

WOD: Writing a Prompt

Learning Target(s):

- Analyze writing prompts
- Write original essay prompts

Standard(s):

CC.1.2.7.X Write routinely over extended time frames and shorter time frames for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Connection:

To the teacher: “When students become makers of a certain genre, they become better readers of that genre, and vice versa.” Bomer, Katherine. *Writing a Life*, Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005.

“We will be analyzing writing prompts and then you’ll write your own essay prompts.”

Modeling (I do):

Project Four Writing Prompts (#1 attached), representing each of the for genres.

Read the narrative mode aloud, and inform students that these prompts tend to be unbiased and universal enough for almost everyone to be able to respond to them.

Now ask, *“What do I remember about the elements of writing prompt?”*

Using different color highlighters for each, underline the **TOPIC**, what you’re **ASKED** to do, and the **MODE**, or purpose for writing. Note that most of the prompts begin with **CONTEXT** or background information that helps define or narrow the topic.

Guided Practice (We do):

Distribute to students the Writing Modes Word list (#2 attached) and the Write A Prompt Worksheet (#3 attached).

Now demonstrate how to write a prompt, based on the models. Begin with the narrative mode. Ask students for suggestions for a topic (e.g., an unforgettable moment, a scary experience) and the context for that topic. Fill in the chart. Then, referring to the Writing Modes Word List, fill in the “write what you must do” section.

Independent Practice (You do):

Now have students write a prompt for the informational and argumentative modes.

Closure:

Ask students how their understanding of writing prompts has changed.

Assessment – Check for Understanding

Project examples of the prompts written by students. Discuss strengths of prompts, and identify prompts that may not be as universal or unbiased as they should be. Have groups revise them to meet the need of all middle grades students.

Reflection:

Resources and References: (adapted from, acknowledgements)

Bomer, Katherine. Writing a Life, Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005.

Writing Prompts for Middle School, Holt, Reinhart and Winston. 25 June 2009.
<http://my.hrw.com/support/hos/hostpdf/hostmsprompts.pdf>

Four Writing Prompts

Narrative

Eleanor Roosevelt once said, “You must do the thing you think you cannot do.” Write a story about a time when you did something you thought you could not do. Be sure to include specific details so that a reader can follow your story.

Narrative

Pretend you open a closet door and discover a golden broom shimmering in the darkness. Make up a story with the word “Magic” in its title.

Informational

We have often heard that “Honesty is the best policy.” Write an essay to explain why honesty is important in a friendship.

Argumentative

A wealthy donor plans to build a new facility that will benefit young people in the area. It could be a swimming pool, skate park, a theatre, an art school, or any other facility that would provide young people with constructive ways to spend their time. The donor is not sure what kind of facility would be most useful. Write a letter to the donor in which you identify the type of facility you would like built, and persuade her that it is the best choice. Be sure to support your opinion with convincing reasons and evidence.

Writing Modes Word List

These phrases are often used to inform writers as to the type of mode and writing structure they must use to address the prompts.

Use these as you write your practice prompts.

Narrative

Tell what happened...

Tell a true story...

or

Make up a story...

Write an imaginative story...

Invent a story...

Informational

Explain...

In your composition, explain...

Argumentative

Write a letter to convince...

Write a paper to convince...

Write an essay to persuade...

Write A Prompt Worksheet

Name _____

Mode	Topic	Context	What You Must Do

WOD: Writing on Demand: “Expert” Topic I

Teaching Point(s):

- Brainstorm expert topic list

Standard(s):

CC.1.2.7.X Write routinely over extended time frames and shorter time frames for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Connection:

Today we will develop a short list of topics we know well and can easily write about. Later we will learn how to adapt these topics to different modes of writing to help us on the PSSA.

We all have deep interests in and know a lot about different things. What do you like to do? What kinds of music or sports interest you most? What activities do you excel in? What topics do you know enough about to be an expert?

Modeling (I do):

On the overhead, or using a document camera, begin a list of things that you personally enjoy or know a lot about. As you write, talk about some of the details that come to mind. For example:

“Oh, I just remembered how great I am at packing the car for a road trip! I can move suitcases and bags around the car trunk so everything gets in – with a little extra room for souvenirs to bring back!”

Guided Practice (We do):

Now engage the class in making group lists of “expert” topics by breaking into groups of four to six. Encourage them to think outside the box. After four minutes, have groups read their lists. Praise divergent, interesting topics.

Independent Practice (You do):

Students then begin their own list of “expert” topics. This list is expected to grow and expand throughout the year. Students should keep the list in their writing notebook or working portfolio.

Closure:

Ask several students to read their lists aloud to the class. Encourage others to “steal” ideas and lengthen their own lists.

Assessment – Check for Understanding

Ask students to write an *exit slip*: How can “Expert Topics” be used to help you write for the Direct writing Assessment?

Reflection:

Resources and References: (adapted from, acknowledgements)

Bomer, Katherine. Writing a Life, Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005.

WOD: Writing on Demand: “Expert” Topic II

Teaching Point(s):

- Analyze practice prompts
- Selecting suitable prompt for expert topic

Standard(s):

CC.1.2.7.X Write routinely over extended time frames and shorter time frames for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Materials:

1. Previously created expert topic lists (one per student).
2. Sample prompts from ode website or teacher created prompts.
3. Graphic organizers or blank paper for students to pre-write/brainstorm.

Connection:

“Earlier, we made lists of things we were experts at or knew a lot about. We’ve also analyzed sample prompts that will be similar to those that you may encounter on the PSSA. Today, we’ll pick one prompt that you can effectively weave one of your expert topics into and write a paper. This will be similar to the process you will experience when we take this test.”

Modeling (I do):

“Take your list from the previous lesson, and circle three or four topics that you feel you could easily write about and adapt to several modes of writing.”

“Then, read over the list of sample prompts. Choose a prompt that one of your expert topics could relate to and begin a word web as a pre-write activity.”

On the document camera, model for the students how you might take one of your expert topics and fit it into several prompts that represent the different modes of writing. For example, if the expert topic is swimming, how does the writer use that topic in a narrative, imaginative, expository, or persuasive prompt? It may work for some of the prompts and not for others. Model this meta-cognition/selection process for the students.

Guided Practice (We do):

Students circle one or two prompts they could effectively write about using one of their expert topics. Then they pair up and each share one or two of the prompts they feel they could effectively write about.

Independent Practice (You do):

After peer feedback, students select one of the prompts that they will write on.

Students then organize their information into an outline/graphic organizer for the prompt they chose.

Closure:

Ask three students to share their ideas about the prompt they chose and how they were able to weave their “expert” topic into this prompt. Try to choose students that chose prompts that reflect different modes of writing (i.e. persuasive, narrative, expository, etc.)

Assessment – Check for Understanding

Check in with students as they are working to make sure they’re able to elaborate on their prompt in some depth. If not, encourage them to choose a different prompt. Also, if they are having trouble fitting any of their expert topics into one of the prompts, explain that sometimes it just doesn’t work. They may have to pick a prompt and write on it without using their expert topic lists.

Reflection:

Resources and References: (adapted from, acknowledgements)

McCourt, Frank. “Writing in First Person.” Literary Cavalcade, Jan. 2004.