

Writing Prompts

1: Cubic Poem

Prompt: Write a Cubic Poem of 3 word lines, 3 line stanzas, with three stanzas using only nouns and verbs.

Intended Outcomes: Students will expand their vocabularies and gain new insight into the multiple uses for common words. Students will employ simple poetic devices like line and stanza structure, rhyme and free verse, among others.

Content Constraint: Must only use nouns and verbs

Formal Constraint: the poem must consist of three stanzas, three lines each, with three words per line; use only nouns and verbs.

Context Constraint: 15 minutes

Grades 9 & 10

Extension: Insert a rhyme scheme and/or use alliteration 3 times

Exemplar:

*Apes, swiping, gripe*

*Structures limit spirit*

*Schools blocking flight*

*Hype blows smoke*

*Light, sloping, slights*

*Fish drink water*

*Thought tortures man*

*Flowers exhibit form*

*Time's thundering plan*

2: My Papa's Waltz

Prompt: After reading "My Papa's Waltz" by Theodore Roethke, write your own version of the poem from the perspective of the father. Use the same structure as the original poem (four stanzas with four lines each) with similar lengths of lines.

Intended Outcomes: Students will strengthen their ability to understand and generate specific perspectives within a text. This activity will allow students to practice writing within the structural restrictions of poetry. Students will be challenged to appreciate the relationship between content, structure, and meaning, in their writing.

Content constraint: must be written from the perspective of the father

Formal constraint: must be a poem with four stanzas, four lines each

Context constraint: 15 minutes

Grade: 10 or 11

Materials needed: "My Papa's Waltz" by Theodore Roethke

Extension: write two more stanzas from either the son or father's perspective, that detail the events following the end of the poem.

Exemplar:

My Son's Waltz

The spirit in your legs

Could make an old man dizzy;

But I carry on instead:

Such mirth was never easy.

We danced to old records

Caked with dust from the shelf,

And though you watched for mother

Our joy replayed itself.

My worn hands carried  
Unscathed hand, finger, knuckle;  
At every new beginning buried  
Your head against my buckle.

You smiled at every pirouette,  
Mother worn from tracking dirt,  
I'll never forget those steps,  
Your hand grasped tight to my shirt.

### 3: CFLAT

Prompt: Create a piece of writing that incorporates every language feature listed in the CFLAT handout. This can be in any form - a paragraph or poem, etc.

Intended outcome: Students will learn about different language features and practice using them in writing. This will challenge students to use features that they might otherwise avoid.

Content constraint: must include all CFLAT items

Formal constraint: none

Context constraint: 20 minutes

Grade: 11 or 12

Materials needed: CFLAT list of language features

#### Exemplar:

(Jk's: Articles of Knowing)

Not knowing what to write, the absence of vision,

Call it laziness, i need some erudite precision.

Realistically I couldn't improvise indecision

Any better than if my moderator insisted on a latin prescription.

Will I, the greatest, maker of affinity,

falter, fail, bomb apocalyptically,

saunter so sadistically while pilgrims perish near to me...

i was never the humblest of prodigies, come

deliver me from tyranny!

(I honestly could never sleep with prose unwritten on the sheet.)

So I scrawled:

“Cause my slant rhyme is your good time  
And my collocation is your breaths’ vacation,  
Yah my short essay is your hit parade  
And anyhow, my life is great,”  
Pass pass pass pass  
Underhanded, reprimanded, over-eager-people-pleaser  
Leave it to the master plans. Plans plans plans plans.  
I wont put off what you pass down,  
I wont hesitate and hit the ground.  
I’m in outer space, every evening i’m dreaming  
About the girl, by herself, creativity streaming,  
With one pen and one paper, gives the whole world new meaning  
Cause she’s a gold-mine, yeah better than fine,  
With gravitas, elegance, and a box of wine,  
Intellectual, yass, and strong as hell,  
Rock steady wit, sick moves as well,  
I mean not really, she’s a meat-loaf pan  
With dance moves as limber as lieutenant dan,  
Methodically,  
Repeatedly,  
Shuffling at the knees,

However unenthused the party seems to be,

but i'm in outer space, every evening dreaming,

The girl by herself, creativity streaming, with one pen and one paper, gives the world true meaning

{ - Trouble is nowhere's a good place to be found,

The best voices, it seems, always come from the ground,

Everyone worth anything's already gone down. - }

Why am i clowning, a kite flying low,

Word count so wimpishly dragging in tow,

She made the case for me, put pen to paper,

Make dolla bills y'all, his name's don draper,

But while he cashed checks i was starting to whimper

Deadline approaching, like some GRRMARTIN winter...

So i'm punch-happy, fresh-sliced caffeine

And a babka made of methamphetamine,

Writing miles a minute, my whole spirit in it,

Realistically, just wasting ink,

But writing is writing

And whether they find it

Entertaining is besides the fucking point.

"Cause my sarcasm's your phantasm,

My irony's your cuppa tea,

My prepositional phrases hit you in special places

And anyhow my life is great”

Pass pass pass pass

But i’m in outer space, every evening dreaming,

The girl by herself, creativity streaming, with one pen and one paper, creates something worth reading.

#### 4: Register Shift

Prompt: Choose a piece of writing from popular culture, literature, or your personal life (text message, email, etc) and apply a “register shift”, that is, translate the tone of the piece as you rewrite, making it more formal/academic.

Intended Outcomes: Students will increase their awareness of the tone with which they are writing and begin to develop a focus on academic/formal language. Students will practice paraphrasing.

Content Constraint: Must “upshift” a piece of writing.

Formal Constraint: None

Context Constraint: 10-15

Grade: any

Extensions: Using a piece of more complex or formal literature create a “downshift” paraphrase.

Exemplar (downshift):

Woot woot! Supah stoked 4 u! A huge StARs HoLLa! ur in! UBC 4 life? #realdeal #thunderbirdlife. Ur in for more books and books and books, cuz ur gonna be an English teacher!

Ur new name is a number, that number is 3827194817329, don't forget, u'll be screwed, u need it. Don't wait, cause there's a buncha people who's money we want coming up real close behind u. If u wait 2 long u'll have to give us even MORE sweet delicious money.

In case u forgot, here's ur name.

When? Friggen now

Stuff ur doing: book-learning for big kids

Get back to us asap or we'll forget you exist and then, you guessed it, more delicious honey sweet money for us.

Registration: blah blah blah figure it out. By May at the latest k?

Crimcheck? Gotta make sure ur not a weirdo. I mean we're checking anyway, but like don't be a douche. Look both ways before you cross the street and all that.

Good luck and thanks for all the moneys!

Fancy smart people,

Fancy smart learning place

## 5: Complement Battle

Prompt: Students will write short poems that exalt one of their classmates, written in the style of a rap - battle, but with the intent to honour as opposed to denigrate one's opponent.

Intended Outcomes: Students will practice rhyme as well as positive, descriptive language. Students will actively identify gifts and positive things in one another. Students will perform their passage for the class.

Content Constraint: Identifying and describing positive attributes in classmates.

Formal Constraint: statements must conform to some kind of rhyme scheme

Context Constraint: 10 minutes - pairs or groups of 4

Grade: 10-12

Materials: Complement Battle video clip - <https://youtu.be/K9Vt3yk8mDQ>

Extension: Perform for the class

Exemplar:

Son i'd have to step up if I wasnt so positive you was genuine,  
The most caring, understanding image of an ideal righteous citizen,  
And man your mom, i respect her, cause she made you up,  
The kind of son i know one day that i'd be proud of.

## 6: Anagram



Prompt: Students must come up with a word that can be rearranged to make three other words, making four words total.

Intended Outcome: Students will practice spelling through engagement with anagram creation. Students will grow their vocabularies.

Content Constraint: none

Formal Constraint: Students seek to find a word that can be rearranged to create 3 new words.

Context Constraint: 5-10 minutes

Grade: 8-10

Extension: Who can find a word with the most anagram possibilities? Who can come up with the longest anagram word or phrase?

Exemplar:

Mates - meats - teams- steam - tames

Pores - prose - spore - ropes

Spear - spare - pears - pares - reaps - rapes - parse

#### 7: 6-Word Story

Prompt: After examining Hemingway's "For sale: baby shoes, never worn", students will create a 6 word story of their own.

Intended Outcome: Students will participate in discovering what constitutes a story, and how to create something of meaning in so few words.

Content Constraint: None

Formal Constraint: Use only 6 words.

Context Constraint: 5 minutes

Grade: any

Materials: Hemingway text

Exemplar:

Proud father, Cancer Survivor: Killed Yesterday.

#### 8: Junk Food Instructions

Prompt: Students will write instructions for using their favourite junk food.

Intended outcomes: Students will use descriptive and directive language to communicate a specific action leading to a desired outcome.

Content Constraint: Description of how to open and ingest a favourite food item

Formal Constraint: None

Context Constraint: 10-15

Grade: 8-10

Extension: Make your instructions into a rap/poem

Exemplar:

Start by using the thumb and forefinger of your less dominant hand to grasp and lift the colourful and appealing candy treat by the serrated paper edge. Using the thumb and forefinger of your dominant hand grasp the wrapper in a position adjacent to your other finger and thumb's position, and with a small twist of both wrists pull your dominant hand towards you while pushing the other hand away. This should result in the paper covering becoming split, revealing the chocolate treat within. Once the interior delight is exposed, release your finger and thumb of your dominant hand from their grasp on the paper and use them to remove the candy treat from the now shorn container. Once the candy is securely positioned between the thumb and index finger, proceed to lift the treat until it has made its way into your gaping maw. Close your mouth at this point, careful to chew vigorously in order to avoid choking and to enjoy maximum ingredient mingling upon your palette. Once sufficient chewing has occurred use the various oral muscle systems to transfer the food matter into your digestive system. Release the now empty food wrapper into the wind, and lick remaining chocolate from thumb and index finger of dominant hand.

9: Quantitative Writing

Prompt: Students will write as many words as they can in 2-3 minutes about why they want to be (insert dream job here) when they graduate.

Intended Outcomes: Students will practice speed writing to engage their baseline of academic writing. Students will think quickly about sentence and thought structure, and plan as they go.

Content Constraints: Students will write about why they want their dream job.

Formal Constraints: Write as much as you can in the allotted time.

Context Constraints: 2 or 3 minute time limit.

Grade: 10 - 12

Extensions: Write without using any form of the verb to be.

Exemplar:

I desire a profession such as teaching due to the impact I hope to have on the youth, the underprivileged, the marginalized, and the disabled students attending public schools in BC. I admire the collections of books, the collecting of wisdom, the wonderment at words, and the intermingling of ideas that comes with teaching as a profession. I recall fondly the night I first heard the word teacher, ah yes it baffled and energized me, it

danced upon my brain like two small capuchin monkeys high on ecstasy and bathed in strobe lights. That night, like all nights before it, began with the slow descent of the sun beneath the horizon, illuminating the vast abyss of space, the forests clothed in subtle greens and grey, the purple shimmer of lake water as it rejected the like of a myriad of stars. That night ended with my awaking, rolling out of bed, and venturing forth with zero preparation in terms of hygiene, to my first day of school. There I met Ms Teacherlady, she called my name and I knew, teaching teaching teaching.

10: One Letter Off

Prompt: Students will add or remove one letter from famous tv or movie titles to create a totally new title. Create as many as you can.

Intended Outcomes: Students will discover how simple spelling errors can dramatically alter meaning.

Content Constraint: Use any pop culture title

Formal Constraint: Add or Remove any one letter

Context Constraints: 5 minutes

Grade: any

Exemplar:

Friends - Fiends

Breaking Bad - Breaking Brad

The Wire - The Ire

South Park - South Ark

Jurassic Park - Jurassic Parka

Free Willy - Free Will

The Big Chill - The Big Hill

Ant Man - Rant Man

The Beach - The Bach