

Thomas Onion
LLED 367
October 26, 2016

Compendium of Writing Prompts

Part 1: LLED 367

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Prompt #1: Rerhyme

Students are provided with the final words of an unknown rhyming poem and are asked to write a new poem following the same rhyming structure. This prompt aims to facilitate writing poetry by constraining students to a predetermined rhyming pattern. Different poetic structures can be explored and, by extension, students can also be constrained into a set metrical structure.

Content constraints:

- Final word of each line is provided
- Ext: students can be shown a picture to aid in directing the subject of their poem

Formal constraints:

- Varies, but must match the rhyme scheme of the selected poem. For example, a six line poem in rhyming couplet
- Ext: students must also follow a predetermined metrical/syllabic pattern

Contextual constraints:

- Silent, individual work.
- Time: varies depending on length of poem, at least one minute per line

Language acquisition:

- Syntactical flexibility due to requirement of writing a “phrase” with a given word at the end
- In extension activities: attention to stressed/unstressed syllables

Exemplar #1

Based on William Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream (I.i.202-7)
6 line rhyming couplet, maximum of ten minutes.

What possessed you to show your face?
Here, now, in this place
You’re no longer welcome here, don’t you see?
By her, by him, but most of all, by me
We clearly invited you to dwell
Within the scorching flumes of fire in hell.

Prompt #2: Biased News Article

For lessons discussing news media and bias, this writing prompt can be added to further linguistic understanding of the day's lesson. In the prompt's most general form, a biased news article is provided, and a set number of components (phrases, descriptive verbs, adjectives) are selected for swapping to an alternate, also biased perspective. Alternatively, a specific type of language which contributes to bias can be highlighted, such as the use of descriptive verbs. In this alternate version, students could both find and replace a set number of the given type of language.

Materials: So that students can complete their work at home, a printed/photocopied version of the story is required for each student.

- Content constraints:**
- The entire news article is provided, students are responsible for changing bias by swapping a determined amount of words/phrases.
 - Students are also provided with the new biased perspective they must follow
- Formal constraints:**
- Inserted words/phrases should most often be the same type of word/phrase as is being replaced
- Contextual constraints:**
- Best completed as individual homework. Time required will vary significantly
- Language acquisition:**
- Students gain experience with and understanding on the power of: descriptive verbs, adjectives, adverbs, perspective, selective reporting

Exemplar #2

Original article: <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2016/05/18/justin-trudeau-accused-of-manhandling-amid-house-of-commons-uproar.html>

Justin Trudeau sorry but happy with progress following Commons disruption, Liberals say

By TONDA MACCHARLES Ottawa Bureau reporter
Wed., May 18, 2016 [Toronto Star]

OTTAWA—Parliament **finally made progress** when an impatient Prime Minister Justin Trudeau crossed the aisle to **assist** an opposition MP forward so a vote could take place, **nudging** a female NDP MP who was **undeservedly shaken** and had to leave the chamber.

The encounter Wednesday led to a shouting match between Trudeau and NDP Leader Tom Mulcair after Trudeau briefly crossed the floor a second time appearing to look for someone. Mulcair can be heard on Commons video footage **losing his temper despite Trudeau's efforts to soothe the situation.**

The confrontation took place late in the day prior to a vote on a government bid to limit debate on its assisted suicide bill, with the opposition already furious at another Liberal move to **achieve results on** the parliamentary agenda.

The mood was tense as each side traded insults. By the end of the day, tempers before the vote were running high. As Trudeau crossed the floor, he was allegedly overheard by NDP MPs to say “Children, children, could we please just work together?”

The opposition erupted in outrage as the Speaker called for order, and ordered MPs to stop taking photos. At the far end of the Commons, former prime minister Stephen Harper made no efforts whatsoever in defusing the situation.

Opposition leaders rose and applied exaggerated terms to the events in an attempt to further derail any progress that could be made on this day. New Democrat House leader Peter Julian rose to accuse Trudeau of “manhandling” the Conservative whip, Gord Brown, and physically pushing aside the NDP’s whip, Ruth-Ellen Brosseau.

“I have been in the House now for 12 years and I have never seen what just transpired in the House of Commons,” he said.

Trudeau stood to offer an apology, saying he thought Brown, the official Opposition whip — who ensures Opposition MPs are in place for a vote — was “impeded,” causing the vote to be delayed. “I felt that this lacked in respect for Parliament,” he said, adding he “offered my arm, extended, to help him come through the gaggle of MPs standing there.”

“In so doing, I admit I came in physical contact with a number of members as I extended my arm in, including someone behind me I did not see, I certainly did not intend to offend or impact on anyone.”

“If anyone feels that they were impacted by my actions I completely apologize,” Trudeau said. It’s not my intention to hurt anyone . . . it was my intention to get this vote done.”

Prompt #3: Register Shift

Students are provided with a set piece of writing, one which tends to be either casual or formal in its tone. They must transform this article into an exaggeratedly high or low register but still follow the format and progression of the provided writing. By altering the piece of writing, students gain practice in selecting different registers depending on context, and awareness of which components of language match with these different contexts.

Materials: A printed/photocopied version of the source text for each student.

Content constraints: - Source text is provided

Formal constraints: - Depending on the source text, the students could be instructed to specifically shift up or down
- Ext: Any number of additional requirements could be added, for example: If shifting up students must include a certain number of quadrasyllabic/pentasyllabic intensifiers, if shifting down students must employ the use of reported speech.

Contextual constraints: - Individual silent work.
- Time required will vary depending on length of source text, whether shifting up or down, etc. Activity lends itself to writing in class time with the option to complete for homework.

Language acquisition: - In ext activities, students will gain experience with the specific type of language being requested

Exemplar #3

Based on UBC Media Release: Dr. Santa Ono to become UBC President and Vice Chancellor.
Original text: <http://news.ubc.ca/2016/06/13/ubcs-15th-president/>

DID YOU HEAR ABOUT ONO?

VAN-CITY – Dude is really good at medicine and school and now UBC is saying he’s gonna be the new boss!

He’s been the president of like a million things so you know he’s gonna kill it.

And he’s JAPANESE, so that’s cool. You should follow him on twitter though, he’s actually a really good guy.

I asked him what he thought now that he got this job and he was all “UBC is the shit. People there are super smart, super eco, and its right by wreck beach! I’m so stoked to be the prez there!”

Also his dad used to work at UBC so you know how he got the job. All the other head honchos at UBC got together and were like, yeah he’ll be way better than the other people who wanted the job.

OH! Did I mention he plays the CELLO? Daaaaammn!

Seriously though, the head honchos all thought this guy is so good at thinking and really, that's what UBC is all about. Thinking good.

Prez Piper is out of here at the end of June and Ono isn't coming until Aug. 15 so they got Dave Farrar to hold down the fort till then. I saw what they said to Piper and they were like "OMG THX SOOOOO much for coming back. We promise it won't ever happen again!"

Prompt #4: Blackout Poem

Students are provided with a source text, perhaps a story or selection of novel which they will soon be working on, and are asked to create a poem by moving sequentially through the poem and eliminating all undesired words. The new poem can be indented, spaced, and punctuated according to the author's liking, but the words used must come from the text in order, and can only be used once.

Material: Source text, for example, 2 pages from next week's novel run through a word randomizing program (such as <http://www.altastic.com/scramblinator/>) or an excerpt of computer-generated text.

Content constraints: - Students can only use words as they appear in the provided source text, eliminating undesired words and arranging the selected words into a poetic structure

Formal constraints: - end result must be a poem
- Option to require certain length
- Ext: require students to include set elements of language such as metaphor, collocations etc.

Contextual constraints: - Individual work
- Time: varies depending on the length of text provided. Students may be able to write poems of extended length if the source text is long

Language acquisition: - Confidence / enjoyment regarding producing poetry
- Varies, depending on extension constraints

Exemplar #4

Based on the opening quotations of Moby Dick, prepared by the Sub-sub-librarian.

Extracts.

“The deep is that chaos:
the bottomless gulf
of true verbal narrative;
boiling bulk into a fable
as to bring on a disorder of the brain.

Ten or fifteen gallons of blood
are thrown out of the heart at a stroke
with immense velocity,
gushing language
voracious conversations
finally destroyed by so little curiosity.

Leaping was inevitable.
To discover a passage through
the haunts of the mystic
is generally well known to be
Distended, threatening, instant destruction.

Oh, the rare old giant,
King of the boundless.”

Prompt #5: Plot, please!

Students take a plotless children's story and must incorporate all of its elements into a short story. This activity provides a very basic structure to which students must demonstrate their knowledge of plot development.

Materials: At least one children's book which does not have a set plot (eg. Picture book, book simply naming animals, etc.).

Content constraints: - All pages of the provided story must be included

Formal constraints:

- Plot structure defined by teacher
- If activity is to be completed in class, general length can be defined
- Ext: Once students understand the components of a typical plot structure, the activity can be amended to write non-typical plots from the linear plots of other children's stories.
- Ext: Additional elements of narrative can be added during revision activities

Contextual constraints:

- Varies depending on length of source text.
- In class written individually or in pairs
- 7 page source text = approximately 10 sentence story, 20 minutes.

Language acquisition: - Depending on extension activity, students can practice using adjective sequences, prepositional phrases, concurrent actions, etc.

Exemplar #5

Based on a 7 page book including only farm animals and instruments.

Once upon a time there was a fluffy white sheep named Fuzz. Fuzz lived with his best friend Staples the cow at a fun farm owned by the musician formerly known as Prince. Life was calm and simple at Prince's farm. Fuzz and Staples spent their time grazing in the lush fields and lazing in the red wooden barn. One day a magical rooster named Coq came to the farm and interrupted the two friends as they completed their circuitous grazing of their favourite field. With one swift swoop of his rainbow tail, Coq transformed Fuzz the sheep into a dopey bearded goat! Staples knew he had to save his friend, but he didn't know how to avoid Coq's magical rainbow tail. Then, as he glanced from the eye on the side of his face, Staples spied the artist formerly known as Prince's John Deere tractor. He had never driven a tractor before, but he jumped right in, stepped on the clutch, and got that tractor roaring at full speed. He chased Coq through the pastures, around the fences, and straight to the watering hole. With nowhere to turn, Coq dove right into the pond and with a ZING transformed into a plain mallard duck. The spell was broken, his rainbow tail had disappeared, and most importantly, Fuzz was back to his old fluffy self.

Prompt #6: Collocation Challenge

Working with a partner, students must come up with as many collocations as they can using at least two emojis for each collocation. They are allowed to insert articles/pronouns freely if required. Through this activity and accompanying instruction, students become familiar and practiced with collocations, thereby increasing their comprehension and/or vocabulary depending on their original facility with English. Students will check their own work to ensure they are using collocations as discussed in class and not compound words.

Materials needed: students will be partnered so that at least one person in the group has access to a phone. In the event this is not possible, the teacher should have ~15 print outs of all emojis grouped as they are on a phone.

Content constraints:

- 1 point is given for each reasonable collocation
- Ext: If a particular type of collocation was focused on, they could be made worth 2 points each

Formal constraints:

- Collocations must be made using two or more emojis
- Articles and pronouns can be inserted
- If the word assigned to the emoji is reasonable it will be accepted

Contextual constraints:

- Completed in partners, in class
- Time : 10 minutes

Language acquisition:

- Practice with various types of collocations
- Students may tend towards noun noun collocations, so specific instruction in other types before the activity would be best

Exemplar #6

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Suit up | 11. Watch dog |
| 2. Toughen up | 12. Watch man |
| 3. Chin up | 13. Stop clock |
| 4. Bikini bottoms | 14. Car key |
| 5. Earring | 15. Letterbox |
| 6. Paddleboard | 16. Paw print |
| 7. Movie star | 17. Tree hugger |
| 8. Top prize | 18. Sound wave |
| 9. Foreign flight | 19. Run a bath |
| 10. Car seat | |

Score = 13

Prompt #7: Phrasal Verb Shuffle

Students randomly pick 3 phrasal verb cards from box #1 and 1 genre card from box #2. Students are tasked with writing one paragraph containing all three of their chosen phrasal verbs. The paragraph is imagined to be from the middle of a novel or short story of the genre written on their card. This activity aims to familiarize students with phrasal verbs, demonstrating their influence on the “natural” quality of language at the same time as encouraging creative engagement with genre fiction.

Materials:

- ~200 cards containing phrasal verbs and their meanings. If the class has a large portion of ELL students, an example sentence can also be included on each card.
<https://www.englishclub.com/vocabulary/phrasal-verbs-list.htm> has a list of 200 common phrasal verbs.
- ~40 cards describing a genre of story
- 2 boxes
- If there is a class set of devices etc, randomizers should be used instead

Content constraints: - Paragraph written in media res in a defined generic style

Formal constraints: - One paragraph
- Three selected phrasal verbs must be used in the paragraph
- Ext : add as many of your own phrasal verbs as you can think of

Contextual constraints: - Silent individual work
- Versatile, can be completed in class, at home, or in combination
- Time: 15-20 minutes

Language acquisition: - Phrasal verbs

Exemplar #7

Genre: Sci-Fi

Phrasal Verbs: calm down (relax after being angry); hand down (give something used to somebody else; think back (remember, + on = sometime, + to = often)

“Calm down,” Fircon bubbled with great effort, “we can figure this out.” She ran her top right tentacle along her protruding forehead in concentration. “We know that the control stick was handed down to us, we just need to think back on who it was we got it from.” The Frakian twins stared at each other with all the blankness of quadrant 55V Gamma6. Fircon swatted her middle left tentacle at the shards of control stick dotted along the floor.

Prompt #8: Mood Writing

The class freewrites for five minutes in response to a video playing at the front of the class. They are asked to take a deep breath, encouraged to relax and then just continually write whatever comes to mind during the video. It can be descriptive, it can be what they are thinking about, it can be in the mind of a persona etc. The intended outcome is to encourage students to feel like writing can be a pressure-free activity.

Students should be informed in advance that they will hear a bell which indicates they have one minute remaining.

Materials:

- Meditative/natural videos such as <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EDir9-UoPjo>
- Computer, projector and display screen
- Small bell/ timing app

Content constraints: - None

Formal constraints: - None

Contextual constraints: - Video is playing, students should attempt to write continually
- Time: 5 minutes or more
- Ext: Following the activity, students can share their work and what they were thinking while writing with a partner. If writing on computers, students could also take a minute to format their writing.

Language acquisition: - Confidence and voice can be nurtured over time when used with other activities

Exemplar #8

Hello birds, hello water. I wonder where you are today?
The greens are lush like here but where is your moss?

Stop trying to pinpoint things and listen.

It's so calm here. In the forest trees sway ever so slightly when the wind manages to reach them.

Back to that calm. Slow down.

See how the water rolls over that rock. It bounces over the rock beside it, and flows over another. On the left does it continually flow in the same way? In the middle... are those bounces, a pattern, or do they change? It's amazing that the most activity in this place is water over rocks.

Prompt #9: Oh, Alas!

In this activity students write a paragraph in which they are locked into a general format and sentence structure. They will be given examples and possible ways to start their first sentence. Depending on language level in the class, students will need varying levels of instruction prior to this activity. This prompt seeks to illicit writing in the third conditional, providing ELL students with practice and allowing native speakers to strengthen their systematic understanding of this element of grammar.

Content constraints: - Possible starting points will be provided (such as “If I had [been born a tree/fish/couch]...” or “If I had [won the lottery]”

Formal constraints: - Students follow the general paragraph structure outlined below:
- Oh!
- If I had _____, I would have _____. x 3
- Alas! I [what happened instead/how you ended up] (atleast two sentences)
- [How you feel about it]

Contextual constraints: - Silent, individual work in class
- Time: At least 10 minutes, depending on the language ability of the students

Language acquisition: - Understanding of and practice with the third conditional

Exemplar #9

Oh! If I had been born a whale, I would have been so much happier. If I had been built to hold my breath for hours, I would have traversed the seas and explored coves and fjords all around the globe. If I had been one hundred tonnes, I would have felt pretty good about myself! Alas! As a mere human I'm not even one tonne. I am proud just to make it to the otherside of the swimming pool alive. I have resigned myself to having to pay for flight tickets. Oh, being a human is so plain and dry!

Prompt #10: Simile Chain

In this activity students write a chain of connected similes. They begin with a physical object brainstormed by the class which we will call thing 1. In their first simile students compare thing 1 to thing 2 using like or as. Then, thing 2 becomes the point of reference and is compared to thing 3 etc. This process should be modelled to students on the board beforehand including both “like” and “as” examples. Teachers could check in at the end to see what “thing” everyone ended up on. This prompt provides students with practice in constructing similes and challenges them to think creatively and in a metaphorical sense.

Content constraints: - All members of the class begin with the same word

Formal constraints: - Students must use a simile in every line
- Ext: take a section of your similes and use them to create a short poem

Contextual constraints: - Silent, individual work
- Time: at least 5 minutes but varies according to interest
- Ext: this activity lends itself well to being completed in small groups or as a whole class.

Language acquisition: - Similes, comparison, and metaphorical thinking

Exemplar #10

Starting word: boot

The boot was leathery like a sunbather.

The sunbather was as red as an autumn maple.

The autumn maple looked as cold as a hairless cat in January.

The hairless cat looked as ugly as Donald Trump (but who had better hair?)