



# Graffiti... Grade One to Adult

Graffiti is a creative brainstorming process that involves collecting the wisdom of all or most of the students in the class. It starts by placing students in groups of three or four and providing a large piece of paper for each group. Each piece of paper has a topic (same or different) in the middle. The students get 30 seconds to think and then 60 - 90 seconds to individually but simultaneously record their ideas on the paper. They then stop, stand up, and go, as a group, to a different piece of paper. They then once more write their ideas. They continue until each group has visited each of the other groups. When they return to their original group they now have the collective wisdom of everyone in the class.

Note, instead of using words, students can draw an image (good for younger students.)



## *Application of this tactic:*

**Situation:** You are in a music class. You play a piece of music and the students have to identify all the things that come into their minds when they hear this type of music (such as feelings and memories etc.). When finished, you will have a variety of thoughts and emotions related to the different types of music (e.g., country western, classical, jazz, blues). Now ask them to make a statement related to music that emerges from their analysis of the data on the sheet.

**Situation:** You are studying a novel or play such as Romeo and Juliet. The next lesson

involves having the students write a character sketch. You realize the most difficult part is collecting the information about each character. You put each of the main characters in the centre of five pieces of paper. The students then write everything they know or examples of situations that communicate this person's personality. They write for 90 seconds and then rotate (every 90 seconds) until they return to their original sheet. They now have the class's thinking. Next, they prioritize the data and write the sketch.

**Situation:** You want to classify the students' understanding of all the different machines that involve levers. They write down all their ideas, then repeat that on each group's sheet. The students then group the examples into classes of levers based on characteristics they have in common. Note: this is using Graffiti as Phase One of Hilda Taba's Inductive Thinking model, as discussed in Chapter 9.

**Situation:** The students are to identify examples of parts of speech. Each paper has a different part of speech (improper nouns, proper nouns, adverbs, etc.). They move from paper to paper (every 60 seconds.) writing down as many examples of each as they can. The students return to their sheet and look for incorrect or confusing examples.

**Situation:** Before starting the unit on Egypt, you want to know everything students currently understand about Egypt. Each sheet has Egypt in the centre. They then get 90 seconds to identify everything they know about Egypt. When they get back to their original sheet, the group makes up five questions to which they would like answers based on the information on the sheet.

## *Graffiti... Considerations*

- Use coloured markers. This makes it more interesting. It also holds students more accountable to stay focused and not write something inappropriate (which will happen ... expect it and be prepared for how you will respond). If the inappropriate comment is green, and only three students have green markers, it makes it easier to be the detective.
- Remind students not to take time to read the other responses. Whether or not they write the same thing is irrelevant; from one perspective it communicates that perhaps the idea is important.
- Introduce graffiti as a concept and what it means. Discuss where they typically find it. You might want to talk about the history of graffiti. This makes the process more meaningful.

## *Graffiti... Adaptations*

- You are a teacher of second languages. This time the Graffiti has no word in the centre—the students take five French or Spanish or German words. They get 30 seconds to record their words. Then they repeat those words on each group's sheet. When they return to their original sheet, they compete to see who can list the English equivalent or French equivalent for each word.
- Have the students pass the paper instead of the groups moving. This is simpler if you think you might have classroom management problems when students move about the class.

- Graffiti is an excellent way to initiate Phase One of Hilda Taba's Inductive Thinking strategy discussed in Chapter 9.
- With kindergarten students, we have seen Graffiti used to have students respond to something they know about a letter, e.g., 'A.' They move around from sheet to sheet (each with a different letter) and they print the letter or draw something that starts with 'A' or a word that has an 'A' in it.

On the next page is a sample of math Graffiti by elementary students.



- When working on spelling, have students take 6 of the words and have them spell 3 correctly and 3 incorrectly. The incorrect words are misspelled in terms of the most common mistake the student thinks others would make when spelling those three words. Students then put the six words on the other group's sheets. When time is up they return to their group, decide which words are spelled correctly, and correct those that are not.

"This structure is adapted with permission from Kagan Publishing and Professional Development. Books and resources on Kagan Structures can be obtained from Kagan Publishing, 1 (800) 933-2667, [www.KaganOnline.com](http://www.KaganOnline.com)"