

Ways of Thinking with *Outburst*

Sometimes I bring the game *Outburst* to class. I place the teaching table in the middle of the classroom, and the students arrange their desks around it so that we have two teams. These teams can be unequal in number. I select six *Outburst* cards and six *ReverseBurst* cards and line them up on the sides of the game board. Each team receives one “Exie” token and places it at the “Start” space on the board. One member of Team 2 (the team not playing this round) is the scorekeeper for that round. The playing team chooses which *Outburst* card they want to play, and the scorekeeper takes the card chosen and inserts it into the Card Viewer so that the topic on the back side is the one in the window. There is no passing of topics to the other team. The scorekeeper then reads the topic aloud. The timer is turned over, and Team 1 has one minute to call out answers that fit the topic and might be on the list of target answers. Each time a Team 1 member yells out a correct answer, the scorekeeper announces, “Yes!” and slides the button next to that answer so that the checkmark can be seen. Usually another student assists this scorekeeper in spotting the answers. When the timer runs out, the scorekeeper reads aloud all of the answers that were not supplied. The scorekeeper then announces the number of correct answers, and the Team’s “Exie” is moved forward that number of spaces on the board. The teams continue taking turns until all six of the *Outburst* cards have been played.

Then we play Round Two. The team whose turn it is will now play *Reverseburst*. In this round, everything is backwards. Teams will be given the answers and must try to guess the target topic. The answers are read aloud by the scorekeeper, one at a time. After each answer is read, players may yell out the overall Topic as many as they can think of, or they may call for another answer to be read aloud. The fewer answers a team needs to guess the topic, the more points they score. Again, the timer allots one minute per turn. The playing team’s “Exie” is moved along the scoreboard according to this calculation: 10 minus the number of answers used equals the number of points earned. Continue taking turns until all six of the *ReverseBurst* cards have been played (adapted from “Rules of Play”). I let them decide which round we play next to get an “Exie” to the Finish line.

The students, by this point, clearly prefer either *Outburst* or *ReverseBurst*. They experience success or failure depending upon which round is being played. Most students find *Outburst* fun and easy to manage (These are the students who, as a rule, do not find it difficult to provide concrete examples in their essays). Many find *ReverseBurst* hard work. These are usually, interestingly enough, the same ones who are having trouble with representing abstract ideas, reflecting upon an ideas in a thoughtful manner, and differentiating between concrete examples and abstract ideas. Some will even say, “I can feel my brain shifting gears!” and hold their heads as if they can feel it in their fingers. It does not take students very long to realize that playing *Outburst* is akin to thinking inductively, and playing *ReverseBurst* is akin to thinking deductively. This, again, leads to a discussion about writing essays in English Composition where I ask them to think inductively in order to construct the knowledge for the written essay, and then write this knowledge deductively for the reader.