This activity is a take on a thesis workshop. I designed it as a response to my students’ vocalized desire to talk with someone about their work in its early stages.

After discussion on our current unit’s readings, I gave my students the prompt for their next paper. They took it home, mulled it over, and came to class with a working thesis. We then arranged the classroom in two lines of desk facing one another so the students are in pairs with their thesis “date.” I then set a timer for three minutes and the students did the following:

1- Student one read/recited his or her thesis.
2- Student two repeated the thesis back to student one. (“So your thesis is...”)
3- The discussion then went where it needed to in order to be most beneficial to the paper of the first student: asking for clarification, suggesting revisions, pointing out questions the student two already has, etc.
4- At the end of time, the process started over with the second student’s thesis and another three minutes.

After each member of the pair discussed his or her thesis, one side of the row stood up and moved to the desk to their right for another round. I found that my students felt ready to move on to something else after 25-30 minutes (about 4 rounds).

I also had a “time out” area where a student could take his or herself out of the “dating pool” for a round to more substantially to revise before diving back in. I mostly worked with those in the “time out” area with their questions.

In addition to the circumstantial benefits to this activity (it gets students to move around and it fosters relationships among the students), the activity gives students the chance to talk through their ideas and it forces them to be able to quickly and concisely state the ideas of their whole paper in short, short period—exactly what a thesis should do.