

# PROMPTS FOR YOUNG WRITERS



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## Acknowledgements

Colorado Authors League (CAL) — thanks CAL member Johnny Welsh, who donated his services to publish this book through his publishing company, Peak 1 Publishing, LLC. CAL would also like to thank members Margi Evans and Linda Frantzen Carlson for their editorial contributions.

## Dedication

Dedicated to all teachers.

You are a true treasure.

Thank you for all you do.

## A Note from the Publisher

As owner/operator of Peak 1 Publishing, LLC, I understand the importance of reading, writing, and teaching during challenging times such as a global pandemic. I am honored to volunteer my time to help those who teach and instruct.

In the acknowledgments of my first book, I gave the highest praise to my teachers of English, Literature, and any subject. They have a great responsibility, and their deeds will not go unnoticed. Thank you to all the teachers in the world.

For more than 80 years, Colorado Authors League has supported professional writers. Authors become members to network with one another, to enhance the craft of writing, and to keep up with changes in copyrights, publishing, and other practical issues affecting writers.

## A Note to Teachers

We provide these writing prompts to help you inspire students during these difficult times. Many of the prompts can be used in several grades. We enjoyed compiling this information as a resource for you.

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**GRADES 1-2**

## **What Makes a Good Story?**

- Tension and Suspense
- While Solving a Problem

## **Three Popular Story Problems**

- A Fight with a Person or an Enemy
- Solving a Mystery
- Looking for a Hidden Treasure

## **Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer..... Grades 1-2**

### **Writing Prompts**

If you could be any instrument, what would you be? How would you sound, and who would you wish to hear you?

Imagine you are in a backwards universe. Write a poem that tells us what it's like when everything is the opposite of how it is now.

Imagine your superpower is love. Or patience. Or kindness. How would you use your superpower? Who would you help first?

### **Writing Tips**

It doesn't have to be good. I make myself this promise every day when I write. But, I tell myself, it has to be true. I don't mean factual—it can be imagined, but I can't just be writing it to sound good. If it's authentic, it will resonate.

I can't know the end when I start. If I do, I write past it, or I write two endings and then choose one. In this way I let the poem know more than I do. I am in service to it. The poem always teaches (or unteaches) me.

I write a poem every day. The benefit of this is that it becomes more about the practice than about the poem itself. It changes the way I go through the world, changes everything about how I frame things. Practice leads to transformation.

### **Bio**

Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer's most recent book, *Hush*, won the Halcyon Prize for poetry about human ecology. Her book *Naked for Tea* was a finalist for the Able Muse Poetry Prize. Visit her at [wordwoman.com/](http://wordwoman.com/).

## **J. B. Stockings ..... Grades 1-2**

### **Writing Prompts**

Prissy the cat gets shut out of the house. What will she do? What trouble will she find?

There's trouble in Little Town! Banks are being robbed by the Sneaky Thief! Who can stop him?

A little purple man showed up at my door today. Did he come for a snack? Did he come to play?

### **Writing Tips**

Before you begin your story, decide who will be in it and what they will be like.

Sometimes it's easier to TELL your story to someone who can write it down for you.

### **Bio**

J.B. Stockings is the author of the children's picture books, *A Tale of Two Kitties* and *The Stubborn Princess*. You can find her books and books by her good friend Jodi Bowersox at [jodibowersox.com/](http://jodibowersox.com/).

## **Barbra Cohn ..... Grades 1-2**

### **Writing Prompts**

I like ice cream because . . .

I love my mommy (or daddy) or other care person because . . .

Before I go to sleep, I like to . . .

### **Writing Tips**

It's not too early to help first and second graders develop critical thinking skills. Use the 5 Ws to enhance the story:

Who, What, When, Where and Why. Examples:

What is your favorite ice cream?

Where do you like to go for ice cream?

What special things do you do with your mom or dad?

Where do you like to go with him/her?

When do you go to sleep?

What "stuffy" do you sleep with?

Who usually reads you a good night story?

Why do you like a good night story?

### **Bio**

Barbra writes in many genres, including health, travel, and for children. Her book *Calmer Waters: The Caregiver's Journey Through Alzheimer's and Dementia* won the 2018 Book Excellence Award in Self-Help.

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[barbracohn.com](http://barbracohn.com)

## **Joni Franks ..... Grades 1-2**

### **Writing Prompts**

Have you ever been bullied? Write down how it makes you feel when this happens.

Do you love to take walks and play outdoors? Write about your favorite flowers and trees. Describe the colors and shapes, the way they smell, and how you feel when you are outdoors.

What is your favorite animal? Write a story describing why this animal is your favorite.

### **Writing Tips**

Writing about things that we feel are unfair or disturbing can help us deal with hurt feelings.

Use your imagination to describe whatever you are writing about. Try to be as clear as possible, so whoever is reading your words can turn them into a picture in their mind.

It is easier to write stories when you write about things that you love and are interested in.

### **Bio**

Joni Franks is a bestselling multi-award-winning children’s book author. She has been honored to receive the prestigious Moms Choice Award for the *Corky Tails, Tales of a Tailless Dog Named Sagebrush* book series. Joni is also the winner of four American Fiction Awards, including Best Children’s Picture Book of 2018 and 2019, the Pinnacle Book Achievement Award, two international Book Excellence Awards, four EVVY Awards and a Best Book Award for 2019! Visit [jonifranks.com](http://jonifranks.com). To contact her, please direct your message to [jonifranksauthor@yahoo.com](mailto:jonifranksauthor@yahoo.com)

## **Caryn Hartman ..... Grades 1-2**

### **Writing Prompts**

Imagine you could talk to animals. Which animal would you talk to first and why? What questions would you ask it?

Go outside and look at the clouds. What shapes do you see? Can you create a story about the shapes you see?

### **Art Prompt**

Combine the bodies of any two animals and draw and name the new animal you create.

### **Writing Tips**

I like to think of writing a story as putting a puzzle together. When you first start, you have all these ideas you want in the story but you're not sure how it will all come together. As you plan your writing, the ideas start to fit together, and in the end, you have a beautiful picture of your own creation.

### **Bio**

Caryn Hartman is a teacher and children's book author. *Dorje the Yak* won first place in the Purple Dragonfly Awards and was a finalist in the Independent Author Network Book of the Year Awards as well as the Best Book Awards. Her second children's book, *Dekyi's Dream* will be coming out in 2021. More information can be found at [pemapublishing.com](http://pemapublishing.com).

## **Nancy Oswald ..... Grades 1-2**

### **Writing Prompts**

Who is your best friend? Write about the things you do together.

Write a story about your favorite animal. It can be true or make believe.

If you had a superpower, what would it be? Write a story about how you'd use your superpower.

### **Writing Tips**

Writing about familiar things is something authors do all the time. Look around for other topics in your daily life that would make good stories.

Remember to put lots of details in your writing. Tell about what you see, hear, smell, taste, and touch. Also, tell about what you feel inside.

Writing is talking on paper. Have fun.

### **Bio**

Award-winning author, Nancy Oswald, has 8 published Colorado-set books for young readers. Her newest is *Ruby's Christmas Gifts*.

[nancyoswald.com/](http://nancyoswald.com/).

**Lisa Reinicke..... Grades 1-2**

**Writing Prompts**

Rhyming is fun and helps you learn more words. Write one sentence about an animal and what sound it makes. For example: bunnies make no sound at all. Next write one more sentence that rhymes with the one you just wrote. Example: and bunnies are not tall. Write two more sentences that have different words at the end that rhyme.

**Music Prompts**

Poetry has a rhythm to the rhyme. A rhythm is like a song but doesn't have any notes yet. Grab a pan with a lid from the kitchen. Ask your parent for a wooden spoon. Read the rhyme about your animal while banging out a beat on your pan with the lid.

A song is a poem that has a tune. Make up a song to go with the poem that you wrote about your animal. You can use your pan and spoon as a drum, or two lids as cymbals.

**Writing Tips**

Be silly with your rhymes sometimes. See that rhymes!

After you write the first sentence, underline the last word. Now find a word that rhymes with the last word and make up a sentence around the word.

Make two lines rhyme together. Do the rhyming in pairs.

**Bio**

Lisa Reinicke is the author of five award-winning children's books that include Mom's Choice, Readers Favorite, Purple Dragonfly, and Book Excellence. Her most recent memoir received the Book Excellence award in its category. She has written more than 25 stories for television and appeared on local TV

shows. Lisa's passion is working with children and charities to improve community relationships through writing. You can connect with her on her website at [lisareinicke.com/](http://lisareinicke.com/) or on social media LisaReinicke/author.

## Natasha Wing ..... Grades 1-2

### Writing Prompts

Brainstorm your own Night Before Story.

What holiday or event do you want to write about?

Give it a title. *The Night Before...*

List three images related to your holiday or event.

Now write 1 or 2 words that rhyme with each of the three images.

Where do you want your story to be set? Your house? School? A town?

Fill in your opening stanza with your event on the first line and your setting on the second line:

‘Twas the night before \_\_\_\_\_.

And all through the \_\_\_\_\_.

What do you think the kids should be dreaming about in your story? Fill this in:

The children were nestled all snug in their beds

While visions of \_\_\_\_\_ danced in their heads.

### Writing Tip

I like to write a word at the top of a page then list as many rhyming words as I can below it. If I get stuck, I look up “words that rhyme with \_\_\_\_\_” on Google.

### Bio

Natasha Wing is the author of the bestselling Night Before series, which includes *The Night Before Kindergarten* and *The Night Before Halloween*. She also writes biographies. *When Jackie Saved Grand Central* won the 2018 Colorado Authors’ League Children’s Nonfiction Award. She lives in Fort Collins and does online classroom visits. [natashawing.com](http://natashawing.com)

## **Patricia Raybon ..... Grades 1-2**

### **Writing Prompts - Genre: Memoir**

Road trip! The vacation I dream about. . .

I could feel my bike tire skid. I knew I was falling.

It was the first day of kindergarten, and I didn't know what to expect.

### **Writing Tips**

Writing about your life is a journey of discovery. So, don't worry about knowing how your story will end. Just use the writing prompt to start writing. Your story will lead you where it wants to go.

Let your memories "walk you back" to your story. Then, tap into your senses. How do things look, sound, feel, smell, and taste? Use those details to help you write your story.

Tell stories. Tell stories. Tell stories. Show your reader what is happening by telling story after story—each one leading to the next. P.S. As you write, don't forget to have fun.

### **Bio**

Patricia Raybon is an award-winning, bestselling author and journalist who writes books and essays on faith, race, and grace. Join her on the journey at [patriciaraybon.com/](http://patriciaraybon.com/)

## Virginia K. White ..... Grades 1-2

### Writing Prompts

Write a little story about your creature, using fun words to tell what it likes to eat and not eat, likes to do and not do, where it likes to go, and where it lives.

“What’s this? I’ve never seen anything like it.” What do you think this is? Think about what you might do with it? What does it look like? Use fun, descriptive words and interesting action words to tell your story.

**Art Prompt:** Cartoon and video game creatures are not real but are fun. Make up your own creature and draw a picture of what it looks like. Think about size, skin and hair color, clothes, and any other special features you can imagine.

### Writing Tips

Ideas for fun creature names might be Catula or Burbula. Fun descriptions are messy, lumpy, gruesome, and grizzly. Fun action words are flop, crawled, gallop, sneeze.

Ex: The Catula likes candy corn. It does not like messy oranges. It lives on lumpy couches. It likes to go canoe sailing. It likes crawling underground. It does not like sneezing snakes. It does not like to go to scary movies.

### Bio

Colorado Authors’ League finalist and Readers’ Choice Awards. Little Honker Saves the Day, Little Honker’s Winter Concert, Little Honker and the Swinging Tails, Little Honker’s Backyard Adventures, Little Honker’s Patriotic Paws, Glasses for Margie, Margie Surprises Doc, Would You Like a Scarlet Striped Schrinkler? Would you Like a Whiskered Wogler? Would You Like a Giant Ginger Garbula? Would You Like a Copper Colored Cajankler? Visit Virginia’s website [www.virginiakwhite.com](http://www.virginiakwhite.com)

## Janet Post ..... Grades 1-2

### Writing Prompts

Imagine you have a magic wand, and you have it for a whole day. What would you do with it?

Imagine you have a magic eraser. This eraser will allow you to erase things you wish you hadn't said, or things you wish you hadn't done. What will you choose to erase?

Imagine you are only as tall as your pencil. How would your life change? What will you find in the grass outside or under your bed? How long will it take you to walk to your friend's house? Will your dog or cat be a problem? If so, where will you hide? Where will you sleep? What kinds of food will you have to eat?

### Writing Tips

Sometimes a blank piece of paper feels scary. If you put just a few words on the paper—even one—it can make you think of other words. A story is told one word at a time. You don't have to worry about the middle or the end. Just start with the beginning.

Writing means taking a chance. Writing is messy. It means making mistakes and crossing things out. Sometimes, it means starting all over. Sometimes, your mistakes make you think of a whole new story. You have an eraser on your pencil. If you have a computer, you have a delete button. You can fix your story!

Everyone has a story to tell. If you don't think you do, ask yourself what you want to tell your friend at recess? That's one of your stories!

### Bio

Janet Smith Post just finished a book about Black Hawk, a warrior from the Sac Native American tribe. Her novel, *Cotton Rock*, was read on National Public Radio's *Chapter a Day*. Visit her at [Janetsmithpost.com](http://Janetsmithpost.com) and learn more about her books.

**GRADES 3-5**

## Creating Characters

Characters can have good and bad traits.

- Are they honest, or do they often tell lies?
- Do they act mean but have kind hearts?
- Do they bully people?
- Are they shy or outgoing?
- Do they include others, or do they hang out with their group?
- Are they neat or sloppy?
- Are they short or tall?
- Do they have a special talent?
- Are they new in town?
- Is there something that makes them different? Fat, too thin, too short, unusual face?
- Are they wild?
- Are they imaginative?
- Are people drawn to them because they are natural leaders?
- Are they conceited?
- Are they beautiful or handsome?
- Are they daring?
- Are they serious?
- Are they rich or poor? Are they loyal, or do they drop friends in a heartbeat?

## **Nancy Oswald ..... Grades 3-5**

### **Writing Prompts**

Find a shoe in your closet or remove the one you're wearing. Put it where you can see it as you write.

Describe your shoe, using as much detail as you can.

Write a story from the shoe's point of view.

Let your shoe travel to an imaginary world. Write about the adventures your shoe has.

### **Writing Tips:**

When you look at things closely, it's surprising the details you can find. When I write, I use lots of pictures to help me describe the setting and characters in a story.

The point of view an author uses to tell a story can change a story entirely. In this case, a shoe might feel very differently about being walked on than the person wearing it.

Imagination can take you anywhere!

### **Bio**

Nancy Oswald is the award-winning author of eight books for young readers. She loves wearing shoes and using her imagination when she writes. [nancyoswald.com/](http://nancyoswald.com/)

## **Nina Neilson Little..... Grades 3-5**

### **Writing Prompts**

If you had a million dollars, but could only spend it on other people, what would you buy, and who would you buy it for? Why?

If you were the president, what is one thing you would change about the world, and how would it help others?

Write a persuasive letter to your caregivers to convince them that you need a . . . (For Example: a cellphone, pet, new toy.)

Write a persuasive letter to convince your caregivers to take you on vacation. Research the travel destination and create a document with travel details: cost of transportation and hotel, list of activity ideas, best travel times (season), packing list, etc.

Create a new board game and write an advertisement to promote it. Include directions for Object of the Game, Set Up/Assembly, Number of Players, How to Play, How to Win, Benefits of Play/What You Will Learn.

Pretend you have a pen pal from another country. Write him/her a letter describing your life (members of family, type of home, type of location: city, suburb, country), age/grade, favorite school subjects, favorite hobbies, etc. Ask five daily life questions about your pen pal and/or research your pen pal's country and ask five questions specific to the country.

Chose a popular fairytale or book and rewrite the story from a different perspective (the evil witch, the superhero sidekick, the best friend). For example, "The Three Little Pigs" from the perspective of the wolf, "Aladdin" from the perspective of the genie, "The Princess and the Frog" from the frog's perspective.

Research an endangered animal. Write a report with at least five reasons why this animal is important to the ecosystem and needs to be protected.

## Writing Tips

Read a lot! The best writers are also readers! Try different genres: historical fiction, fantasy, mystery. Try different styles: graphic novel, picture book, chapter book.

Switch up the writing style. Write a letter, an advertisement, a news article, a billboard, a recipe...

Write with all five senses. Add details about how things look, smell, feel, sound, and taste.

Let the creative energy flow! Let your ideas spill onto the page, then worry about the grammar, spelling, and punctuation later. Before completing an assignment, be sure to proofread and edit, but sometimes creative writing can be easier if you run with it.

Write about what you know and what you love. Write every day, it doesn't have to be perfect or complete. Keep a notebook and simply write down ideas, dreams, hopes, fears, favorite memories...

## Bio

Nina Neilson Little is the author of *Spirit Baby: Travels through China on the Long Road to Motherhood*. Part memoir and part travelogue, the book tells of her five-year struggle with infertility, the healing benefits of travel, and the many wonders of China. "I wanted to write a book that supports, comforts, and inspires people." Visit her at [ninalittlebooks.com/](http://ninalittlebooks.com/)

**Patricia Raybon ..... Grades 3-5**

**Writing Prompts - Genre: Memoir**

Road trip! That’s the vacation I dreamed about.

I could feel my bike skid. So, I knew I was falling.

I love when it snows, but this was ridiculous.

**Writing Tips**

Writing memoir is a journey of discovery. So, don’t worry about knowing how your story will end. Just use the writing prompt to start writing. Your story will lead you where it wants to go.

Let your memory “walk you back” to your story. Then, tap into your senses. How do things look, sound, feel, smell, and taste? Use those details as you tell your story.

Tell stories. Tell stories. Tell stories. Show your reader what is happening by using a “narrative thread” of “sequential” stories—each one leading to the next. P.S. As you write, don’t forget to have fun.

**Bio**

Patricia Raybon is an award-winning, bestselling author and journalist, who writes books and essays on faith, race, and grace. Join her on the journey at [patriciaraybon.com/](http://patriciaraybon.com/).

## Jennifer Kincheloe ..... Grades 3-5

### Writing Prompts

A pack of wiener dogs, each driving their own race car, drive into your neighborhood at top speed. The pack leader rolls down her window and throws a water balloon at your mom. Other wiener dogs are rolling down their windows. It is up to you to save the day. How do you defeat them? What do you use? What do you do? What do they do? What does your mom do? And then what?

Write the story, beginning to end. Tell us exactly what happened.

Now write a second story from the perspective of the lead wiener dog. Explain your behavior. (I mean, why a race car? Do you even have a license? What do you want? And what did that kid's mom ever do to you anyway?)

### Writing Tip

Take this story in your own direction. For example, if you want the wiener dogs to hurl water balloons at your grandma (or dad or teacher), make that change. If you want to change the wiener dogs to monkeys, make that change. If you want them to be space aliens playing ukulele at a wading pool, go for it. Change everything for all I care. This is your story, after all.

### Bio

Jennifer Kincheloe is the author of the award-winning *Anna Blanc Mystery* series (Suitable for ages 13 to 113). Visit her at [jenniferkincheloe.com/](http://jenniferkincheloe.com/).

## **Fleur Bradley..... Grades 3-5**

### **Writing Prompts**

Pick a main character in a scene or chapter from a book you like. How does that person feel about what’s happening? How do her/his actions continue the story?

Now pick another character—an antagonist (bad guy) would be the most interesting. Try writing the scene from their perspective. How does (s)he feel about the events? How does (s)he react?

### **Writing Tip**

I wrote *Double Vision* from the perspective of funny troublemaker Linc Baker, who has a double—who looks just like him—named Ben. Although Linc is the main character, I kept track of Ben’s point of view. A lot of conflict (which makes a story great!) comes from opposing perspectives.

### **Bio**

Fleur Bradley wrote the *Double Vision* series and *Midnight at the Barclay Hotel*, a spooky Colorado mystery, due out in August 2020 (Viking/Penguin Random House). She regularly does school and Skype visits, as well as educator conference talks on reaching reluctant readers. You can find her at [ftbradley.com](http://ftbradley.com)

## **Joni Franks ..... Grades 3-5**

### **Writing Prompts**

Do you want to make a difference in the world? Write a story about the thing you would most like to change.

Sometimes we can solve a problem we are having by writing about a solution to the problem.

Is there a topic that really interests you? You may find it easier to write about subjects that you feel passionate about.

### **Writing Tips**

If you want to make a difference in the world about a topic you feel passionate about, put your thoughts down in words. It is the best way to convey your message to others, and it will make it easier for you to speak about the topic using your written words.

If we write about things that trouble us, it can make us feel better. Try doing this in a diary or a journal.

I write books about my dog, Sagebrush, because I love her. Do you have something or someone you really love? When we are interested in a topic, it makes writing about it much easier.

### **Bio**

Joni Franks is a bestselling, multi-award-winning children’s book author. She has been honored to receive the prestigious Moms Choice Award for the *Corky Tails, Tales of a Tailless Dog Named Sagebrush* book series. Joni is also the winner of four American Fiction Awards, including Best Children’s Picture Book of 2018 and 2019, the Pinnacle Book Achievement Award, two international Book Excellence Awards, four EVVY Awards and a Best Book Award for 2019! Visit [jonifranks.com](http://jonifranks.com). To contact her, please direct your message to [jonifranksauthor@yahoo.com](mailto:jonifranksauthor@yahoo.com).

## **Virginia K. White ..... Grades 3-5**

### **Writing Prompts**

Use details to explain why you think these glasses are fun. For example: bling, polished, glowing, a particular shape, or even act as a camera.

“Doc finished Margie’s bonnet glasses, but he felt it was not quite enough.” Write about what you think might be added to the bonnet glasses. Use fun description words and interesting action words to tell your story.

### **Art Prompt**

Draw the most fun pair of glasses you can imagine. Think about the color, shape, and details that might be on them. Do the glasses have magical powers?

### **Writing Tip**

Using a fun description makes your writing interesting. For example: lumpy, crimson, moldy, flowery, triangular. When you do this, you show the reader rather than tell the reader about a person, thing, or event. You are painting a picture of the glasses with your words.

### **Bio**

Colorado Authors’ League finalist and Readers’ Choice Awards. Little Honker Saves the Day. Little Honker’s Winter Concert. Little Honker and the Swinging Tails. Little Honker’s Backyard Adventures. Little Honker’s Patriotic Paws. Glasses for Margie, Margie Surprises Doc, Would You Like a Scarlet Striped Schrinkler? Would You Like a Whiskered Wogler, Would You Like a Giant Ginger Garbula? Would You Like a Copper Colored Cajankler? Visit Virginia’s website [virginiakwhite.com](http://virginiakwhite.com).

## **Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer..... Grades 3-5**

### **Writing Prompts**

If you could be any instrument, what would you be? How would you sound, and who would you wish to hear you?

Imagine you are in a backwards universe. Write a poem that tells us what it's like when everything is the opposite of how it is now.

Imagine your superpower is love. Or patience. Or kindness. How would you use your superpower? Who would you help first?

### **Writing Tips**

It doesn't have to be good. I make myself this promise every day when I write. But, I tell myself, it has to be true. I don't mean factual—it can be imagined, but I can't just be writing it to sound good. If it's authentic, it will resonate.

I can't know the end when I start. If I do, I write past it, or I write two endings and then choose one. In this way I let the poem know more than I do. I am in service to it. The poem always teaches (or unteaches) me.

I write a poem every day. The benefit of this is that it becomes more about the practice than about the poem itself. It changes the way I go through the world, changes everything about how I frame things. Practice leads to transformation.

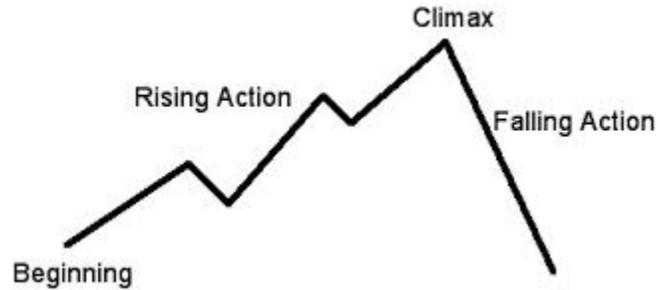
### **Bio**

Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer's most recent book, *Hush*, won the Halcyon Prize for poetry about human ecology. Her book *Naked for Tea* was a finalist for the Able Muse Poetry Prize. Visit her at [wordwoman.com/](http://wordwoman.com/)

**MIDDLE SCHOOL**

## A Harmony Goes On in a Great Story

Let's Take a Mystery. A Great Mystery Looks Like This.



- Tell the reader what mysterious event occurred.
- The main character hits bumps (problems) on the way to solving the mystery.
- At the top of the hill, the “big action” takes place...she has a big confrontation and solves the mystery.
- After the big confrontation happens, all the loose ends get tied up, as the falling action ends the story.

### Where's the Harmony?

The main character also has to have a personal problem she works to resolve. Maybe she fears horseback riding but has to ride a horse to solve the case. Maybe an old school enemy is the person who needs help, and she has to be extra generous to help him.

When the two problems (the mystery and the main character's personal challenge) get solved, in the end, the reader feels satisfied. The harmony is complete.

## Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer..... Middle School

### Writing Prompts

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Imagine your superpower is love. Or patience. Or kindness. How would you use your superpower? Who would you help first?

### Writing Tips

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## **Jennie MacDonald..... Middle School**

### **Writing Prompts**

What's the worst present anyone ever gave you? Describe it in a message to your best friend.

Now write a thank-you note to the person who gave it to you. Consider who they are as a person and what it meant for that individual to give you a gift.

What is the difference between these two notes? What would happen if each was delivered to the other recipient? How would they feel? How would you feel?

### **Writing Tips**

Writing with an audience in mind is an important part of choosing what to say, whether it is about a subject or about the language, and the emotion you want to use and convey.

You already write to specific audiences when you are following writing instructions for school assignments. Writing for specific people or types of audiences will help you write important things like college application essays more effectively.

### **Bio**

Jennie MacDonald, PhD, is an award-winning author and playwright. She has published poetry and short stories, as well as an anthology and articles concerning 18th and 19th century Gothic literature and theatre.

**Patricia Raybon ..... Middle School**

**Writing Prompts - Genre: Memoir**

She was a bully, and I think I hated her.

A swimming pool? Here it was. And, now what?

I could tell my mom was happy.

**Writing Tips**

Writing memoir is a journey of discovery. So, don't worry about knowing how the story will end. Just use the writing prompt to start writing. Your story will lead you where it wants to go.

Let your memory walk you back to the moment of the prompt. Then, tap into your sensory memory. How do things look, sound, feel, smell, and taste? Use those details.

Tell stories. Tell stories. Tell stories. Show your reader what is happening by using a "narrative thread" of "sequential" stories—each one leading to the next. P.S. As you write, don't forget to have fun.

**Bio**

Patricia Raybon is an award-winning, bestselling author and journalist who writes books and essays on faith, race, and grace. Join her on the journey at [patriciaraybon.com/](http://patriciaraybon.com/).

## **Jennie MacDonald..... Middle School**

### **Writing Prompts**

Five people went out in the small boat. Only one returned.

I was new to the neighborhood, but that wasn't the only reason everything seemed strange.

When we heard the news, it was already too late.

### **Writing Tips**

Creating suspense is a key component of writing mysteries. Try to keep from revealing the cause of any of these mysteries for as long as you can. Take your time writing about what happened before the mystery.

Reading your stories aloud to yourself can be a great method for seeing how suspenseful they are. Try to imagine you're telling the story to friends around a campfire or during a sleepover. Is it scary enough? Surprising enough?

### **Bio**

Jennie MacDonald, PhD, is an award-winning author and playwright. She has published poetry and short stories, as well as an anthology and articles concerning 18th and 19th century Gothic literature and theatre.

## **Denny Dressman ..... Middle School**

### **Writing Prompts**

The rabbit munched grass in the back yard, seemingly paying no attention to what was going on around him . . .

The ball felt too big for his hand as Rusty peered at the catcher flashing the sign for a fastball . . .

“What was THAT!” Tyler exclaimed, wide-eyed . . .

### **Writing Tips**

Imagine you are living the moment but use narrative third person to describe what happens. Keep answering the question: What happens next?

Decide the audience for whom you are writing. Use words they’ll understand.

### **Bio**

Denny Dressman is a retired journalist and author of 12 nonfiction books. He also has edited many books, both nonfiction and fiction. Most recently, he is actively engaged in the publication of *The Delta Tango Trilogy*, a series of Border Patrol novels by the late Christopher LaGrone. To view his titles and other writing, please visit [comservbooks.com/](http://comservbooks.com/).

## **Jerry Fabyanic ..... Middle School**

### **Writing Prompts**

The 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic is the latest one to have afflicted humans since we Homo sapiens began living in communities—so past caveman days—and began to travel and trade. You are living through this pandemic in real time. It can be tough in all kinds of ways, but you also get to play witness to one of the most impactful events in American, and even global, history. Your opportunity: Write about it from a variety of angles from fiction to poetry and essay. In short, help tell the story of this era.

### **Pandemics in History—Two-step process:**

**Research:** Do a quick search of ones that swept through major populations and have been documented. Then, zero in on one by researching it more in-depth.

**Writing:** After gaining working knowledge about the facts of the period, create a story around it. Create a setting, such as big town, small rural village, a ship that is weeks from shore or not allowed to dock. Become a character in it. Develop other supporting characters. Perhaps add artwork to enhance your writing.

“School—Truth be told, I never thought I would miss going to school. But I found out that it wasn’t the case when I...”

### **“All was going well until...”**

- Parents and/or grandparents
- Spring Break
- Culminating class project

### **Writing Tips**

Step into the story. Become a character in it and tell it as if you were literally telling others about what happened. Details, details, details. Vibrant language. Vivid descriptors that convey images. Write metaphorically. Rather than write,

“She walked like a duck,” instead say, “She waddled across the room.” Remember your audience. You want to write the story you have to tell, but you also want to engage your audience, not bore them. So, you want to connect.

Tone: Serious, perhaps tragic. However, there are lighthearted tales to be told. So, humor in the right circumstances can work and be most appreciated.

## **Bio**

Jerry Fabyanic is the award-winning author of *Sisyphus Wins: A novel about self-acceptance, forgiveness, and triumph*. Jerry is a retired English and social studies teacher and writes a blog on themes and topics he calls “Higher Living Reflections.” Jerry also interviews Colorado authors on his *Writers Talk* show on KYGT-FM in Idaho Springs, CO. You can learn more about Jerry and read his blog on his website [jerryfabyanic.com/](http://jerryfabyanic.com/). You can listen to his interviews of authors on his other website [bighornbookclub.com/](http://bighornbookclub.com/).

**Barb Lundy..... Middle School**

**Writing Prompts - Genre: Poetry**

Poet Ogden Nash loved to write limericks. Here's a fun one.

"A flea and a fly in a flue

Were imprisoned, so what could they do?

Said the fly, "let us flee!"

"Let us fly!" said the flea.

So they flew through a flaw in the flue."

Lines 1, 2, and 5 rhyme. Lines 3 and 4 rhyme. Listen to Nash's beat and try writing a limerick.

Does your favorite song have a metaphor in it? A metaphor compares two things that usually don't go together. Here are some examples. "It's raining cats and dogs, my teacher is a dragon, he feels blue. Think about a song you like and use a metaphor from the lyrics to write a poem.

**Writing Tips**

Poetry makes the reader feel something more than it makes the reader think something. One poem can mean something different to various readers. Write poetry from your heart not your head.

Even though poetry is read instead of sung, it often has a beat and rhythm. Read your poetry out loud, and you will hear what your eye cannot see.

**Bio**

A widely published poet, Barb's work has appeared in *The Lyric*, *The MacGuffin*, and *Rattle*. Barb's listed in the Directory of Poets and Writers, and she teaches writing. You can visit her at

[http://www.pw.org/directory/writers/barb\\_lundy](http://www.pw.org/directory/writers/barb_lundy)

## **Nancy Oswald ..... Middle School**

### **Writing Prompts**

Doors swing both directions; they can be large or small, open or closed; be rusty, smooth, blocked, or unlockable...

Brainstorm or use a thesaurus to generate a list of synonyms for “door.” Examples: portal, hatch, mousehole, castle gate. Be creative.

Choose a door to go through. Use your senses to describe what’s on the other side.

Write a story about someone passing through a door and what they encounter on the other side.

### **Writing Tips**

A good story has suspense and emotion. Dig deep into your character’s feelings, fears, worries, or possible excitement about passing through the door.

Use the “What if?” strategy. What if the door is locked? What if something unexpected is on the other side? Keep going, asking “what if” every time you get stuck.

### **Bio**

Multi-award-winning author, Nancy Oswald, has published 8 Colorado-set books for young readers. She loves digging into the emotions of her characters. [nancyoswald.com/](http://nancyoswald.com/)

**M. J. EVANS ..... Middle School**

**Writing Prompts**

**Fantasy:** The little leprechaun looked up from the boot he was repairing. His mouth fell open. His body stiffened. “Wh-who are you?” he stammered . . .

**Fantasy:** Five centaurs galloped across the open meadow, the hair of their heads and their tails flowing out behind them. In their hands they held bows. Their quivers were full of arrows. Their destination was . . .

**Historical Fiction:** The horse reared at the appearance of the noisy, smelly vehicle coming down the road toward him. The strange contraption came to a stop in the middle of the dusty, rutted road. A lovely, young maid, not more than fourteen, leapt from the horse-less carriage and . . .

**Historical Fiction:** The air raid sirens split the night air with their shrieks. I jerked up in bed, forcing myself to focus on what was happening around me. I heard my parents’ pounding footsteps in the hall. Then all went silent. . .

**Coming of Age:** Paul went out for a long pass. His eyes were glued to the spiraling football as it sailed through the air. He didn’t see the . . .

**Coming of Age:** Sarah was nervous about her first day at her new school. Would anyone be kind to her? Would she be able to find her classes? But all those fears vanished in an instant when...

**WRITING TIPS**

Show, don’t tell. Rather than say, “He was scared,” say, “His body stiffened, his hands quivered, his scream caught in his throat.

Use the five senses in your writing. When setting a scene, use as many of the senses in your description as you can, so your reader will be able to feel like they are there with you.

Authors are artists with words. Paint pictures in your reader’s mind with the words you choose.

Never start your story with a dream. It gets the reader involved in something that doesn't continue.

Also, never start with the weather, e.g., "It was a dark and stormy night," unless the weather is so bad that it creates the story going forward, as in *The Wizard of Oz*.

## **Bio**

Ms. Evans is the award-winning author of fourteen books, three of which are nonfiction, eleven are fiction. Her favorite genre is fantasy, but she has also written a coming of age novel and a historical fiction. Most of her books are centered around horses or horse fantasy creatures. Her latest book is a historical fiction titled *PINTO! Based Upon the True Story of the Longest Horseback Ride in History*. This book, taken from the journals of four men who rode to every state capital from 1912 to 1915, is told from the point of view of the only horse to complete the entire journey. Awards include: Gold medals from the Literary Classics Awards, Book Excellence Awards, Feathered Quill Awards, and many more. As a former teacher, she loves to visit classrooms. Please feel free to contact her. Visit her website at [dancinghorsepress.com/](http://dancinghorsepress.com/).

## **Barb Lundy..... Middle School**

### **Writing Prompts - Genre: Nonfiction**

Imagine you are an invisible guest at a large family gathering. How would you write up the event?

Imagine you find a diary that tells you something unexpected about a grandparent. What do you learn? What do you do with the information?

Think about a fork in the road of your life. You had to make a choice. What would have happened if you made the opposite choice?

### **Writing Tips**

Nonfiction requires all the creativity of fiction. You make a factual story interesting. You want readers to turn pages because they care about the people and events you explore. Keep your reader in mind as you write.

Read your work out loud. Your ear can hear what your eye misses.

I like to read all my work to others. I know what I mean to convey when I write, so I don't always realize it when I confuse readers. A mini audience can help you improve your writing.

### **Bio**

Barb Lundy is widely published in newspapers and magazines. She is the author of the book *Connections Count, Master the Human Side of Business*, and she teaches writing. [http://www.pw.org/directory/writers/barb\\_lundy](http://www.pw.org/directory/writers/barb_lundy)

**HIGH SCHOOL**

## Metaphor as a Writing Tool

Metaphor is a valuable writing tool. Our subconscious mind remembers images and the concepts they represent.

Robert Frost's famous lines, "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I, I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference." are familiar to most of us.

Many readers also recognize Margaret Atwood's famous observation, "Marriage is not a house or even a tent."

No one has to translate when we hear "scapegoat," "loose cannon," "boiling mad," or "silken lies." "The big bang," "all the world's a stage," and "conscience is a man's compass" have found their way into our vocabularies so often we don't even think about the visuals they represent.

Popular lyrics gives us "You ain't nothin' but a hound dog," "Cryin' all the time" Elvis Presley, "Cause baby you're a firework" Katy Perry, "I'm a marquis diamond" Selena Gomez, "Remember those walls I built, Well, baby, they're tumbling down" Beyoncé.

Think about your main themes and see if a metaphor might add dimension to your story or your article.

Check out Peter Elbow's *Writing with Power* for more on using metaphor.

## Daniel Ginsberg ..... High School

### Writing Prompts

I saw him/her at the school dance and then at the mall, but I never imagined...

Why would someone wear their shoes on the wrong feet?

I've always thought of cutting all my hair off...

### Writing Tips

Writing is about telling stories. Always write until you finish telling your story... short or long... either way is okay.

Find authors whose stories hold your interest and then read, read, and read some more. It will make you a better writer.

### Bio

Daniel Ginsberg writes both fiction and nonfiction. His books and stories include: *By the Dark of the Moon*, "On Buying a Bra," "Her First Christmas," "Irish Stew," "The Murder of Sarah Chen," "Figs," "The Pickle," "Circle the Wagons," *The Banty Connors Mystery Trilogy*. To view his titles and artwork, please visit [DanGinsberg.com/](http://DanGinsberg.com/).

## **Johnny Welsh..... High School**

### **Writing Prompts - Genre: Fiction**

The front door to the house opened. The next phrase uttered was a chilling, “You have to leave now...” (doesn’t matter who said it)

The note on the corkboard said, “Date with the roommates. Bring booze, drug of choice, pencil, and a paper. We are finally going to write!” (along the lines of creating a new beatnik club)

A young lad is pushing a wheelbarrow full of turtles through an abandoned church parking lot, and he is crying...

### **Writing Tips**

Imagine yourself in the situation. Draw a map of where it might be happening and fill in the descriptive narrative of the surroundings.

My best creative writing happens when I put myself in a location where nobody will distract me. For example, I used to love going a few towns away and sitting in a busy coffee shop. The chatter from the crowds became the best white noise.

### **Bio**

Johnny Welsh has worked as a professional bartender in Frisco, Colorado, for over twenty years. He did so well at Syracuse University that they kept him an extra year. After five years of university study, he earned a degree in Italian Language, Literature, and Culture, which has been a great prerequisite for a lifelong career in the mixology arts. He can now dictate funny bar stories in two different languages. His latest hobby is twisting these topics into books.

He is the author of *Paper Maps, No Apps: An Unplugged Travel Adventure*. His first book, *Weedgalized in Colorado*, about the legalization of marijuana in Colorado, won two awards from Readers’ Favorite. Find more at

[JohnnyWelsh.com](http://JohnnyWelsh.com).

## Natli VanDerWerken ..... High School

### Writing Prompts - Genre: Fantasy

The dragon was sleeping, curled at the base of the cliff. Mareka hung her head over the edge and peered down at the iridescent scales that glittered in the sun. Wisps of smoke rose from its nostrils. As she squirmed to find a more comfortable resting place, a rock fell off the edge of the cliff.

The portal opened. Beyond its rim, black creatures stood in ordered rows, waiting.

The castle rose from the fog covering the lower reaches of the mountain. Lights gleamed through its windows. The scouting party slowed their advance, looking for any indication that the goblins has arrived before them. Arvil raised his head and sniffed the air. Goblins were notoriously filthy.

Calista surged through the ocean waves, riding the crests as she could. The white sails of the ship she followed betrayed its location. Her strong tail lashed back and forth...

Capernicus, called Capy by his friends, scuttled down the alley, careful to stay next to the sunbaked bricks of the shops and hovels that lined it. He deftly avoided the refuse littering the path he followed. The smell of rotting food, human waste, and death filled the air. A trap door opened in front of his hurrying feet. As he fell through the black square, the door swung into place.

### Writing Tips

One of the most important lessons I've learned on this publishing journey is to Just Start.

Write every day, even if it's just one word or one sentence. The main character in each book is one of my grandchildren, but other characters have just politely waltzed into the story and taken over. I had no idea that the King of the Dragons was going to appear in the Lady's Garden in *Red Dragon's Keep*. I was as shocked as my readers appear to be. Who knew he would take another character with him back to the Dragon Lands? I didn't!

I hope you have fun building on these prompts. Write down the pictures that you see in your mind when you read them. That's how a story begins.

## **Bio**

Natli VanDerWerken loves dragons. She has a collection of 30 of them, collected from around the world while she served in the Navy as a meteorologist and anti-submarine warfare specialist.

Natli is an international multi-award-winning author of fantasy and science fiction novels. She also raises and shows Shetland Sheepdogs, winning the title of Champion with many of them. They have also earned obedience titles through 44 years of training and showing.

Natli started *The Dragon's Children* series with *Red Dragon's Keep* and *WindRunner*. She is currently working on the third book, *DreamWalker*.

The series was inspired by a fairytale she told her grandchildren one Christmas Eve. The main character in each of the five books is one of those grandchildren. The books are available wherever books are sold. Find her at [natlivanderwerken.com/](http://natlivanderwerken.com/).

## **Peg Brantley..... High School**

### **Writing Prompts - Genre: Crime Fiction/Thrillers**

Sometimes the dead shouldn't stay buried.

Crime scene tape stretched like flexible neon ribbon across the entrance, popping in and out of the light from his headlights.

He woke in the middle of the night, pillow soaked, heart pounding.

### **Writing Tips**

Don't start at the beginning. Start in the middle of the action.

Put some kind of conflict on every page, whether it's your character's internal struggle, an obstacle of some kind, or an outright physical encounter.

Don't give your reader the answer to their questions. Just like you don't start at the beginning, end the chapter early so they need to turn the page.

### **Bio**

Through her stories, which are often centered around social issues, award-winning author Peg Brantley considers herself a conversation starter. She makes personal appearances not only to discuss the topics of her books, but the writing process as well. Find her books here: [pegbrantley.com](http://pegbrantley.com).

## Jodi Bowersox ..... High School

### Writing Prompts

She lobbed a clod at the coffin as the wind whipped around her. *Take that old man*, she thought with defiance.

His flight had been grounded, and she couldn't say it out loud, but her heart cheered. She had no desire to marry that man. Not now. Not ever.

It was a long walk to the barn, but he needed the time to think. Had she really come back for him, or was it all about the horses? All about the race?

### Writing Tips

Stay away from overused tropes. Why write the same story THOUSANDS of people have already written? Write deep characters and let them tell you their story. Real people don't live in tropes.

Be patient in storytelling. Relationships take time. Crises resolved too soon won't have impact. A backstory can be spread out in small bites.

### Bio

Jodi Bowersox is the author of *The Rocky Mountain* series, *The Lightning Riders* series, and the *Tripping on Mars* series, as well as several other stand-alone adult romances. You can find all her books, as well as her art gallery, at [jodibowersox.com/](http://jodibowersox.com/).

## **Buffy Gilfoil High School**

### **Writing Prompts - Genre: Nonfiction**

Starting around March 2020, schools throughout the U.S. suddenly found themselves immersed in distance learning:

Write an essay in three parts telling what this is like, first from a student's point of view, second from a teacher's point of view, and finally from a parental point of view. Feel free to use your imagination and to insert humor.

Create a list of at least three questions about distance learning to ask one or more fellow students, one or more teachers, and one or more parents. Craft an article or essay based on the information and perspectives you gather. (You may want to outline the content before you decide on the questions.)

Take a position on your views about whether any good came of distance learning and how the distance learning experiment could enhance education going forward.

### **Writing Tips**

Use your mind-reading skills: Writers need to think not only like writers, but also like readers. They need to be able to understand what goes through readers' minds. They also need to understand how others think when they write about something from someone else's perspective.

Zoom in and out: In writing, as in photography, it's sometimes good to have both panoramic and detailed perspectives. For example, you want to give an overview about your topic, but you may also want to weave in some small part, especially if it's a microcosm for a larger point. Maybe you miss the way your mom would wave an extra time after dropping you off, for example. Maybe you want to tell about distance learning from the point of view of how people show they care for one another.

Picture this: A graphic organizer can help when you're planning to write. If you're telling a story from three perspectives, maybe each will emphasize a different aspect. Making a drawing that reflects this can be helpful.

## **Bio**

A freelancer for most of her career, Buffy Gilfoil has reported for newspapers, done writing and editing for the Colorado Academy of Family Physicians, and served as an external affairs officer for the Federal Emergency Management Agency. She currently works as a substitute teacher and writes monthly essays for posting on two blogs, including her own, which is at [buffygilfoil.com/blog/](http://buffygilfoil.com/blog/).

## **Kevin Bowersox ..... High School**

### **Writing Prompts**

She had dreamed all her life that someday her prince would come, but she had never suspected that when he did, some assembly would be required, and batteries would not be included.

The transmission started suddenly and indicated intelligence. Coordinating with listening posts to pinpoint its source brought the real shock. All posts around the globe received it simultaneously no matter where they focused their dish. The signal was coming from everywhere.

The robot is the size of a continent. It is heading toward earth. It is asking for the password.

### **Writing Tips**

Make every word count. Each one must contribute to the main storyline, or it will feel like padding. Even too much "style" can detract from the tale you're trying to tell.

Take care with point of view. Each point of view shift should be obvious. A POV that bounces around too much is confusing and a red flag for amateur writing.

### **Bio**

Kevin Bowersox is the author of the humorous sci fi series, *Tales of the Incorrigible*. Follow him on Facebook: [facebook.com/kevinbowersox-author](https://www.facebook.com/kevinbowersox-author) to find out more about the escapades of the crew of the spaceship *Incorrigible*.

## **Patricia Raybon ..... High School**

### **Writing Prompts - Genre: Memoir**

She was a bully, and I think I hated her.

A swimming pool? Here it was. And, now what?

I could tell my mom was happy.

### **Writing Tips**

Writing memoir is a journey of discovery. So, don't worry about knowing how the story will end. Just use the writing prompt to start writing. Your story will lead you where it wants to go.

Let your memory walk you back to the moment of the prompt. Then, tap into your sensory memory. How do things look, sound, feel, smell, and taste? Use those details.

Tell stories. Tell stories. Tell stories. Show your reader what is happening by using a "narrative thread" of "sequential" stories—each one leading to the next. P.S. As you write, don't forget to have fun.

### **Bio**

Patricia Raybon is an award-winning, bestselling author and journalist who writes books and essays on faith, race, and grace. Join her on the journey at [patriciaraybon.com/](http://patriciaraybon.com/)

## **Todd Fahnestock..... High School**

### **Writing Prompts - Genre: Epic Fantasy**

He spit the tooth from his mouth and squinted up at her. They were off to a good start. The magic was beginning to gather...

The man in the clearing sharpened his sword by the orange light of the campfire. Thank the gods he hadn't seen her yet. Her ghostly head floated next to the animated corpse of her body, entwined with the magical roots of the Hallowed Woods. She wondered how she was going to get him to help with her predicament...

The dragon dipped its head, glaring at the dumbstruck group that had stumbled into its lair. "So," the dragon said. "Where shall we begin?"

### **Writing Tips**

Write a crappy novel: I know of no failed novelists who said, "My first book was so crappy I never wrote a second." I know of dozens of failed novelists who never finished their first book because they let their demons convince them that their story sucked. Tell those nattering naysayers to take a hike. Believe in your own brilliance and give yourself time to bring it out. Write the story. If you want to pass judgment on it when it's finished, fine. But finish it. You learn so much by taking the journey to the end. You learn nothing by letting the demons kill your novel.

Write every day: Even if it's only for thirty minutes and even if it's hard. Bestselling author Jodi Thomas once gave a keynote speech about how she decided to write every day for two months and not edit herself. She said there were days where she felt she was writing absolute brilliance, and there were days where she felt she was writing absolute garbage. But she stuck to her plan, didn't edit any of the bad parts until the end of those two months, at which point she went back through the manuscript. She was ready to slice away those horrible writing days and replace them with brilliance. But she couldn't find them. The days where she thought she was writing horribly were just as skilled as the days where she thought she was writing brilliantly. My takeaway was that our skill as writers stays consistent and, if anything, gets

better over time. But our emotions about what we write vacillate wildly day-to-day. Trust your skill and let your emotions do their rollercoaster. But whatever you do, keep writing.

Read *Save the Cat* by Blake Snyder: It is the best book for learning the essence of storytelling structure. It was made for screen writers, but it gives amazing insight to storytelling of all stripes. I've been writing for decades, and I just read *Save the Cat* this past year. I can only imagine how much better my writing would be now if I'd read it early on. Do yourself a favor. Read it.

## **Bio**

TODD FAHNESTOCK is a writer of fantasy for all ages and winner of the New York Public Library's Books for the Teen Age Award. *Threadweavers* and *The Whisper Prince Trilogy* are two of his bestselling epic fantasy series. His time travel novel, *Charlie Fiction*, was a finalist in the Colorado Authors' League Best of 2019. His passions are fantasy and his quirky, fun-loving family. When he's not writing, he teaches Taekwondo, swaps middle grade humor with his son, plays Ticket to Ride with his wife, scribes modern slang from his daughter and goes on morning runs with Galahad the Weimaraner. Find Todd's extensive book list at [toddfahnestock.com](http://toddfahnestock.com)

## **Buffy Gilfoil ..... High School**

### **Writing Prompts - Genre: Nonfiction**

Think about having to stay at home with members of your household, as happened starting in March 2020.

Tell about one to three of your favorite things and one to three of your least favorite things about this time.

How did this experience change you, your outlook, or your relationships, or all of these?

Describe a typical day during this time and compare that to what life was like beforehand and afterward. Focus on yourself for the typical day. For life before and after, you may emphasize just your life or life in general.

### **Writing Tips**

Sometimes brainstorming and list making are good ways to start writing projects. You may want to first think of things you want to include and then organize them so that they tell a story.

Research can often be daunting, but for these prompts you just need to use your imagination and powers of observation. You may want to imagine yourself looking back on this quarantine a year from now. Include details that you may take for granted, like what sort of computer you have or the names of computer games.

Edit your work after you've completed a draft. Put it aside for a while and then review it. Keep an eye open for overlooked errors and opportunities to make your point more clearly and powerfully.

### **Bio**

A freelancer for most of her career, Buffy Gilfoil has reported for newspapers, done writing and editing for the Colorado Academy of Family Physicians, and served as an external affairs officer for the Federal Emergency Management Agency. She currently works as a substitute teacher and writes monthly essays for posting on two blogs. [buffygilfoil.com/blog/](http://buffygilfoil.com/blog/)

## **Jerry Fabyanic..... High School**

### **Genre: Essays**

The essay has become a lost art for a few reasons. But well-written ones are well received because they serve vital purposes. They provide readers with thought-provoking perspectives. They help readers learn by seeing life, the world, and others through a different lens or prism. They authenticate readers' fears, hopes, and more, by seeing others who think similarly to how they do and share common feelings.

Essays touch people more deeply when the writer writes from a personally vulnerable angle. That allows readers to focus on lessons learned about life and/or about themselves, because you modeled it by revealing more about yourself in an honest way. The key is honesty, because almost everyone in time learns to identify a phony.

### **Writing Prompt**

Studies give solid evidence that acts of courage always include the individual willingly making him/herself vulnerable. Write an essay about a time you put yourself at risk, allowed yourself to be vulnerable—physically, but more importantly, socially, mentally, or emotionally—then acted courageously, perhaps discovering a side of you that you weren't aware of before. It might even include writing this essay.

### **Writing Tip**

Begin writing and write like you are telling a story. Let your fingers roam where your thoughts go. Let ideas flow where they will. Don't worry about connections while you write. Write until you have exhausted the telling. You can always go back to edit and rearrange passages and to incorporate transitional words and phrases to bring coherence to your work. Set the piece aside for a while, a few hours at least or, better, a day. Re-read. Add more details you hadn't thought of in the initial writing. Repeat. Finally, go back over it to bring cohesion.

**Bio**

Jerry Fabyanic is the award-winning author of *Sisyphus Wins: A novel about self-acceptance, forgiveness, and triumph*. Jerry is a retired English and social studies teacher and writes a blog on themes and topics he calls “Higher Living Reflections.” Jerry also interviews Colorado authors on his *Writers Talk* show on KYGT-FM in Idaho Springs CO. You can learn more about Jerry and read his blog on his website [jerryfabyanic.com/](http://jerryfabyanic.com/). You can listen to his interviews of authors on his other website [bighornbookclub.com/](http://bighornbookclub.com/).

## Mary Taylor Young ..... High School

### Writing Prompts

Creating a Sense of Place in Your Writing. Place means the surrounding where the story happens. It can be physical, emotional, psychological, virtual.

What are the “Places” in your life? Make a list of specific names: School, skate park, mall, local park, rec center, your bedroom, your house, your family, virtual (gaming, social media, favorite websites).

Write a paragraph about how you feel when you are in one or more of your Places.

Why is this Place important to you?

How do you feel when you are there? Happy, scared, romantic, like a little kid, like a man/woman, powerful, powerless?

Think of writing a story set in one of your Places. Describe it to your reader in a few paragraphs or a page.

What does it look like?

What does it feel like? What are the hidden things there—real, emotional, in memory?

### Bio

Mary Taylor Young is author of 18 books of nonfiction. She was inducted into the Colorado Authors Hall of Fame in 2019. Mary has been writing professionally for 33 years and has taught writing to thousands of students, K to 10 as an artist in residence in public and private schools throughout Colorado. [MaryTaylorYoung.com](http://MaryTaylorYoung.com)

## **Barb Lundy..... High School**

Genre: Nonfiction

### **Writing Prompts - Genre: Nonfiction**

Imagine you are an invisible guest at a large family gathering. How would you write up the event?

Imagine you find a diary that tells you something unexpected about a grandparent. What do you learn? What do you do with the information?

Think about a fork in the road of your life. You had to make a choice. What would have happened if you made the opposite choice?

### **Writing Tips**

Nonfiction requires all the creativity of fiction. You make a factual story interesting. You want readers to turn pages because they care about the people and events you explore. Keep your reader in mind as you write.

Read your work out loud. Your ear can hear what your eye misses.

I like to read all my work to others. I know what I mean to convey when I write, so I don't always realize it when I confuse readers. A mini audience can help you improve your writing.

### **Bio**

Barb Lundy is widely published in newspapers and magazines. She is the author of the book *Connections Count, Master the Human Side of Business*, and she teaches writing. You can visit her at:

[pw.org/directory/writers/barb\\_lundy](http://pw.org/directory/writers/barb_lundy)

## R. Gary Raham ..... High School

### Writing Prompts

You are the last human in the world sitting alone in a room. There is a knock on the door, so you...

My master takes me to the park every day. I love to smell all my friends and run until my heart pounds, but today...

Six months alone on any empty Island? I can only take ten things and must leave tomorrow? Well, here's my list, and I'll tell you why:

### Writing Tips

Remember your audience. One way to do that is to put a picture of someone who represents that audience on or near your computer so that as you write you can envision talking to him or her.

When writing fiction, have written discussions with your characters. Ask them how they feel, what they want, and what they care about. You may not use all this information in your story, but having that information available will provide background that enriches your tale.

### Bio

R. Gary Raham is a writer, illustrator, and journalist with 19 books and hundreds of magazine articles to his credit. Fiction titles include *The Deep Time Diaries*, and *A Once-Dead Genius in the Kennel of Master Morticue Ambergrand*. Nonfiction includes *The Restless Earth: Fossils, and Confessions of a Time Traveler*. Raham has been a winner or finalist of 7 Colorado Authors' League Awards as well as awards from the Colorado Press Association, Denver Video Festival Award of Excellence, and Highlights for Children Science Article of the Year Award. Learn about his work at [biostration.com](http://biostration.com).

## **Bruce Most..... High School**

### **Writing Prompts**

Read today’s newspaper, scan news online, or browse through a magazine for inspiration for a person or subject matter that might form the basis for an interesting fictional story.

Start with a setting that intrigues you. Develop characters and story rooted deeply in that setting.

Choose an occupation that fascinates you but which you know little about. Research it and come up with a story.

### **Writing Tips**

Write what inspires you, not merely what you know. Your excitement of discovery through research and writing will shine through to your readers.

Write, rewrite, repeat, even if only 30 minutes a day. Writing is a muscle that needs to be exercised regularly.

Carry a digital recorder. Dictate plot ideas, character bios, bits of dialogue or scene actions. Transcribe into story notes and expand. This works well while driving and walking, but not in the shower.

### **Bio**

Bruce W. Most writes mystery novels and short stories. His latest novel is *The Big Dive*, a sequel to his award-winning *Murder on the Tracks*. Other titles are *Bonded for Murder*, *Missing Bonds*, and the award-winning *Rope Burn*. More about his mysteries can be found at [brucewmost.com/](http://brucewmost.com/).

## M. J. Evans ..... High School

### Writing Prompts

**Fantasy:** The little leprechaun looked up from the boot he was repairing. His mouth fell open. His body stiffened. “Wh-who are you?” he stammered . . .

**Fantasy:** Five centaurs galloped across the open meadow, the hair of their heads and their tails flowing out behind them. In their hands they held bows. Their quivers were full of arrows. Their destination was . . .

**Historical Fiction:** The horse reared at the appearance of the noisy, smelly vehicle coming down the road toward him. The strange contraption came to a stop in the middle of the dusty, rutted road. A lovely, young maid, not more than fourteen, leapt from the horse-less carriage and . . .

**Historical Fiction:** The air raid sirens split the night air with their shrieks. I jerked up in bed, forcing myself to focus on what was happening around me. I heard my parents’ pounding footsteps in the hall. Then all went silent. . .

**Coming of Age:** Paul went out for a long pass. His eyes were glued to the spiraling football as it sailed through the air. He didn’t see the . . .

**Coming of Age:** Sarah was nervous about her first day at her new school. Would anyone be kind to her? Would she be able to find her classes? But all those fears vanished in an instant when...

### Writing Tips

Show, don’t tell. Rather than say, “He was scared,” say, “His body stiffened, his hands quivered, his scream caught in his throat.

Use the five senses in your writing. When setting a scene, use as many of the senses in your description as you can, so your reader will be able to feel like they are there with you.

Authors are artists with words. Paint pictures in your reader’s mind with the words you choose.

Never start your story with a dream. It gets the reader involved in something that doesn't continue.

Also, never start with the weather, e.g., "It was a dark and stormy night," unless the weather is so bad that it creates the story going forward, as in *The Wizard of Oz*.

## **Bio**

Ms. Evans is the award-winning author of fourteen books, three of which are nonfiction, eleven are fiction. Her favorite genre is fantasy, but she has also written a coming of age novel and a historical fiction. Most of her books are centered around horses or horse fantasy creatures. Her latest book is a historical fiction titled *PINTO! Based Upon the True Story of the Longest Horseback Ride in History*. This book, taken from the journals of four men who rode to every state capital from 1912 to 1915, is told from the point of view of the only horse to complete the entire journey. Awards include: Gold medals from the Literary Classics Awards, Book Excellence Awards, Feathered Quill Awards, and many more. As a former teacher, she loves to visit classrooms. Please feel free to contact her. Visit her website:

[dancinghorsepress.com](http://dancinghorsepress.com)

**Heather Mateus Sappenfield ..... High School****Writing Prompts**

How are you feeling right now? In as many paragraphs as are needed, describe that feeling as though it were a painting you were creating. What type of paint would you select: watercolor, acrylic, oil? What style would it embody: Impressionism, Modernism, Cubism, Realism, Surrealism, Abstract? What colors would you choose? What would be the subject, the focus? What would be the mood and overall impression? What telling details would it include? Paint your mood with words.

Now imagine you are someone else, someone who is visiting a museum, and there, on the wall, is your painting. You are so taken with it that you sit on the marble bench across from it to study it. Does your painting look different through this other person's eyes? What do you hope this observer would see/feel/learn about you? What would they really see? And would it be true? Write this other person's thoughts about your painting.

**Bio**

Heather Mateus Sappenfield's writing, whether fiction or nonfiction, explores the adventures that fill life, often in the Rocky Mountain landscape that has been her lifelong home. She's fascinated by the many selves each of us becomes in our varied roles throughout the day (some we like, some we do not), and her writing often delves into the internal adventure of juggling those multiple selves. Her writing is literary, yet easy to read, reviewed as "deceptively simple, yet a closer look will often reveal layers of technique and meaning." She has written the young adult novels *The View From Who I Was*, and *Life at the Speed of Us*, a Colorado Book Award Finalist. Her short story collection *Lyrics for Rock Stars*, winner of the V Press Book Compilation Prize, will release on September 21, 2020. You can visit her at:

[heathermateussappenfield.com/](http://heathermateussappenfield.com/)

## Denny Dressman ..... High School

### Writing Prompts

The rabbit munched grass in the back yard, seemingly paying no attention to what was going on around him . . .

The ball felt too big for his hand as Rusty peered at the catcher flashing the sign for a fastball . . .

“What was THAT!” Tyler exclaimed, wide-eyed . . .

### Writing Tips

Imagine you are living the moment but use narrative third person to describe what happens. Keep answering the question: What happens next?

Decide the audience for whom you are writing. Use words they’ll understand.

### Bio

Denny Dressman is a retired journalist and author of 12 nonfiction books. He also has edited many books, both nonfiction and fiction. Most recently, he is actively engaged in the publication of *The Delta Tango Trilogy*, a series of Border Patrol novels by the late Christopher LaGrone. To view his titles and other writing, please visit [comservbooks.com/](http://comservbooks.com/).

# OPEN PROMPTS

## **So What Do I DO with What I've Written?**

New Pages Young Writers Guide Is a Great Resource:

“Where young writers can find print and online literary magazines to read, places to publish their own works, and legitimate contests. Some publish only young writers, some publish all ages for young readers. For specific submission guidelines, visit the publication's website. Ages can include elementary, teen, or early college. This is an ad-free resource: publications and writing contests listed here have not paid to be included. This guide is maintained by Editor Denise Hill, a teacher who loves to encourage young writers.

Safety Matters! New Pages expects sites listed in the guide to adhere to the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act.”

You Can Also Find Contests for Young Writers At

[newpages.com/writers-resources/young-writers-guide](http://newpages.com/writers-resources/young-writers-guide)

## **New Pages Writers Resources for Adults**

Your first stop in researching MA, PhD, and MFA creative writing programs; undergraduate college and universities with creative writing concentrations; writing contests and calls for submissions from magazines and publishers; and book and literary festivals, conferences, workshops, retreats, and more. Recommended by Colorado Authors' League as a great resource for writing opportunities. [www.newpages.com/writers-resources](http://www.newpages.com/writers-resources)

## Johnny Welsh.....Open Prompts

### Writing Prompts

The front door to the house opened. The next phrase uttered was a chilling, “You have to leave now...” (doesn’t matter who said it)

The note on the corkboard said, “Date with the roommates. Bring booze, drug of choice, pencil, and a paper. We are finally going to write!” (along the lines of creating a new beatnik club)

A young lad is pushing a wheelbarrow full of turtles through an abandoned church parking lot, and he is crying...

### Writing Tips

Imagine yourself in the situation. Draw a map of where it might be happening and fill in the descriptive narrative of the surroundings.

My best creative writing happens when I put myself in a location where nobody will distract me. For example, I used to love going a few towns away and sit in a busy coffee shop. The chatter from the crowds became the best white noise.

### Bio

Johnny Welsh has worked as a professional bartender in Frisco, Colorado, for over twenty years. He did so well at Syracuse University that they kept him an extra year. After five years of university study, he earned a degree in Italian Language, Literature, and Culture, which has been a great prerequisite for a lifelong career in the mixology arts. He can now dictate funny bar stories in two different languages. His latest hobby is twisting these topics into books. He is the author of *Paper Maps*, *No Apps: An Unplugged Travel Adventure*. His first book, *Weedgalized in Colorado*, about the legalization of marijuana in Colorado, won two awards from Readers’ Favorite. Find more at [JohnnyWelsh.com](http://JohnnyWelsh.com).

## **Todd Fahnestock.....Open Prompts**

### **Writing Prompts - Genre: Epic Fantasy**

He spit the tooth from his mouth and squinted up at her. They were off to a good start. The magic was beginning to gather...

The man in the clearing sharpened his sword by the orange light of the campfire. Thank the gods he hadn't seen her yet. Her ghostly head floated next to the animated corpse of her body, entwined with the magical roots of the Hallowed Woods. She wondered how she was going to get him to help with her predicament...

The dragon dipped its head, glaring at the dumbstruck group that had stumbled into its lair. "So," the dragon said. "Where shall we begin?"

### **Writing Tips**

Write a crappy novel: I know of no failed novelists who said, "My first book was so crappy I never wrote a second." I know of dozens of failed novelists who never finished their first book because they let their demons convince them that their story sucked. Tell those nattering naysayers to take a hike. Believe in your own brilliance and give yourself time to bring it out. Write the story. If you want to pass judgment on it when it's finished, fine. But finish it. You learn so much by taking the journey to the end. You learn nothing by letting the demons kill your novel.

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better over time. But our emotions about what we write vacillate wildly day-to-day. Trust your skill and let your emotions do their rollercoaster. But whatever you do, keep writing.

Read *Save the Cat* by Blake Snyder: It is the best book for learning the essence of storytelling structure. It was made for screen writers, but it gives amazing insight to storytelling of all stripes. I've been writing for decades, and I just read *Save the Cat* this past year. I can only imagine how much better my writing would be now if I'd read it early on. Do yourself a favor. Read it.

## **Bio**

Todd Fahnestock is a writer of fantasy for all ages and winner of the New York Public Library's Books for the Teen Age Award. *Threadweavers* and *The Whisper Prince Trilogy* are two of his bestselling epic fantasy series. His time travel novel, *Charlie Fiction*, was a finalist in the Colorado Authors' League Best of 2019. His passions are fantasy and his quirky, fun-loving family. When he's not writing, he teaches Taekwondo, swaps middle grade humor with his son, plays Ticket to Ride with his wife, scribes modern slang from his daughter and goes on morning runs with Galahad the Weimaraner. Find Todd's extensive book list at [toddfahnestock.com](http://toddfahnestock.com).

## **Barb Lundy.....Open Prompts**

### **Writing Prompts - Genre: Poetry**

1. The fog deepened
2. Hulking stones stand in circle fragments
3. The moon attends my dark concert

### **Writing Tips**

Let a metaphor tell you a story. That story will still emerge from events or relationships in your life. When you allow the metaphor to take the lead, you reap unexpected results.

I like to read my poems to people whose opinions I trust before mailing them to literary journals. I'm always surprised when someone gets lost in a poem. Most of the time my mini audience is spot on.

### **Bio**

A widely published poet, Barb's work has appeared in *The Lyric*, *The MacGuffin*, and *Rattle*. Barb's listed in the Directory of Poets and Writers, and she teaches writing.

## R. Gary Raham .....Open Prompts

### Writing Prompts

You are the last human in the world sitting alone in a room. There is a knock on the door, so you...

My master takes me to the park every day. I love to smell all my friends and run until my heart pounds, but today...

Six months alone on any empty Island? I can only take ten things and must leave tomorrow? Well, here’s my list, and I’ll tell you why:

### Writing Tips

Remember your audience. One way to do that is to put a picture of someone who represents that audience on or near your computer so that as you write you can envision talking to him or her.

When writing fiction, have written discussions with your characters. Ask them how they feel, what they want, and what they care about. You may not use all this information in your story, but having that information available will provide background that enriches your tale.

### Bio

R. Gary Raham is a writer, illustrator, and journalist with 19 books and hundreds of magazine articles to his credit. Fiction titles include *The Deep Time Diaries*, and *A Once-Dead Genius in the Kennel of Master Morticue Ambergrand*. Nonfiction includes *The Restless Earth: Fossils, and Confessions of a Time Traveler*. Raham has been a winner or finalist of 7 Colorado Authors’ League Awards as well as awards from the Colorado Press Association, Denver Video Festival Award of Excellence, and Highlights for Children Science Article of the Year Award. Learn about his work at [biostration.com](http://biostration.com).

## Jodi Bowersox .....Open Prompts

### Writing Prompts

She lobbed a clod at the coffin as the wind whipped around her. *Take that old man*, she thought with defiance.

His flight had been grounded, and she couldn't say it out loud, but her heart cheered. She had no desire to marry that man. Not now. Not ever.

It was a long walk to the barn, but he needed the time to think. Had she really come back for him, or was it all about the horses? All about the race?

### Writing Tips

Stay away from overused tropes. Why write the same story THOUSANDS of people have already written? Write deep characters and let them tell you their story. Real people don't live in tropes.

Be patient in storytelling. Relationships take time. Crises resolved too soon won't have impact. A backstory can be spread out in small bites.

### Bio

Jodi Bowersox is the author of *The Rocky Mountain* series, *The Lightning Riders* series, and the *Tripping on Mars* series, as well as several other stand-alone adult romances. You can find all her books, as well as her art gallery, at [jodibowersox.com](http://jodibowersox.com).

## Linda Frantzen Carlson .....Open Prompts

### Writing Prompts - Genre: Humor

You're stuck in a traffic jam, when suddenly last night's spicy chicken vindaloo kicks in with a vengeance.

You've just met someone interesting at a friend's party when, without warning, your friend's new puppy decides it's madly in love with your left leg.

You wake up late on the morning of a job interview and dress in a hurry. At the job site, you slip out of your overcoat, only to realize you've put your sweater on inside-out.

### Writing Tips

The best humor strikes a universal chord...it could happen to anybody. It's not necessary to be hateful or harmful. Be willing to laugh at yourself. Be on the lookout for humor. It's lurking everywhere.

Shamelessly eavesdrop and carry a pen and a notebook.

### Bio

Linda has a long and diverse publishing history, including a column for the *Boulder Daily Camera*, play reviews, feature articles for the *Audience Magazine*, satire in *The Boulder Lampoon*, poetry in various magazines, several short stories, and a book entitled *Plump: Survival of the Fattest*, published by White-Boucke Publishing. Visit Linda at [facebook.com/linda.f.carlson.7](https://www.facebook.com/linda.f.carlson.7).

## Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer.....Open Prompts

### Writing Prompts

Think of an embarrassing moment. What object was there to witness it? Write about it from that object's point of view.

Think of a burning question. Now go to any object in the kitchen—knife, opener, plate, peeler—and ask it your question. See what advice it may have for you.

Write a poem that is only questions.

### Writing Tips

It doesn't have to be good. I make myself this promise every day when I write. But, I tell myself, it has to be true. I don't mean factual—it can be imagined, but I can't just be writing it to sound good. If it's authentic, it will resonate.

I can't know the end when I start. If I do, I write past it, or I write two endings and then choose one. In this way I let the poem know more than I do. I am in service to it. The poem always teaches (or unteaches) me.

I write a poem every day. The benefit of this is that it becomes more about the practice than about the poem itself. It changes the way I go through the world, changes everything about how I frame things. Practice leads to transformation.

### Bio

Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer's most recent book, *Hush*, won the Halcyon Prize for poetry about human ecology. Her book *Naked for Tea* was a finalist for the Able Muse Poetry Prize. Visit her at [wordwoman.com/](http://wordwoman.com/).

## Daniel Ginsberg.....Open Prompts

### Writing Prompts

His heart was still beating when it slipped from her hands...

She looked so innocent. Who would have believed...

If extra-terrestrials looked like us...

### Writing Tips

Fantasize, daydream, stare at clouds, and let your mind ponder the what ifs.

Always tell the story you would want someone to tell you and take your time; don't skimp on the details.

### Bio

Daniel Ginsberg writes both fiction and nonfiction. His books and stories include: *By the Dark of the Moon*, "On Buying a Bra," "Her First Christmas," "Irish Stew," "The Murder of Sarah Chen," "Figs," "The Pickle," "Circle the Wagons," *The Banty Conners Mystery Trilogy*. To view his titles and artwork, please visit [DanGinsberg.com/](http://DanGinsberg.com/).

## **Doris McCraw writing as Angela Raines .....Open Prompts**

Genres: Historical Fiction, Nonfiction, and Poetry

### **Writing Prompts - Genres: Historical Fiction, Nonfiction, and Poetry**

You are pulled through your window into the past at the same place you are now. Describe how it is the same and how it's different.

Read a newspaper from the past, find a news story and fill in what you think is missing

Tell a story or write a poem based on a favorite color.

### **Writing Tips**

When writing fiction, the first draft is the basic story, each draft after adds more information, color, history, and deeper character information.

When writing nonfiction, the research never ends. Despite trying to tell, "just the facts," the story is always told through your own experiences. Be aware of that, and be as honest with yourself and the story as you can be.

Write something every day. A poem, such as haiku, or make notes on new research projects. Take in the world around you and make notes about what you see, think, and feel.

### **Bio**

Doris's latest article on the early women doctors of Colorado will appear in the summer issue of *Saddle Bag Dispatches*. Her latest novel, writing as Angela Raines is *The Outlaw's Letter*, a western romance story. You can find more at her website: [angelaraines.net/](http://angelaraines.net/)

## Jo Fontana .....Open Prompts

### Writing Prompts

You've heard of the hero's journey. Instead of writing in this perspective, what if your character was the villain? What would be different in their journey?

Imagine everyone lost their sight in a world without technology. Write a story about how people would adapt. What obstacles would they face?

Imagine a world where everyone had one wish that was granted. How would that affect the world and the people living in it?

### Writing Tips

Don't expect to get it perfect on the first try. Rewrite it. It helps to set it aside for a while and rework it.

If you get stuck, don't stop writing. It may be helpful to work on something else.

Try not to stop at the end of a chapter or a paragraph, this way it is easier to get back into the story because you will still have part of the story in your mind.

### Bio

Jo Fontana is a member of the Colorado Authors' League and the author of the *Turtle Monkey* series. She has written an anthology under the pen name of A.J. Hallows titled *Approaching Darkness*. She has completed her first novel, *The Egg Quest*. Her new novel, *Gods of the Bay*, is scheduled to release in 2020. Visit her at [jofontana.com/](http://jofontana.com/).

## Douglas D. Hawk .....Open Prompts

### Writing Prompts

Night and he had left her alone on the mountain road; something was following her...

All the cabins were closed for the winter and as they walked by them, laughter erupted from somewhere in the trees...

The cemetery at night was compassionless and hostile, not a place for lovers...

### Writing Tips

Summon up your greatest fear or phobia and imagine how you would save yourself from it.

As you write your story, visualize the setting, make it a part of the tale.

### Bio

Douglas D. Hawk is a retired public relations manager. His first novel, *Moonslasher*, was a bestseller, and his novel *The Devouring* was named one of the best horror novels of the year by Science Fiction Chronicles. His other works include *The Occult Madonna*, *Island of the Wolf*, *A Grinding in the Bones*, *Moons of the Blood Hunt*, *Graveyard Looters*, *Denver Dreadful: The Ripper of Capitol Heights*, *Mark of the Black Claw*, *Justice of the Black Claw*, and *The Big Blow-Off*, based on true events. He is a past president of the Colorado Authors' League. You can visit Douglas at [douglasdhawk.com/wp/](http://douglasdhawk.com/wp/).

## Kelly Robbins .....Open Prompts

### Writing Prompt - Genre: Nonfiction

I see a vision of beautiful white, clean snow as far as the eye can see. I take one step into the snow. And then another. With each step I take, I am making my own new way, and at the same time creating a new path for others to follow. What is one area of your life where you have created fresh tracks? What is one where you would like to?

### Writing Tips

Know why you are writing. What is your purpose? For example, to inform the reader of a new way to be creative or to teach how to make new and healthy friendships.

Don't write to impress, write to be understood. Use clear, simple language to make your point. What's important is what you have to share, not how knowledgeable you sound.

### Bio

Kelly Robbins is the author of *Trust Your Next Step: Creating the Confidence to Cut Fresh Tracks*. She publishes *The Edge* newsletter and the *Fresh Tracks with Kelly Robbins* podcast. Kelly was a columnist for the *Denver Business Journal* for several years and currently writes feature articles in *Science of Mind* magazine. Find more from Kelly at [kellyrobbins.net/](http://kellyrobbins.net/).

## Kevin Bowersox .....Open Prompts

### Writing Prompts

She had dreamed all her life that someday her prince would come, but she had never suspected that when he did, some assembly would be required, and batteries would not be included.

The transmission started suddenly and indicated intelligence. Coordinating with listening posts to pinpoint its source brought the real shock. All posts around the globe received it simultaneously no matter where they focused their dish. The signal was coming from everywhere.

The robot is the size of a continent. It is heading toward earth. It is asking for the password.

### Writing Tips

Make every word count. Each one must contribute to the main storyline, or it will feel like padding. Even too much "style" can detract from the tale you're trying to tell.

Take care with point of view. Each point of view shift should be obvious. A POV that bounces around too much is confusing and a red flag for amateur writing.

### Bio

Kevin Bowersox is the author of the humorous sci fi series, *Tales of the Incorrigible*. Follow him on Facebook: [facebook.com/Kevin-Bowersox-Author](https://www.facebook.com/Kevin-Bowersox-Author) to find out more about the escapades of the crew of the spaceship *Incirrigible*.

## **Peg Brantley.....Open Prompts**

### **Writing Prompts - Genre: Crime Fiction/Thrillers**

Sometimes the dead shouldn't stay buried.

Crime scene tape stretched like flexible neon ribbon across the entrance, popping in and out of the light from his headlights.

He woke in the middle of the night, pillow soaked, heart pounding.

### **Writing Tips**

Don't start at the beginning. Start in the middle of the action.

Put some kind of conflict on every page, whether it's your character's internal struggle, an obstacle of some kind, or an outright physical encounter.

Don't give your reader the answer to their questions. Just like you don't start at the beginning, end the chapter early so they need to turn the page.

### **Bio**

Through her stories, which are often centered around social issues, award-winning author Peg Brantley considers herself a conversation starter. She makes personal appearances not only to discuss the topics of her books, but the writing process as well. Find her books here: [pegbrantley.com](http://pegbrantley.com).

## **Jerry Fabyanic.....Open Prompts**

Provide readers with thought-provoking perspectives. Help readers learn by seeing life, the world, and others through a different lens or prism. Authenticate readers' fears, hopes, and more, by seeing others who think similarly to how they do, and share common feelings through your writing.

You can touch people more deeply when you write from a personally vulnerable angle. That allows readers to focus on lessons learned about life and/or about themselves because you modeled it by revealing more about yourself in an honest way.

### **Writing Prompt**

Studies give solid evidence that acts of courage always include the individual willingly making him/herself vulnerable. Write about the time you put yourself at risk, allowed yourself to be vulnerable—physically, but more importantly, socially, mentally, or emotionally—then acted courageously, perhaps discovering a side of you that you weren't aware of before. It might even include writing this essay.

### **Writing Tip**

Begin writing. Let your fingers roam where your thoughts go. Let ideas flow where they will. Don't worry about connections while you write. Write until you have exhausted the telling of your story. You can always go back to edit and rearrange passages and to incorporate transitional words and phrases to bring coherence to your work. Set the piece aside for a while, a few hours at least or, better, a day. Re-read. Add more details you hadn't thought of in the initial writing. Repeat. Finally, go back over it to bring cohesion.

### **Bio**

Jerry Fabyanic is the award-winning author of *Sisyphus Wins: A novel about self-acceptance, forgiveness, and triumph*. Jerry is a retired English and social

studies teacher and writes a blog on themes and topics he calls “Higher Living Reflections.” Jerry also interviews Colorado authors on his *Writers Talk* show on KYGT-FM in Idaho Springs, CO. You can learn more about Jerry and read his blog on his website [jerryfabyanic.com/](http://jerryfabyanic.com/). You can listen to his interviews of authors on his other website [bighornbookclub.com/](http://bighornbookclub.com/).

## Natli VanDerWerken .....Open Prompts

### Writing Prompts - Genre: Fantasy

The dragon was sleeping, curled at the base of the cliff. Mareka hung her head over the edge and peered down at the iridescent scales that glittered in the sun. Wisps of smoke rose from its nostrils. As she squirmed to find a more comfortable resting place, a rock fell off the edge of the cliff.

The portal opened. Beyond its rim, black creatures stood in ordered rows, waiting.

The castle rose from the fog covering the lower reaches of the mountain. Lights gleamed through its windows. The scouting party slowed their advance, looking for any indication that the goblins has arrived before them. Arvil raised his head and sniffed the air. Goblins were notoriously filthy.

Calista surged through the ocean waves, riding the crests as she could. The white sails of the ship she followed betrayed its location. Her strong tail lashed back and forth...

Capernicus, called Capy by his friends, scuttled down the alley, careful to stay next to the sunbaked bricks of the shops and hovels that lined it. He deftly avoided the refuse littering the path he followed. The smell of rotting food, human waste, and death filled the air. A trap door opened in front of his hurrying feet. As he fell through the black square, the door swung into place.

### Writing Tips

One of the most important lessons I've learned on this publishing journey is to Just Start.

Write every day, even if it's just one word or one sentence. The main character in each book is one of my grandchildren, but other characters have just politely waltzed into the story and taken over. I had no idea that the King of the Dragons was going to appear in the Lady's Garden in *Red Dragon's Keep*. I was as shocked as my readers appear to be. Who knew he would take another character with him back to the Dragon Lands? I didn't!

I hope you have fun building on these prompts. Write down the pictures that you see in your mind when you read them. That's how a story begins.

## **Bio**

Natli VanDerWerken loves dragons. She has a collection of 30 of them, collected from around the world while she served in the Navy as a meteorologist and anti-submarine warfare specialist.

Natli is an international multi-award-winning author of fantasy and science fiction novels. She also raises and shows Shetland Sheepdogs, winning the title of Champion with many of them. They have also earned obedience titles through 44 years of training and showing.

Natli started *The Dragon's Children* series with *Red Dragon's Keep* and *WindRunner*. She is currently working on the third book, *DreamWalker*.

The series was inspired by a fairytale she told her grandchildren one Christmas Eve. The main character in each of the five books is one of those grandchildren. The books are available wherever books are sold. Find her at [natlivanderwerken.com/](http://natlivanderwerken.com/).

## **Bruce Most.....Open Prompts**

### **Writing Prompts**

Read today's newspaper, scan news online, or browse through a magazine for inspiration for a person or subject matter that might form the basis for an interesting fictional story.

Start with a setting that intrigues you. Develop characters and story rooted deeply in that setting.

Choose an occupation that fascinates you but which you know little about. Research it and come up with a story.

### **Writing Tips**

Write what inspires you, not merely what you know. Your excitement of discovery through research and writing will shine through to your readers.

Write, rewrite, repeat, even if only 30 minutes a day. Writing is a muscle that needs to be exercised regularly.

Carry a digital recorder. Dictate plot ideas, character bios, bits of dialogue or scene actions. Transcribe into story notes and expand. This works well while driving and walking, but not in the shower.

### **Bio**

Bruce W. Most writes mystery novels and short stories. His latest novel is *The Big Dive*, a sequel to his award-winning *Murder on the Tracks*. Other titles are *Bonded for Murder*, *Missing Bonds*, and the award-winning *Rope Burn*. More about his mysteries can be found at [brucewmost.com/](http://brucewmost.com/).

# COLORADO AUTHORS LEAGUE

This guide is provided to Colorado teachers as a free resource because of the Colorado school closures caused by COVID-19, 2020. We hope you find it helpful.

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