

## Orienting Students to a Writing Checklist

### Roundtable Exercise

1. **Prepare students for the exercise:** Arrange students into small groups of three or four. Instruct each student to take out a pencil or pen. Ask someone in the group to supply one sheet of paper for the entire group. Or, students can each take out an electronic device and prepare a Google Doc or a similar electronic tool for making a collaborative, synchronous list.
2. **Provide an activity overview:** Tell students they will participate in a group activity that goes like this.
  - a. Your group will make a bulleted or numbered list in response to a prompt I will give you shortly.
  - b. When responding to the prompt, each of you will enter one to three words each time it is your turn. Avoid sentences because the list should include brief items.
  - c. You'll pass the paper around in a clockwise fashion or make online entries when it is your turn to add your item. Read the items before writing yours to eliminate duplicates.
  - d. If at some point you are out of ideas when it is your turn, you can say, "Pass."
  - e. You have \_\_\_\_\_ minutes for this activity. (Assign a time limit of about six to ten minutes.)
3. **Make a group list:** Once students are ready with their materials or electronic devices, issue the prompt, "What does a \_\_\_\_\_ include? Remember to include what contributes to good writing in general too." (Insert the specific genre that is the focus for your narrative unit.)
4. **Report out:** When you call time, each group reports out one line item at a time that you record on chart paper, a whiteboard, or an interactive whiteboard to arrive at a class-generated list.
5. **Review the class-generated list:** Open it up for individuals to add any items a group has not offered. Invite the class to review the accumulated list and do any or all of the following.
  - a. Combine items.
  - b. Categorize items and add subheadings to the list.
  - c. Delete unnecessary or incorrect items.

### After the Roundtable Exercise

6. **Cross-reference the class list with your prepared checklist:** Distribute the teacher-prepared checklist to each student (see figure 2.2, page 33). Instruct groups to do the following.
  - a. Perform one-to-one correspondence by checking off items on the class-generated list (from step 4 in the roundtable exercise) that match those on the teacher-prepared checklist.
  - b. Add missing items to the checklist that you think are important to add.
7. **Consider adding items:** Discuss as a class if the matching items contribute to an effective piece of writing. If students recommend adding any items you omitted, discuss why they are worthy of inclusion. If so, formally add them so they are now an expectation.
8. **Assess writing models:** You might elect for students to examine a student sample and assess it against the checklist. Discuss to what degree the writer satisfies key points on the checklist.
9. **Distribute the checklist:** Give students a clean copy of the checklist to keep in their writing folders or provide an electronic version. Emphasize that they will use it as a guide while writing.
10. **Use the checklist throughout instruction:** Focus on discrete checklist line items or a combination of items along with associated guiding questions to set the purpose for learning.