good place to start.

Mid-Semester Reflections

Which moments come to mind when you think back over the semester
in our group so far?

What has been the hardest for you about group?

What questions do you have about what we've done in groups?

How would you explain what we do to a friend?

How is our group different from small groups in your classes?

How will you ask for feedback on your writing when you're out of the Writing Center?

How do you write differently now?

How do you think about writing differently now?

How do you revise differently now?

How do you think about revision differently now?

What have you learned about responding to writing?

What strengths or skills do you bring to the tutorial?

What would you say to prepare a student starting the Writing Center next semester?

What do you most need to learn next?

What suggestions do you have for tutors or the Writing Center?

How have you used what we've done in our group in your other classes?

Several lenses in this booklet originated in:

Elbow, Peter and Pat Belanoff. *Sharing and Responding*. 3rd ed. McGraw Hill, 1999.

and were adapted through extensive use in small group tutorials at The Writing Center at California State University Fresno by Magda Gilewicz, Kirk Stone and many fine tutors.

Writers, you can ask these questions about your draft:

After reading this, what really sticks in your mind? (Center-of-Gravity)

After reading this, what do you think of? (Reply)

What do you want to hear more about? (More About)

What do you hear me saying overall? (Sayback)

What reactions do you have as you read through my paper? (Play-by-play)

Can we look closely at what each of my paragraphs is saying? (2-Step Summary)

Who do you imagine I'm writing this to? (Audience)

How do you see my sources talking to each other? (Conversation Map)

Can you tell me all the claims I'm making and what support I give (Skeleton Feedback)

What kind of voice, or voices, do you hear in this writing? (Voice)

What am I almost saying, but not quite? (Almost Said)

How do you see the parts of my essay working together? (Where & Why)