An Ode to the Timed Essay

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remarked he had “never thought about that before.” How could such a conversation be emulated via technology? Maybe a similar one could be generated with an interactive blog, but it’s not the same. When I used to train student teachers, I kept stressing them to “Make the connection.” This means both connecting with the kids and with the key points of the lesson. An effective teacher inspires kids—something that could never be achieved by an electrical apparatus.

My school recently received a grant that gives each student a laptop, leaving me with no choice but to bring technology into the classroom. While websites like Edmodo, Quizlet, StudyIsland, and others, are helpful tools, which I gladly embrace, when former students tell me they loved my class or learned a lot, I know it’s not the website to which they are referring. It’s me.

Work Cited


Liz deBeer currently teaches English at New Jersey's Point Pleasant Beach High School and is a former adjunct professor at Rutgers University and Middlesex County College. She has earned her bachelor's degree from University of Pennsylvania and her doctorate from Rutgers University GSE. Liz was the 2011 NJCTE Educator of the Year.

An Ode to the Timed Essay

The percussive punching of laptop keys.
The delicate surgery of longhand composition—in each student’s hand, a pencil/scalpel.

Watch the students’ stares around the room—concentrated, eyes narrowed; distant, unseeing from exhaustion; bug-eyed, eyebrows raised: that’s frustration.

Silent yawns become watery eyes.

Sneezes muffled in arm crooks.
Deep breaths sucked in then forced out through sealed lips, bangs fluttering.

Legs kick beneath the table—they want to be anywhere but here.

- Andy Hueller

Andy Hueller teaches English at St. Paul Academy and Summit School in Minnesota. He is the author of the children’s novels Dizzy Fantastic and Her Flying Bicycle and Skipping Stones at the Center of the Earth, as well as the YA novel and writing guide *How I Got Rich Writing C Papers.* Learn more about Andy and his books at andrewhueller.com.