

Writing Prompt #1: Limerick-It

Write a limerick. Can start with “There one was a man from Nantucket”.

Extensions: Create own starting sentence; write with a theme in mind.

Intended outcomes: Students will become familiar with rhyme scheme of limericks. Students will also experiment with words and tone to form humour and puns.

Formal Constraints: Five lines, rhyme scheme (AABBA)

Contextual Constraints: 10 mins

Exemplar

There once was a girl from Vancouver,
Who really needed a four leaf clover,
She looked every day and night,
With no luck in sight,
The irony unfortunately plagues her.

Writing Prompt #2: Colour Me

Choose a colour. Look around the room and list everything with that colour. Create a play/script using two of objects as characters.

Intended outcomes: Students experiment with dialogue and personification.

Formal constraint: Script format, two characters

Contextual Constraint: 15 mins.

Exemplar

“Blue”

Sock: So what's it like?

Pillowcase: What do you mean?

Sock: Well, you know.

Pillowcase: No, I don't know...

Sock: I...well...isn't it weird?

Pillowcase: Still don't know what you're trying to get at, my friend.

Sock: Ugh, don't hate me for this, but doesn't it feel weird to be hugging Pillow?

Pillowcase: Uh, no? Why do you ask?

Sock: Well, it can't be warm now. And it's probably really uncomfortable since the human has to hit you to fluff Pillow.

Pillowcase: Now that you mention it, sure. Yeah. It is kind of weird. But at least it's not as bad for me than it is for you.

Sock: What do you mean?

Pillowcase: Well, for starters, at least I get to lay on Bed.

Sock: Oh, that's true. But—

Pillowcase: AND, I get to stay inside.

Sock: Sure. But —

Pillowcase: AND! At least I get to hug something that smells nice.

Sock: Hey!

Pillowcase: What? It's true. You have to deal with feet. Stinky, stinky feet.

Sock: ...

Writing Prompt #3: Persona Poem

Choose a famous person (actor, author, artist, athlete, musician, etc), and write a biographical narrative in the form of a poem.

Intended outcome: Students will learn how to analyze a person and create/personify the person's character/personality.

Formal Constraint: Include biography/accomplishments (at least 2)

Contextual Constraint:

Exemplar – Jim Carrey

It all started in Canada.
The cold, white north.
I lived in an igloo with my family,
All six of us.
I'm joking.

We were well off,
until we tried to be normal.
Life decided that
being normal wasn't part of our plan.
We were left battered.

All I can do now is wait.
Go to school
when we could afford it,
and remember that life could only be
successful with a heart of steel.

Milling around didn't work for us,
so we changed things up a little bit.
It took some time
and patience,
but things started falling into place.

It wasn't easy.
It wasn't all that fun.
But, it was what I loved to do,
so I did it.
I played my parts to make it big.

I was the Ace,
the Masked Man,
though it seemed Dumb to some.
I Riddled my way into the scene;
some Cables did snap on the way.

I was a Liar,
a dramatic Truman.
It was all about Me, Myself, & I.
I became a Grinch,
thought that I was Almighty.

But I wasn't.
I am not who they think I am.
There is more to me than
the happy guy on the screen,
looking for laughs.

Because like I said,
I'm a Liar.
I'm not all that happy.
I'm not all that focused.
I am split between two.

But, I believe in myself
and in the things that I see.
Life has thrown me down
so many times before,
but it's up to me to decide when to fall.

I still have a long way to go.

Writing Prompt #4 – One-Minute Monologue

Students are going to read the monologue from *Macbeth*, and write their own monologue using a character of another text, or a group of people.

Intended Outcome: Students learn how to analyze text and characters. Identify themes.

Formal Constraint: Must be 1 minute; clear theme; character or group of people must be identified.

Contextual Constraint:

Exemplar:

We are the future. We are Generation Y.

We are the generation of lazy, incompetent, narcissistic young adults who seem to have nothing better to do than to lie around and procrastinate. Oh, and take selfies. Like, all the time. Because that's just the way we are, Generation Y. We are not motivated, we have no goals, no purpose in life. Our lives revolve around nothing but the smartphone in our hands and the laptop on our bed. There is no commitment to thoughts or new ideas, nor is there a hunger for taking charge and being a humanitarian.

This is how society views us. This is how the world sees us.

But, this is not how we see ourselves.

We are active, competent, and selfless. We are motivated and driven to change our world. We try to do, and we try to create. But, in reality, we're just struggling to stay afloat in the waves of advancements that seem to hold us down in our battle between the past and the present.

Prompt #5 – I'll take a Noun for 20

Pick a noun and write a short story/scene. Must represent the noun, but should not explicitly refer to it.

Intended outcomes: Gets students thinking about different ways they might approach, use, and express their chosen word.

Formal Constraint: Must use at least one of the senses to describe noun. Use dialogue.

Contextual Constraint: 20 mins to write.

Exemplar

Aggression

"Captain! The storm is too dangerous! We must find land immediately!" a sailor screamed over the howling winds, grasping onto the rails for dear life. Waves rose, towering over the small vessel and came crashing down onto the deck. Sailors scattered, rushing down below to safety. The Captain stood at the wheel, firmly grounded on the rocking ship. "Captain! We can't go any further or else we'll capsize. Please, let's find a place to dock for the night!"

"No! I don't have any more time. She's waiting for me!" he barked, directing his crew with waving arms.

Sheets of rain poured down in obstructing walls of opaque white, blinding the crew, limiting them to only a meager ten centimeter radius of sight. Thunder clapped, resonating in their ears as a flash of light illuminated the dark sky, highlighting the sailors' ashen faces. After several days and nights stuck in the never-ending storm, the burly crewmen were weathered and worn down to beings similar to that of a newborn kit. Weak and restless, all they prayed for was solid ground, to land safely and wait out the storm. They wanted to return to their families safe and in one piece, but it seemed like their Captain had other plans.

Three months. Three months, I have been on my quest. Three months, I have travelled the world. Three months, I have missed you dearly. And now, after three months, I shall sail to keep my promise, to return to you. Even if the water gods are against me, I shall not give up. My dear Bessie, wait for me. I'm almost home, and no storm shall stand in my way.

The waves continued to rain down on the poor ship and crew, soaking the already drenched surfaces. Winds whipped the sails out of their lines and they dangerously unraveled, sending the boat into all directions as the cloths caught onto the sporadic gales. The men grabbed hold of any battened down objects in hopes of not getting thrown overboard by the sudden jerking. Sadly, not all were safe for some unfortunate souls toppled over the rails, their desperate cries for help lost amongst the roaring waters. Only the winds could hear their pleas, doing them one last "good" deed by carrying their voices away to haunt their unsuspecting families on land.

"Captain! Please spare us our lives! We must find land before we all meet our doom. I'm begging you!" His second in command stumbled up the slippery steps, tripping over his feet as

he threw himself onto the Captain's leg in distress. "I know you want to see her, but don't do this to yourself and to your men. We all want to see our wives and families, too! We want to see them as humans, alive and breathing. If you push this any further, they'll see our souls in their dreams. Stop while you can! Spare what lives are still left on this ship, please?!"

"No! I promised her! WE CAN'T STOP NOW. I MUST SEE HER TONIGHT!"

"WE MIGHT NOT BE ALIVE BY THE NEXT HOUR IF YOU CONTINUE THIS JOURNEY THROUGH HELL!"

Burning with anger, the Captain kicked his skipper and spun the wheel to the left, dodging the growing waves. *I can't stop now. We're almost there. I need to see my Bessie!* He steered the boat through the dark waters, shielding the downpour as best as he could with a soaked arm. Left and right, he spun the wheel, skillfully maneuvering the vessel past the impending currents.

The squall was not backing down. In fact, the rain came down heavier than before, creating a thick wall of whiteness. A stark contrast to the pitch black starless sky, the white showers blanketed everything, obscuring the entire boat and its surroundings. Even grasping onto the steering wheel became a labored task as it constantly slipped out of his hands, disappearing from his vision into the thick rain droplets.

"Captain!"

The boat swerved dangerously through the currents and over a towering wave. Time seemed to have stopped as the boat free fell into the water. The bow dipped below the surface, disappearing for a couple of suffocating seconds as the stern hung above the water. The sudden descent caused the Captain to crash into the wheel, knocking the breath out of him. Men scrambled to hold on as the ship began to tip over, leaving them hanging by their fingertips.

No! I can't end this way. We can't end this way!

The Captain screamed into the rain, anger and frustration echoing into the darkness. And then, silence.

Prompt #6 – Found Poem

Choose song or rap and delete words to create a poem.

Intended outcome: Allows students to create a poem from an existing text. Approach activity from a logical or visual approach.

Formal Constraint: Must be a song or rap; keep it clean.

Context Constraint: 10 minutes

Exemplar – “Dear TV”

Dear TV, desensitize
genocide
aphrodisiac turned on
breathe
weapon greed kill me
checkin' out
disinfecting breed
nirvana
heaven's eye bleeds
Anoint me with your lies
televise me
I'll die standing breaking my knees
freeze
You sell me

Prompt #8 – Abecedarian

Create a list of words using an alphabetic list in relation to topic.

Extension: Group similar words into categories that relate to topic (aesthetic, pragmatic, etc.)

Intended outcome: Students build their vocab for future reference and gain perspective and angle of topic or word.

Formal constraint: Must use every single word of the alphabet (unless impossible, usually difficult to find 'x' words), at least one word per letter.

Contextual constraint: 10 minutes.

Exemplar – Elements of Narrative

Action, Antagonist
Barrier, Beauty
Character, Conflict, Climax, Conclusion
Dialogue, Denouement, Diction
Exploration, Emotion
Foreshadowing, Friction, Flashbacks
Genre, Growth
Hero
Irony, Imagery
Journey
Knowledge
Language
Metaphor, Mood
Narration
Observation
Plot, Protagonist
Quality, Quotes
Reader Response, Rising Action
Setting
Theme, Tone, Time
Understanding
Voice, View point
Wonder, World
X
Yearn
Zest

Prompt #9 – Babble and Doodle

Create a poem using only the letters from specific words.

Intended outcome: Allows students to play with letters and make them visceral. It also gets students to experiment with language as well.

Formal constraint: Only use the letters within the given word(s).

Contextual constraint: 10 mins.

Exemplar

Ping Pong

Pip a pig
Pip did go giggling
Bagging pop
Pin dog

*a created by joining o+i, 'd' is upside down and backwards 'p', 'b' is upside down 'p'

Prompt #10 – Cubic Poem

Noun-verb exercise. Write poem using words that can be both nouns and verbs.

Intended outcome: Expand vocabulary, get students to really work with the form and meaning of the poem.

Formal constraint: Words must be both a noun and verb, twenty-seven words in total, three stanzas, three lines per stanza, three words per line.

Contextual constraint: 15 mins.

Exemplar

Level Toned Wind,
Bear Swings Ball,
Colour Paint Brush.

Fish Spears Cook!
Drink Bottled Water,
Can Saw Wheel,

Coin Pound Bag,
Chained Rope Trap,
Pull Weeds Clean.