

Conversation & Writing Skills. . . Using Legos! **by John Middlesworth**

This activity takes Lego building pieces as the point of departure to encourage student conversation and improve precision writing skills. T

Aim: Conversation and Writing Skills

Activity: Descriptive and instruction writing for constructions with the Lego building pieces

Level: Advanced (instructions may be modified to meet the needs of lower levels)

Outline:

- Form the class into groups of three. If possible, have each group sit where they're somewhat isolated from the other groups.
- Give each group a small bag with six assorted Lego building pieces in it (assorted in shape and color works best).
- Explain that the pieces can be combined to form an object that resembles something in a very abstract way (a person, a bridge, etc.).
- The groups are each to decide upon a design, give it a description (a name), and then write down step-by-step instructions for how another group could construct the same design from the six pieces. The actual name for the design (house, car, whatever) the group should keep secret and not make part of their instructions. For instance, they can't write "to form the walls of the house" but they can write "place red green blocks around the edge of the flat green piece"
- Once the groups have finished writing their instructions, they take all the Lego blocks apart and return them to the bag, along with their instructions.
- The bag is then given to another group and they are to recreate the design based upon the instructions. That group then completes the exercise by correctly guessing what the initial group intended the design to represent.
- Allow 45 minutes to an hour for the entire sequence to be completed. This is a great exercise in writing with clarity and precision.

This activity promotes an enormous amount of discussion within the groups during the instruction-writing phase, and even though only six blocks are used, you should expect the instructions to take around 30 minutes to complete. What can be particularly fun in this activity is to take a design that you know was completed incorrectly to the initial group to show them what their instructions produced.