

Winter Writing Prompts

Grades 9–12

There are many fun things to do and see in the winter. Whether you celebrate with outdoor activities such as sledding and skiing or by curling up indoors with a hot cup of cocoa, the snowiest season has something for everyone to enjoy! With these winter-themed writing prompts, adolescents can draw inspiration from their favorite winter activities and practice valuable writing skills at the same time.

Practicing responding to creative writing prompts at home can help students strengthen skills such as crafting a narrative, establishing a clear sequence of events, developing an argument, and more. Creative writing can also help young students develop stronger reading skills, especially when they are encouraged to read their written responses aloud.

This guide includes summer-themed creative fiction and nonfiction writing prompts for teens in Grades 9-12. While originally intended for use in the home during summer, these prompts would also be appropriate for classroom use. The prompts were written to encourage responders to draw from various literacy skills included in the [Common Core ELA Writing Standards](#).

Reflection and Feedback—Suggestions for Caregivers and Educators

When administering these prompts, provide teens 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 teens 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 9-12 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 teens to write their responses

Fiction

In the snowy months of winter, many high schools hold a festive formal dance. Write a short creative story that takes place at a high school's winter dance. Describe what people are wearing, what kind of music is playing, what the decorations are like, and anything else you can think to include. You should use as much descriptive language as possible and include at least two similes (comparisons that use "like" or "as") and two metaphors (comparisons that do not use "like" or "as").

During the holiday season, many people purchase gifts for friends or family members. As a result of this, stores tend to be much busier than usual. Write a story from the perspective of a young person who works in a retail store during the holiday rush. Describe an action-packed day in their life using as many details as you can. Be sure to use descriptive language and include at least one instance of dialogue between two or more characters.

3... 2... 1... HAPPY NEW YEAR! Write a story about a group of characters who stay up until midnight on New Year's Eve, including what happens when the clock strikes twelve. Your story can be as ordinary or as bizarre as you want but be sure to use both descriptive language and dialogue.

Some families celebrate Christmas with an "Elf on the Shelf," a toy elf that sits in various spots around the house and, according to tradition, reports back to Santa about children's behavior. While some people find this tradition charming, others find it strange and even creepy. Write a story about a haunted Elf on the Shelf. Use sensory details and descriptive language to bring your twisted tale to life!

Every four years, the Winter Olympics takes place, bringing together some of the best athletes from around the world. Write a story describing an athlete (real or fictional) who is competing in your favorite winter Olympic sport. Be sure to use sensory language to describe what the character experiences, and to give lots of details.

Nonfiction

There are many superstitions associated with the Lunar New Year, which is celebrated every year in late January or early February. For example, many people wear red and avoid sweeping with a broom in order to bring good luck into the new year. Do you have any superstitions that you believe are true? If so, write a brief essay explaining your superstitious belief and why you think it is true. If not, research the history of a popular superstition and write a brief essay explaining what you learned.

Some people believe that winter holiday music and decorations should wait until after Thanksgiving. Other people believe that the holiday festivities should begin right after Halloween. What do you think? When is the best time to start celebrating the winter holidays? Explain your reasoning in a logical order, using lots of convincing details.

Every winter, the winners of the annual Golden Globe Awards in film and television are announced. If you were in charge of deciding who won these awards, what is one movie or television series that you would like to nominate? It does not have to be something that came out recently—you can choose to write about any movie or series you like. Explain why this movie or series deserves to win a Golden Globe using thorough and convincing details.

The winter holidays can be a great opportunity to reconnect with friends and family, even if you won't get to see them in person. Write a letter to a friend or family member who you have not seen in a while, telling them what you have been up to lately and asking how they are doing. When you are finished, send your letter in the mail, and wait for a response!

When we are young, winter can seem like a magical season, filled with wonder and whimsy. Think back to your favorite winter memory from when you were a child—perhaps involving playing outside in the snow or a special holiday tradition. Then, write a short, narrative essay describing this memory with as much detail as possible including details from all five senses: sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste.

