Example of Extended Writing to Learn Activity  
The following is a description of one sequence of informal writing used in COMP 2000 (NSU’s research writing course), developed by Dr. Eric Mason and based on research by Doug Downs and Elizabeth Wardle into the value of “writing about writing” approaches in the composition classroom.

**Assignment Description**

After reading an assigned journal article, students write a one-page "thought piece" outside of class with two goals: 1. Summarize the article’s purpose, 2. Respond to the article. In class, students share their responses in small groups and/or with the whole class, and the class holds a guided discussion focused on understanding both the specific article and the generic characteristics of research writing in the discipline of composition.

**Key Features**

* Short, low-stakes exploratory writing. Students are encouraged to ask questions, connect the article to their own experiences, and identify dissonance or confusion rather than focus on summary.
* Simplified grading system, with no evaluation of grammar.
* Document needs no title, cover page, citation system, or formal conclusion.
* Students provided with examples by past students, and assignment sheet explaining assignment purpose, components, and grading criteria.
* Articles to be read are selected for their content, accessibility, and demonstration of research methods students may use during course in their formal research writing.

**Goals of this Assignment**

* To help students understand the purpose and design of academic research projects
* To help students find ways to enter academic conversations through their own experiences and ideas
* To help students evaluate research methods and results

**What We Do in Class**

* Discuss student's responses and experiences with topic
* Identifying key moves by the author, and generic features of research writing
* Evaluate the author's attempt to achieve their purpose (discussion of methods/results/conclusions)
* Identify potential research projects that could build on this existing research
* Use other writing to learn methods (posing questions, role playing, problem solving, etc.)
* Instructor pulls quotes from student thought pieces and brings them to the next class to continue the conversation using students’ own words (alternatively, the instructor could write their own thought piece in response to one or more student thought pieces, and share it with the class)

**Grading of this Assignment**

* Thought pieces are assigned zero credit, half credit, full credit, or extra credit based on the following: 1. On-time submission, 2. Presence of both summary and response, 3. Length (no more than one page). Extra credit can be gained for excelling at an additional criterion: 4. Insightfulness.

Example of Student Thought Piece (given full credit)

(NOTE: Just as I would do in a normal class where the goal of this short writing assignment is to get students to explore their responses to the assigned reading, I have not corrected mechanical issues in the writing below.)

The purpose of Rhetorical Reading strategies and the Construction of Menaing is to look at how students read, and whether there are different things going on in different readers heads that leads to better or worse results. The authors want to know why some readers read better than others, and whether you can teach readers to read better. I admit this article didn’t make a lot of sense at first maybe because of the way it was written. The article start off in simple content. Progressing to the middle I started losing interest in what the author had to say. At the last two pages it all came together. Now I can be place myself in the category of the typical college student reader and not the so-called “experienced reader.”

When it comes to the question of if the article was fair to student, with no doubt it is but whose fault is it? If you think about it, the teachers are more to be blame for a student action in this case, because a student didn’t make up the curriculum in which to follow. It is the body that governs education, which include teachers. As far as I can remember I was thought to follow instruction and read the question before answering the question, and depend on the answer you give that’s how you will be graded. The answers must be similar to the teacher’s expectation or exact, if not you will be deem as a bad student and get a F or a low grade. So it is only right for one to do what is required of them to get a good grade and move on to the next level, this is the reason why most student think in the box rather than try to think out of the box, which will result in a low grade.

My point is that an experience reader or a rhetorical reader wasn’t born with that talent, according to the article it was developed throughout a person’s educational life experience. However if rhetorical reading was been thought at the beginning or at the first level of one’s education then we as college student wouldn’t be face with this so called problem, because in all respect we are following instruction. We were taught to interpret a paragraph looking for information, facts, and evidence. We weren’t taught to think about the context of the writing to determine why the author chose these facts and evidence, or why the audience would respond to it. Without doing this, it’s hard to see why a writer made intentional choices to write the way they did. Then when we go to write, we don’t make intentional choices. All from our inability to read rhetorically

The western educational system is some what out-of-order, the system is design for students to learn on step by step basis, requisite and prerequisite, this mean you have to take one class before you can advance to the next. But this system seems to focus on increasingly complex or specific information, not meaning or skills. In this process important information is been left out and will have to move to the next level to get that information, in some respect this is the perfect way to learn some material, but it doesn’t work with all. Critical information like how to read a text should be thought at the first level not in college or graduate school it should be mastered at that point and become a natural thing. If reading really is so important to college-level work, why is there no course in it?