*from* Teaching the Multiparagraph Essay • Jane Schaffer

Using Peer Response

one way to do it

## Procedure:

* Students bring in two copies of their draft—copies, not their original
* The teacher collects the copies and redistributes them, giving two different drafts to each student.
* The teacher models the writing of questions for a paragraph of an essay draft.
* As homework, students “work through” each of the two essay drafts.

(Alternatively, the students bring in one copy. The teacher redistributes the copies, one to a student. At the next class meeting, the teacher collects the drafts and the peer responses, then redistributes the drafts to a second student reviewer. The second reviewer should not see the review of the first to avoid being “blinded” by it.)

## Student reviewers:

### write their response questions on separate paper and do not mark the original essay.

### make no suggestions about ‘cosmetic’ changes, such as style, diction, spelling, syntax, or the like. The questions address content only.

### write questions only, no comments.

### make no judgments about the essay or any of its parts.

### write a minimum of fourteen valid and helpful questions for each essay:

* Student reviewers write the questions paragraph by paragraph.
* *Valid* here means questions that help a writer think about making changes.
* *Helpful* here means that the question is intended to help improve the content.
* There are no “yes/no” questions.
* Student reviewers may well *not* know the answer to a question they ask.
* Questions do not state or imply evaluation, as in ‘Why didn’t you…’ or ‘What the heck is this supposed to mean?’

## Assessment:

* Students must comment on the whole essay to get credit.
* Students’ own essay grades are lowered one letter for each peer response not completed.
* Students are penalized for making cosmetic suggestions in writing.