TEACHER'S GUIDE · GRADES 9 TO COLLEGE

Write a List of 30: a 45-minute lesson



Students write a list of exactly 30 items on one topic, using the format from Clemens Wan's books. It builds fluency, divergent thinking, and revision habits, and it's hard to get writer's block when you only need one more item.

Objectives

- Generate ideas quickly and without self-editing
- Approach one topic from many angles (Who, What, Where, When, Why, How)
- Revise by grouping, cutting, and ordering
- Write a strong ending (item #30)

Materials

- The free 30 Prompts sheet and worksheet (book.listsof30.com)
- The How to Write a List of 30 cheat sheet
- Optional: one sample list from either book, read aloud

LESSON PLAN

0-5 min: Hook	Read 5 items from a sample list. Ask: "Could you write 30 of these about your life?"
5-10 min: Model	Show the template: title, "Why This List?", 30 items, Random Observation/Comment. Point out that #30 is saved for last.
10-15 min: Lap 1	Students pick a prompt and write items 1-10 from instinct. No erasing.
15-25 min: Lap 2	Items 11-20: ask Who, What, Where, When, Why, How about the topic. Pairs trade one idea each.
25-35 min: Lap 3	Items 21-30: zoom in, zoom out, or make it funny. If someone hits 31, they cut one.
35-45 min: Share	Each student reads their #30 and their Random Observation/Comment. Exit ticket: which item surprised you?

RUBRIC (4 POINTS EACH)

Completeness	All 30 items, numbered, on one topic
Range	Items approach the topic from several angles
Voice	Specific details, honest and personal; not generic
Ending	Item #30 steps back or lands a joke; a closing Random Observation/Comment

Extensions: turn a list into a 5-minute speech; rewrite a list for a different audience; mind-map the 30 items into groups.