

LIBERAL ARTS

Peer Review: What Is It Good For?

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Throughout secondary and postsecondary education, English Language Arts (ELA) students undergo peer review as an in-class revision activity. The traditional style of peer review encompasses students silently reading one another's papers and offering constructive criticism with guidance from a worksheet or posed questions. Through this revision process, students are given the opportunity to share their ideas with their peers and offer feedback in an effort to improve their writing; however, students often perceive the process of peer review as an arduous task that is not a crucial step in the writing process. Why do ELA students dread the concept of peer review? Additionally, what exactly is peer review and what purpose does it serve in the ELA classroom?

Secondary and postsecondary ELA students are reluctant to participate in peer review and feel apprehensive about the benefits of peer review and how this practice can enhance their writing abilities. Additionally, since writing is personal, students may not feel comfortable sharing a piece of their writing with another student. Revision is not perceived as a crucial step in the writing process; students would much rather write an essay and never

look at it again. However, peer review is a critical step in the writing process because it fuels revision, which enables students' writing abilities to improve.

The term *peer review* is surrounded by ambiguity amongst ELA teachers and students. My research serves to define the process of peer review, illustrate why peer review is beneficial, and offer ELA teachers techniques of improving peer review in order to appeal to differing learning styles of students. By combining peer review with technology, educators can provide students with additional resources of revision that can alleviate the stress of face-to-face peer review interaction and expand peer review beyond the classroom setting. By gathering research from the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and other academic journals in the field of writing studies, the topic of peer review was explored, along with its advantages and methods of incorporating it into the ELA classroom.

Research advisor Lizbeth A. Bryant writes: "Rose has crafted an argument told in the first person that takes readers through her research process about how peer review works in English classes. Creatively, Rose guides her readers—new English language arts teachers—through their distrust of peer review, showing how this teaching strategy can be used to 'grow' successful writers."