

Genre-Themed Writing Prompts

Grades 6-8

Strong writers practice composing texts in many different genres, both during school and outside the classroom. These genre-themed writing prompts are a fun and creative way to help your students develop important writing skills while also gaining familiarity with some of the most popular fiction and nonfiction genres. Responding to writing prompts can help students strengthen skills such as crafting a narrative, establishing a clear sequence of events, developing an argument, and more. It can also help young students develop stronger reading skills, especially when they are encouraged to read their written responses aloud.

This resource includes genre-themed creative fiction and nonfiction writing prompts for adolescents in grades 6-8. These prompts would be appropriate for use in the home as well as for classroom use. The prompts were written to encourage responders to draw from various literacy skills included in the [Common Core ELA Writing Standards](#).

In addition, this resource includes a genre guide that caregivers and educators can use to introduce writers to each genre prior to writing. This guide includes a grade-level appropriate definition for the genre, a genre-specific writing tip for students to focus on, and suggestions for further reading.

Reflection and Feedback—Suggestions for Caregivers and Educators

When administering these prompts, provide adolescents with ample time to respond thoroughly and carefully. After writing, there are a few different feedback methods that may be helpful.

Independent Reflection

- Encourage writers to go back over what they have written to check for spelling, grammar, or logical errors.
- Encourage writers to read their written responses aloud. Some may have an easier time hearing mistakes than seeing them on the page.

Peer Feedback

- If multiple adolescents are participating in this activity, encourage them to read one another's responses. Then, have them share what they liked about the other writers' responses, and any questions they have about them.

Caregiver/Educator Feedback

- Read over the responses. Check for the following elements:
 - Do their responses effectively address the question of the prompt?
 - Did they structure their narratives with a clear progression of events and/or ideas?
 - Did they successfully implement narrative techniques such as dialogue, descriptive language, and sensory details?
 - Do they back up any argumentative claims with logical supporting details?
 - Do their responses include clear and effective conclusions?
 - Did they demonstrate repeated or consistent mechanical errors, such as issues with spelling, sentence structure, or punctuation? If so, provide corrective feedback.
- Pick one or two areas of feedback to highlight for your writers and take time to discuss them together. You may be able to find additional resources on the web to provide practice opportunities in particular areas where improvement is needed. Be sure to also point out a few things that they are doing well in their writing.

Lastly, celebrate the writing process! Encourage writers to share their responses with friends, family members, and other loved ones. Perhaps they could send a handwritten copy of their response to a grandparent or call up a cousin and read what they wrote over the phone. And if a writer seems passionate about a specific prompt or topic, encourage them to keep writing about it, either via more guided practice or as something to do in their free time!

Additional Resources

- For more information on writing prompts, read our [Understanding and Responding to Writing Prompts Guide](#).

Grades 6-8 Genre Guide

The writing prompts in this resource correspond to the following fiction and nonfiction genres:

Fiction Genres



Mystery

Definition

A fictional story in which an important fact stays secret until the very end.

Genre Hint

Don't rush. To help your reader solve the mystery, make sure to tell your story step-by-step, in an order that makes sense.

Read more!

Some examples of books that fit into the mystery genre include:

- *The Case of the Missing Marquess* by Nancy Springer
- *The Emperor's Riddle* by Kat Zhang
- *The Westing Game* by Ellen Raskin



Fantasy

Definition

A fictional story that is full of magical characters, places, and events.

Genre Hint

Be creative! Fantasy stories can be as wacky and wild as you want.

Read more!

Some examples of books that fit into the fantasy genre include:

- *Ikenga* by Nnedi Okorafor
- *Magnus Chase and the Sword of Summer* by Rick Riordan
- *Magyk* by Angie Sage



Science Fiction

Definition

A fictional story that imagines futuristic technology and scientific advancements, such as time travel, robots, aliens, and more.

Genre Hint

Use what you know. What do you know about this topic in real life? Show how these real life ideas are affected by science fiction elements.

Read more!

Some examples of books that fit into the science fiction genre include:

- *Dragon Pearl* by Yoon Ha Lee
- *Cleo Porter and the Body Electric* by Jake Burt
- *Last Gamer Standing* by Katie Zaho

**Supernatural/Horror****Definition**

A fictional story that is intended to startle the reader, often through the use of ghosts, monsters, and other unnatural elements.

Genre Hint

Paint a picture. Sensory details that show what a character sees, hears, smells, and feels can make your story extra creepy!

Read more!

Some examples of books that fit into the supernatural/horror genre include:

- *Coraline* by Neil Gaiman
- *Ghost Squad* by Claribel A. Ortega
- *The Girl and the Ghost* by Hannah Alkaf

**Action and Adventure****Definition**

A fictional story in which a character experiences exciting, thrilling, and sometimes dangerous events.

Genre Hint

Raise the stakes. Adventure stories work best when an obstacle prevents the main character from achieving their goal.

Read more!

Some examples of books that fit into the action and adventure genre include:

- *Stormbreaker* by Anthony Horowitz
- *I'd Tell You I Love You, But Then I'd Have to Kill You* by Ally Carter
- *Jada Sly, Artist & Spy* by Sherri Winston

Nonfiction Genres



Memoir

Definition

A true story based on the writer's own life. Memoirs are similar to autobiographies, but usually focus more on vivid details and memories than on facts and dates.

Genre Hint

Show don't tell. Use sensory details to describe what you saw, heard, smelled, and felt in order to bring your memories to life on the page.

Read more!

Some examples of books that fit into the autobiography genre include:

- *Soul Surfer: A True Story of Faith, Family, and Fighting to Get Back on the Board* by Bethany Hamilton
- *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie
- *El Deafo* by Cece Bell



Informational

Definition

A nonfiction text that is written to inform the reader about a given subject.

Genre Hint

Be specific. Imagine that your reader has never heard of this topic. What do they need to know to understand it?

Read more!

Some examples of books that fit into the informational genre include:

- *Yummy: A History of Desserts* by Victoria Grace Elliot
- *Total Garbage: A Messy Dive Into Trash, Waste, and Our World* by Rebecca Donnelly
- *Kid Athletes: True Tales of Childhood Sports Legends* by David Stabler



Criticism

Definition

A text written to evaluate another work of art or literature.

Genre Hint

Zoom in. Critical writing works best when you focus on the small details of a work, rather than the big picture.

Read more!

Some real-life examples of critical writing include:

- Movie reviews
- Book reviews
- Music reviews



Persuasive

Definition

A nonfiction text that aims to convince readers to believe in an idea or to take a certain action.

Genre Hint

Prove your point. The more evidence you give to support your claim, the more convincing your argument will be.

Read more!

Some real-life examples of persuasive texts include:

- Commercials
- Campaign speeches
- Petitions



Letter Writing

Definition

A text written to a specific person and sent via the mail or the internet.

Genre Hint

Know your audience. A letter is written with a specific person in mind. Write your letter in the same voice you would use to talk to this person.

Read more!

Some real-life examples of letter writing include:

- Postcards
- E-mails
- Text messages

Grades 6-8 Writing Prompts

The writing prompts that are listed below are also included on the pages that follow on lined sheets you can print and hand out to adolescents to write their responses.

Fiction

There's a mystery at the museum! Write a story about a detective who has been hired to find a priceless jewel that has been stolen from a museum. The only clues the thief has left behind are an orange peel and a single black glove. How does the detective use these clues to find the jewel? Tell the story using lots of details.

Genre hint: Don't rush. To help your reader solve the mystery, make sure to tell your story step-by-step, in an order that makes sense.

Write a fantasy story that includes all three of these characters: a talking animal, a brave knight, and a mysterious stranger. How did these characters meet? What are they like? What do they do? Be sure to use lots of details.

Genre hint: Be creative! Fantasy stories can be as wacky and wild as you want.

Have you ever wondered what would happen if your computer or phone had a mind of its own? Write a story in which all the technology in the world becomes sentient, or able to think and act all on its own. What happens next? Be sure to use lots of details.

Genre hint: Use what you know. You probably interact with phones and computers almost every day. How would these interactions be different if these devices could think for themselves?

Write a story about a student who gets sucked into the world of their favorite video game franchise. What happens next? Do the characters of the game welcome the student? Tell your story using lots of details, and try to include events that build suspense.

Genre hint: Raise the stakes. Adventure stories work best when an obstacle gets in the main character's way. For example, maybe your character has to battle a video game boss or complete a mini-game challenge.

Boo! Write a story about a group of friends visiting a haunted house. Be sure to use lots of details and at least two instances of dialogue to show what the characters say to one another.

Genre hint: Paint a picture. Sensory details that show what a character sees, hears, smells, and feels can make your story extra creepy!

Nonfiction

What is your favorite holiday memory? Describe this event as a personal narrative story, including who was there and what you did to celebrate together. Be sure to use creative word choice and lots of descriptive language.

Genre hint: Show don't tell. Use sensory details to describe what you saw, heard, smelled, and felt in order to bring your memories to life on the page.

If you could travel back in time, what is one historical event you would like to visit? Research that event online, and then write a short, informational essay describing it. What happened? Who was there? Be sure to use lots of details to bring this true story to life.

Genre hint: Be specific. Imagine that your reader has never heard of this event. What do they need to know to understand it?

Think about the last movie you watched. How would you rate it on a scale of 1-10? Write a short critical essay describing what you thought about this movie. For example, you might talk about the acting, the dialogue, or the special effects. Were they well-done and interesting? Or did the film fall flat? Be sure to address both the film's strengths and weaknesses.

Genre hint: Zoom in. Critical writing works best when you focus on the small details of a work, rather than the big picture. Instead of "I liked this movie because it was funny," try to highlight specific moments of the film that made you feel that way.

Does your school require students to wear uniforms? Do you think this is a good idea, or do you think it is unfair? Write a persuasive essay explaining your point of view. Be sure to give evidence to back up your claim.

Prove your point. The more evidence you give to support your claim, the more convincing your argument will be.

Write a letter to the author of your favorite book. Explain what you enjoyed about the book, being as specific as possible. You might also choose to ask the author questions about their writing process, or to describe your own experience reading the book.

Genre hint: Know your audience. A letter is written with a specific person in mind. Write your letter in the same voice you would use to talk to this person.

