

# Write After

*Group Projects as Pre-Writing Activities*



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**Write After is an Intermediate to Advanced writing resource book which:**

- provides a way to explore, develop and revise ideas
- integrates oral and written activities
- is interactive
- uses familiar topics with a cross cultural dimension
- draws on students' previous knowledge

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## **Introduction**

*Write After* is a writing resource book for teachers of intermediate and advanced ESL classes. In writing it, the authors have drawn upon their extensive experience teaching secondary, university, and adult students in the United States and overseas.

All the activities in the book are interactive; that is, they require students to work in groups and to discuss the work they are doing. Through this process students begin to think of writing as a collaborative process between themselves and their audiences. Discussion provides a way to explore, develop, and revise ideas. Students have a chance to try their ideas out on others before putting them down on paper. This is especially important for those who are inexperienced writers. Through discussion, students become more comfortable talking about subject matter in English and have greater investment in the writing that follows.

Because the book combines oral and written activities, it is suitable for use in a separate writing class or as part of a program of integrated skills. This combination also allows for the variety of students ESL teachers deal with. For example, some students feel more comfortable speaking than writing; others prefer writing to speaking. In addition, students come with very different writing histories. Some are accustomed to engaging in academic pursuits and feel frustrated by their inability to express their ideas as elegantly in English as in their first language. Others have done little writing before and may indeed have been actively discouraged from doing so (they were not “ready” to write). Still others have copied the writing of others but have not engaged in the development and expression of their own ideas.

Many students have been taught that writing is a linear process. First a writer decides what to write about and in what order and then writes the essay. But most writers find that it does not work that way. Writers need to explore ideas, try them out, revise them (or perhaps discard them). This book emphasizes that process.

The topics included in this book are: language learning, work, education, cultural awareness, media, and relationships. They have been chosen because they are of general interest. They are all topics about which students have some experience and ideas. Because the topics are familiar, students are encouraged to use previously acquired knowledge about the world and how it works, something that many students do not do automatically but that they should be encouraged to do. The material in the book is intended to stimulate students to think further about these familiar topics and to develop ideas they can write about.

All of the topics have a cross cultural dimension. However, while all of the exercises encourage cross-cultural awareness, very few require direct experience of living in a foreign country. These are identified in the table of contents by an asterisk and may be included or excluded according to the makeup of your class.

Within each topic there are eight activities. It is not assumed, however, that the teacher will complete all the activities on a given topic with her classes, but that she will choose those that are appropriate and interesting to her particular students. The activities exemplify a variety of techniques, which could be used with other subject matter. Most of them can be done in less than one class period. Each one is complete in itself and requires minimal preparation time.

Each activity is used as the basis for a writing assignment (writing output) to be done in or out of class. The forms of writing output are varied. Students may be asked to report on what they have discovered or to write an opinion. They may be asked to write a letter or a report. They may need to organize their writing to show comparisons and contrasts or to suit the levels of the students. Although two outputs are provided for each activity, it is anticipated that the teacher will choose only one.

# **I CULTURAL ADAPTATION**

1. Cross-Cultural Encounters
2. Letters
3. Word Blitz
4. Quotations
5. Situations for Discussion
6. Finish the Sentence
7. Stress and Sickness
8. Whose Problems?

- Activity:** **Cross-Cultural Encounters**
- Task:** To experience and explore some cultural differences
- Organization:** Small groups, half class, whole class
- Materials:** Copy the *Object Cards* on page 4 onto two different colors of papers. Make enough copies so that each student will have one object of each color. Make copies of Work Sheet A form page 5 for half the students in the class and copies of Work sheet B for the rest.
- Time:** 40 minutes
- Directions:** Divide the class into two groups and designate them Group A and Group B. Separate the groups, using different rooms if possible. Give each student a copy of his group's work sheet to read. When the students have finished reading, give them five minutes to discuss and practice the rules and behaviors indicated on their sheets. If the class is large, Groups A and B may be subdivided for this step. If both groups are in the same room, this discussion and practice should be done in such a way that members of the two groups do not hear and see each other. Next, explain to the class that they will each receive two cards. Designate one color the *Haves* and the other the *Needs*. Hand out the cards in such a way that the Haves of one group match the Needs of the other. The students will then walk around the class and talk to people in order to locate those whose Have cards match their Need card. The teacher may want to demonstrate this part of the activity. In searching for the cards, the students must follow the cultural rules and behaviors they have just read and discussed. Give them five to ten minutes to try to locate the cards. Then send the students back to their original groups. Ask them to discuss how they felt about the people from the other culture and to make a list of the rules that they thought the people from the other culture were following. Finally, have the groups report back to the whole class. Discuss the observations and feelings resulting from the exercise.
- Writing Output:**
1. Describe your feelings while you were playing the game and explain why you think you felt that way.
  2. Compare the two cultures describe din the game.
  3. Compare your culture and American culture on the issue of touching. Interview one or two Americans to check when they feel they can or can't touch someone.

(This activity owes much to *Bafa Bafa* (1973) R. Gary Shirts, Simile II CA. *Department of the Navy* Contract No. 0600-73-C-0668)

## Cross-Cultural-Encounters Object Cards

text book	clock	skirt	flower
purse	chalk	television	skillet
lamp	jacket	radio	hammer
tire	ball	gun	mirror
telephone	sweater	chair	rug
bicycle	ruler	blanket	aspirin
pair of scissors	knife	towel	hat
scarf	vase	pizza	jug

## Cross-Cultural Encounters Work Sheets

### Work Sheet A

1. Time is very important in your culture. When you are talking to someone you must get to the point quickly. Otherwise, they will think you are wasting their time.
  2. In your culture it is important to look directly into the eyes of the people you are talking to. If you do not, the people you are talking to may get the idea that you are not being completely honest with them.
  3. When you are talking to someone in a friendly way, you stand close enough to hem to feel their breath.
  4. In your culture it is impolite to talk about another person's belongings – clothes, furniture, etc.
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### Work Sheet B

1. Politeness is very important in your culture. When you meet people, you must show an interest in them and their family. This is particularly important if you have a request to make of them, as they must be convinced that you like them for themselves – not for anything they can do for you.
2. In your culture when you are talking to people, it is polite to look down except when you have a problem understanding what they are saying.
3. When you are speaking, you should stand several feet away from the person you are talking to. This is so you will not breathe on them and spread germs.
4. To say *thank you* politely, you put your hands together and bow your head without speaking.