

Genre-Themed Writing Prompts

Grades 3-5

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 children in Grades 3-5. 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 children 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 children 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 3-5 Genre Guide

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

Fiction Genres



Mystery

Definition

A made-up 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 Harlem Charade* by Natasha Tarpley
- *Me, Frida, and the Secret of the Peacock Ring* by Angela Cervantes
- *The Mysterious Benedict Society* by Trenton Lee Stewart



Fantasy

Definition

A made-up 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:

- *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Roald Dahl
- *Ella Enchanted* by Gail Carson Levine
- *The Tale of Despereaux* by Kate DiCamillo



Science Fiction

Definition

A made-up story that tells about new science and inventions, such as robots, spaceships, superpowers, 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:

- *The Last Last-Day-of-Summer* by Lamar Giles
- *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle
- *The First Cat in Space Ate Pizza* by Mac Barnett

**Fractured Fairytale****Definition**

A made-up story that tells a famous fairytale with a twist. For example, the new story might take place in a new location or time period, or include different characters.

Genre Hint

Paint a picture with your words. Tell as much as you can about what your character sees and does. This will help your reader imagine the past.

Read more!

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

- *The Fairy-Tale Detectives* by Michael Buckley
- *The Frog Princess* by E.D. Baker
- *The Wishing Spell* by Chris Colfer

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

A made up story in which a character goes on a quest, escapes danger, or faces other exciting events.

Genre Hint

What goes wrong? Tell what problems get in the main character's way.

Read more!

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

- *Ninja Kid* by Anh Do
- *Dinosaurs Before Dark* by Mary Pope Osborne
- *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson

Nonfiction Genres



Personal Narrative

Definition

A true story based on the writer's own life.

Genre Hint

Show don't tell. Give lots of details that show what you saw, heard, smelled, and felt.

Read more!

Some examples of books that fit into this genre include:

- *My Life With the Chimpanzees* by Jane Goodall
- *Through My Eyes* by Ruby Bridges
- *I Am Rosa Parks* by Rosa Parks and Jim Haskins



Informational

Definition

A text written to tell facts about a real life topic.

Genre Hint

Be specific. Pretend you are talking to someone who has never heard of this topic. What do they need to know?

Read more!

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

- *Dogs* by Emma Helbrough
- *Castle* by David Maculay
- *Who Was Albert Einstein?* By Jess Brallier



How-To

Definition

A text that tells how to do something, like cooking, crafting, or playing a sport.

Genre Hint

The order of your story matters. Be sure to tell your answer in a step-by-step order. It will be helpful to use words like first, next, and last.

Read more!

Some real-life examples of how-to texts include:

- Recipes
- Board game instructions



Persuasive

Definition

A text that is written to make the reader agree with the author's opinion.

Genre Hint

Prove your point. The more you tell about why your opinion is best, the more likely you are to change your reader's mind.

Read more!

Some real-life examples of persuasive texts include:

- Commercials



Letter Writing

Definition

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

Genre Hint

Who are you writing to? A letter is written to a specific person. Write in the same way you would talk to this person.

Read more!

Some real-life examples of letter writing include:

- Postcards
- E-mails
- Text messages

Grades 3-5 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 children to write their responses.

Fiction

Zoinks! Imagine that a group of friends are exploring an old house on the edge of town. In the basement, they find a secret tunnel. Where does the tunnel go? Why was it built? What is inside? 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.

Abracadabra, alakazam! Write a story about a person who gets turned into a frog. Be sure to explain how and why the transformation happened, as well as what the person does next. Use lots of details.

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

Imagine what it would be like if everyone in school got superpowers overnight. Write a story telling what might happen. What would people's powers be? What would they do with their new abilities? Be sure to use lots of details.

Genre hint: Use what you know. For example, think about your classmates and teachers. What are they like? What superpowers would make most sense for them to have? Why?

Write a story about a scuba diver on a deep-sea dive. What do they see in the ocean? What are they looking for? Do they find it? Or do they discover something even better?

Genre hint: What goes wrong? Adventure stories work best when a problem gets in the main character's way. For example, what if the diver gets lost, or runs into something scary?

What would happen if *Cinderella* took place in New York City? Or what if *Jack and the Beanstalk* happened in your backyard? Pick your favorite fairytale and rewrite it as a story that takes place today. Be sure to describe where the characters are, what they look like, and what they say.

Genre hint: Paint a picture with your words. Tell as much as you can about what happens in your story.

Nonfiction

Think about a time when you felt proud of yourself. Then, write a true story telling what you did to make you feel that way. Be sure to describe the beginning, middle, and end of the story, using lots of details.

Genre hint: Show, don't tell. Give lots of details that show what you saw, heard, did, and felt.

Write a paragraph describing your mom, dad, or other caregiver. What do they look like? How do they act? What do you do together? Try to write everything you know about this person.

Genre hint: Be specific. Pretend you are describing your person to someone who has never met them. What would you say?

Do you know how to cook? Describe one food that you know how to make by yourself or with some help from an adult. Then, describe each step you take when cooking that food. Use transition words like “first,” “next,” and “last” to structure your answer.

Genre hint: The order of your story matters. Be sure to tell your answer in a step-by-step order, using transition words as necessary.

What is the best part of the school day? Reading? Math? Recess? Something else? What do you like about it? Explain your answer with lots of examples.

Genre hint: Prove your point. The more you tell about why this part of the day is best, the more likely you are to change your reader’s mind.

Do you have a favorite celebrity? This could be a singer, actor, athlete, or other famous person who you look up to. Write a letter addressed to this person. First, tell them who you are. Then, describe why you look up to them. Be sure to give lots of details. If you want to, you may also include any questions you would like to ask this person.

Genre hint: Who are you writing to? A letter is written to a specific person. Write in the same way you would talk to this person.

