

## 40 Creative Writing Prompts

By Crystal Vaughan

In *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within* (2010), Natalie Goldberg compares writing to running or painting: “the more you do it, the better you get at it” (p. 14). Like anything you want to be good at, writing takes practice. The more you practice writing, the more your imagination will open to new thoughts and ideas (Goldberg, 2010).

It can be very difficult to just sit down and start writing something, especially if you have never tried before. Or maybe you just don’t know what to write about. Try starting your practice with one of these writing prompts. Focus on small details, emotions, memories, and associations. Be specific. You may be surprised by where these topics take you.

**Author’s Note:** Some of these writing prompts are old and some are new. Many were gathered from or inspired by the Reddit forum [r/writingprompts](https://www.reddit.com/r/writingprompts/), or the online magazine [Poets & Writers](https://www.poetsandwriters.com/); others are prompts I collected over the years from writing groups or classes I attended, or were given to me by friends or writers or guest speakers who I cannot place in time and space. Others were likely inspired by conversations over coffee, or while carpooling on the way home from a poetry meet. Many years and even more notebook pages have passed between them. Although I was able to track down many of their sources, I regret that I cannot attribute some of them to a single person or event, but I am grateful for them and hope that in them you find some value.

1. Begin writing with, "I remember." (Goldberg, 2010, p. 25)
2. Describe your most memorable first day of school.
3. Write a poem in the form of a self-portrait. Try using instructional language to describe yourself, allowing any emotions that arise to make their way into the poem. (Poets & Writers, 2022, June 28)
4. Start a story with the last sentence of the last book you read.
5. Describe a little thing – something you love that defines your world but is often overlooked. (platorepublic, 2015)
6. Write a letter to a friend you've lost touch with for at least ten years – perhaps you haven't spoken to each other because of a falling-out or one of you moved to a new town. What do you remember about the last time you saw this person? Reflect upon the ways in which you have changed and remain the same from who you were ten years ago. Examine the emotions that surface when you think about this old friend and your relationship, and the physical places that your memories take you. (Poets & Writers, 2015, October 22)
7. Write a short story in which the main "character" is the setting. For example, a house. (Worsham, 2022)
8. Use five points of view to describe one situation. (Worsham, 2022)
9. Write about your first name. Are you named after someone or something? Are there any stories or associations attached to it? If you had the choice, would you rename yourself? (Venezio-Preston, 2016)

10. A man struggles to adopt a nocturnal lifestyle for his vampire girlfriend. A woman is heartbroken to lock up her werewolf fiancée every full moon. A child says goodbye to their mermaid friend because the river is too polluted. These are the untold stories of an urban fantasy world. (SomeSortOfUser, 2023)
11. You're stuck in an elevator with an intriguing stranger. Write this scene. (ranu802, 2014)
12. All your life you've traveled the world with your father. Now, on your 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, you learn the truth: you've been running from the law.
13. Write a letter to your mom when she was pregnant with you, from the perspective of your unborn self. (Kaur, 2022, p. 11)
14. Turn one of the last texts you sent into a story. (Clark, 2018)
15. Write a well-known story or fairy tale from the perspective of the villain.
16. Choose a poem you love and write your own version of it, following the original structure and adding a new perspective. (Poets & Writers, 2021, January 26)
17. Write about your first memory. (Goldberg, 2010, p. 27)
18. Head to your favourite online news source. Pick an article with a headline that grabs you. Now, write a short story based on the article. (Supernova, 2016)
19. You're locked in a room with your greatest fear. Describe what's in the room. (heathergow, 2018)
20. Think of the first film, photograph, painting, or song that left a strong impression on you and then write a personal essay about it. Focus on why it resonates with you, and explore the memories, feelings, associations, and observations that surface. (Poets & Writers, 2015, November 19)

21. Turn the last song you listened to into a story. (Clark, 2018)
22. Write about an experience you've had while in transit during the holidays.
23. Write about your first sexual experience. (Goldberg, 2010, p. 27)
24. Write your own eulogy.
25. Tell a story or poem through text messages. (Worsham, 2022)
26. Write a story from the perspective of a writer whose book is banned and targeted by a group of parents and local politicians. In what unexpected way is your protagonist's life changed by this sudden fame? (Poets & Writers, 2022, September 21)
27. Write about a vivid dream you had.
28. What kind of animal are you? (Goldberg, 2010, p. 28)
29. Instead of a modern adaptation of a myth, write a mythic adaptation of a modern story. (erosPhoenix, 2015)
30. Write about an angry, depressed dictionary writer who can't keep his personal problems out of word examples. (The\_Draigg, 2015)
31. Write a personal essay about your relationship with a family member whom you feel is especially different from you. Explore a few memories or observations from your shared experiences over the years. Are there feelings of insecurity or other emotions that are brought up when you consider your differences? How do the disconnects affect your sense of identity and place within your family? Are you able to detect any common bonds? (Poets & Writers, 2015, December 3)
32. The four horsemen of the apocalypse are teenage girls. (biccrystal, 2015)

33. Write a letter addressed to all the people who have touched your body. (Kaur, 2022, p. 65)
34. Your life without a computer (or your phone): what does it look like? (granonine, 2016)
35. Write a story about yourself from the perspective of an object, thing, animal, or another person. (Kho, 2013)
36. Write about your first love.
37. Go to your favourite social media site and write about the first post you see. (Clark, 2018)
38. Write a story that involves two unlikely people meeting on a dating app. What do they discover as they get to know each other? (Poets & Writers, 2023, February 14)
39. Your favourite fairy tale is now set in 2023. (Worsham, 2022)
40. If the walls of your bedroom could talk, what would they say? (Kaur, 2022, p.68)

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