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Introduction

Think about all those times during the school day or school week when there are just five or ten minutes remaining before the class must move on to something else. These are time periods of an unusual length – too short to start a major event or lesson but too long to waste. Such a spell of a time may be just before lunch, just before recess, while you're waiting to send the class to P.E. or music, or while you're waiting for a class visitor. Maybe there are a few minutes at the start of the class when you aren't quite ready to dive into a long lesson, or at the end of the class when you've put everything away and don't want to waste valuable time.

Even with the best planning, it is not possible to eliminate those extra five-minute periods. However, when you do a little calculation, you'll realise that five minutes a day adds up to over fifteen hours during a school year – almost two full days of valuable instructional time! Those odd extra moments can be put to excellent use with little or no preparation at all. *Five-Minute Warm-Ups for the Middle Years* provides just what you need to use these small pockets of time for effective reinforcement of skills and concepts in English, maths, science and social studies.

These warm-ups are more than just ways to fill extra moments. You will find that they spark enthusiasm in students, 'warm them up' for the next activity, or leave them 'fired-up' with learning as they exit the class. Many of these warm-ups can be used as lead-ins for a new unit or lesson. Others are meant for sharpening basic skills and facts. Some are simply fun-filled ways to put skills and knowledge to work, but just about all of them can be extended into much longer learning lessons.

The book ends with a bonus section of self-awareness activities. The wise middle-years teacher knows when the atmosphere of trust in a classroom has reached a level where such activities can be of benefit to the group. At first, students may seem reluctant to participate in self-awareness activities. However, when you present them in a non-coercive way and repeat them regularly, you will probably find that these are the activities students most want to extend beyond the five-minute time period.

Now that you have this treasure of short, useful activities with high student appeal, you need not dread those extra moments in your school day's schedule. Indeed, you will look forward to the lulls when you can delight the students with quick but important warm-ups!

Happy teaching!

Spectacular starts

Challenge students to improve their writing by polishing the skill of good beginnings. Show them an 'ordinary' beginning and a 'spectacular' beginning. (See example below.) Then, give them a writing topic. Let them brainstorm spectacular opening sentences for that topic. Encourage them to think of starters that will grab the reader's attention and compel him or her to keep on reading. Enlist one student to record the ideas.

Ordinary: On Friday, our class took the long-anticipated trip to the aquarium.

Spectacular: No one in our class could ever have imagined how Friday's trip to the aquarium would turn out.

OR

I don't know who was more amazed by Friday's trip to the aquarium – our class, or the sharks.

Arguments in a hurry

Tell the students to imagine that they have a younger sister (or brother, or neighbour) who is on their way to get a large tattoo. They only have five minutes to convince the sister not to do this. Position one student at the blackboard to write the arguments down as they are offered.

Try these *Arguments in a hurry* on other days:

- ◆ Persuade your school to let you bring pets to class.
- ◆ Convince your parents to get you a motorbike.
- ◆ Argue that kids should not be allowed to use the Internet.
- ◆ Persuade a friend to take care of your pet boa constrictor for a week.
- ◆ Argue that the voting age should be lowered to 12.
- ◆ Persuade your school staff to try a 'no homework' policy.

Quick collections

Brainstorm all the words you can gather in five minutes that fit into one of these categories. Get a student (or the teacher) to keep a written list of the words.

slow words	night words	city words
fast words	day words	country words
small words	colour words	laughing words
big words	tasty words	creepy words
lazy words	salty words	sickly words
energetic words	dry words	grumpy words
cool words	wet words	mysterious words
hot words	confusing words	heavy words
troublesome words	long-distance words	light words

Save the word collections. Use them another day to write short stories, paragraphs, poems or descriptions.

Paragraph detectives

Write this paragraph on the board ahead of time. Tell students to read it quickly.

A noise this terrible had never been heard in a library. At least, Charles and Delilah could not imagine that it had. The noise was shocking, ugly, pained and horrifying. It came from somewhere in the biography section, they were sure. Was it a cry for help? Was there someone hiding or hurt between the bookshelves? After they heard the noise the fourth time, Charles cautiously went to investigate, creeping slowly down the aisle between the stacks of books. Again, the horrendous moan burst forth, right ahead of him. He saw no-one. The moan came another time, louder still. As it did, a book fell to the floor at his feet. The pages were violently torn from the binding. Charles touched the book gently, and heard a low sigh, 'Ahhhhh.' He read the title: *Trapped between the Covers*. The author was Sandra Paige.

Ask students to do some paragraph detecting to quickly answer questions such as these:

- ◆ How many times was a noise made? (six – shocking noise five times, sigh one time)
- ◆ How many people heard the shocking noise? (two, for sure)
- ◆ What words describe the noise? (terrible, shocking, ugly, pained, terrifying)
- ◆ How did Charles approach the book? (cautiously, gently)
- ◆ Under what letter was the book shelved? (P for the author's name – it is a biography.)

Who owns the camel?

Give students a copy of the following logic problem. Tell them they will need to use logical reasoning skills to solve the problem. Suggest that they create a diagram or chart to help them think through the problem. Challenge them to find the answer in only five minutes.

Four neighbours live in four houses in a row. Each house is a different colour. Each inhabitant has a different pet and a different hobby.

Use the clues below to answer the question, 'who owns the camel?'

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| 1. The owner of the white house has a pet tarantula. | 5. The owner of the red house is a hula dancer. | 10. Zelda lives in the blue house. |
| 2. Charlie lives between George and Zelda. | 6. The blue house is next to the green house. | 11. The white house is not next to the green house. |
| 3. The scuba diver lives in the first house on the left. | 7. The scuba diver lives next to the red house. | 12. The ventriloquist's pet is not a mammal. |
| 4. Margaret has a pet boa constrictor. | 8. The skunk lives next door to the pet tarantula. | 13. Charlie is terrified of spiders. |
| | 9. The skydiver lives next door to the hula dancer. | 14. Neither George nor Zelda lives in the green house. |

(Answer: Zelda)

A bubblegum brother

It's great fun to compare people to food. Such an exercise sharpens creative thinking and expands the use of figurative language. Give the students one or more examples of similes that compare a person to a food (extended to explain the comparison). Then ask each student to write or say a simile comparing a person and a food.

Examples:

- ◆ **My little brother is like bubblegum because he sticks to me everywhere I go.**
- ◆ **Sally is like an apple because everything she does is so healthy.**
- ◆ **Grandma is warm and comforting like a beef casserole.**
- ◆ **Lucy is as sour as a lemon. She is always complaining!**

Try comparing people to animals, toys, cars or other things that will stretch the imagination and produce creative similes.

Clever contradictions

Explain to students what an oxymoron is. Then gather as many as they can think of in five minutes. You might challenge them to be on the lookout for more oxymorons, and work to build an ongoing compilation of them. Oxymorons are fun and challenging. Students will build vocabulary and critical thinking skills as they collect oxymorons.

Examples:

civil war	slow speed	down escalator	near miss
walking dead	awfully good	sweet tarts	grounded flight
fresh frozen	old news	good grief	
larger half	pretty awful	virtual reality	
act natural	true counterfeit	found missing	

What's wrong?

Send students on a 'scavenger hunt' for punctuation and capitalisation errors. Give each student a half-sheet of notebook paper. Ask them to write two or three sentences that contain deliberate errors in punctuation and capitalisation. Encourage them to include a variety of proper nouns and adjectives that should be capitalised, and to capitalise some things that should not be capitalised. Set a timer for two minutes.

When the timer rings, swap papers. Use the last three minutes to track down the errors and fix them. Each student will be challenged to find the errors in sentences written by another student.

Example:

shortly after valentine;s Day, on February 23 2004 we visited these places; the sydney harbour Bridge, the opera house and the blue mountains. what fun we had riding Roller Coasters, swimming at bondi Beach and climbing Peaks? Let's do this every year 'we said to our parents'.