

## Prompt Format

### GRADE 8

#### Prompt #      Description

##### Writing Situation

- The first sentence provides the background for the writing assignment and the general topic.
- The remaining sentences help writers consider different aspects of the topic, realize that they know enough about the topic to write, and focus their individual responses.

##### Directions for Writing

- The first sentence identifies the nature of the writing (an essay) and also identifies an audience and purpose(s).
- The remaining sentences remind students to help their audience understand their ideas by giving many examples and suggest from where those ideas might be drawn.

## GRADE 8 INSTRUCTIONAL EXAMPLE PROMPTS

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### GRADE 8

#### Prompt 1      A Change from Your Youth

##### Writing Situation

In our lifetime many places and things change from what we remember from our youth. Sometimes the changes are subtle, like the repainting of a house down the street or the addition of a traffic light, while other times they are more obvious, like the demolition of a remembered landmark or the construction of a major new building. Consider one such change from your own life.

##### Directions for Writing

Write an essay to the adults of your community to explain a place or thing that has changed since your youth. Help your audience understand how this change is important by describing what changed and how you feel about that change. Provide specific details and examples of your main ideas.

**TEACHING TIP:** Help students to focus their ideas by using a comparison/contrast graphic organizer to brainstorm specific details for this essay and by focusing on their personal reactions/feelings regarding those changes.

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## **GRADE 8**

### **Prompt 2 U.S. Postage Stamp Honoree**

#### Writing Situation

The United States Postal Service has honored many individuals from American history, such as President George Washington, astronaut Neil Armstrong, and animator Walt Disney, by placing their portraits (pictures) on postage stamps. Imagine you had the task of selecting the next person from United States history to be recognized on a stamp and the responsibility of explaining the reasons of your choice to the public.

#### Directions for Writing

Write an essay to a group of adults to explain the person you would recognize and the reasons you have for this choice. Help your audience to understand why this individual is important and worthy of this honor by providing specific details and examples to support your ideas.

**TEACHING TIP:** Help students to avoid writing a biographical report and to focus on explaining their reasons for honoring this individual.

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## **GRADE 8**

### **Prompt 3 Neighborhood Improvement**

#### Writing Situation

Imagine you have been appointed to a neighborhood improvement committee. You must make recommendations on ways to make your neighborhood a better place to live such as planting trees and flowers, repairing streets and sidewalks, providing home clean-up and repair assistance, or enhancing safety. Think about the changes you would like to make in your neighborhood.

#### Directions for Writing

Write an essay to the other residents of your neighborhood to explain the changes

you would recommend. Help your audience to understand why these changes are important by providing specific details and examples of what would happen and by explaining the benefits that these changes may produce.

**TEACHING TIP:** Help students to deconstruct this prompt by identifying the elements included from the “prompt format” box on the first page.

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## **GRADE 8**

### **Prompt 4 Time Travel**

#### Writing Situation

Imagine that time travel was possible. Identify how far into the future or the past you personally would like to visit. Perhaps you’d like to visit the days of the Old West, or Ancient Rome, or jump ahead into the future to see what life might be like in 100 or 500 years. Think about your reasons for choosing that particular time.

#### Directions for Writing

Write an essay for other travelers to explain your reasons for visiting your chosen time period. Help your audience to understand why these reasons are important by providing specific details and examples of what you would hope to see and why you believe that time period could help us to better understand our own.

**TEACHING TIP:** Help students avoid slipping into a fictional story of the future or the past by focusing on explaining their reasons for wanting to visit a particular era.

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## **GRADE 8**

### **Prompt 5 Thorns or Flowers**

#### Writing Situation

German Author Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote, “Life’s field will yield as we make it... A harvest of thorns or flowers.” Consider what point the author is making in this quotation and how you might apply that idea to your own life.

#### Directions for Writing

Write an essay to a group of teachers in which you explain the central point Goethe makes in this quotation. Help your audience to understand your ideas by providing specific details and examples of your ideas and by explaining how you can apply these ideas to your own life.

**TEACHING TIP:** Help students to understand that knowledge of Goethe, his work, or his background is not necessary to respond to this prompt. Although he is identified as the source, the prompt asks the student to write about the quotation, not about Goethe.

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## GRADE 8

### Prompt 6 A Change in a Fictional Character

#### Writing Situation

In many plays, novels, and short stories a character often changes in some important way, either for better or worse, and that change often reveals an idea or theme the author wants you to understand. For example, when a character becomes happier at the end of a novel than he was at the beginning, the author may be showing you what goes into making someone happy. Consider such a change in a fictional character you have read about.

#### Directions for Writing

Write an essay to your parents explain how the character you have chosen has changed. Help your audience to understand the idea or theme the author wants the reader to understand about that change by providing specific details and examples to support your ideas. Assume that your audience is familiar with the novel, play, or short story from which your chosen character is drawn.

**TEACHING TIP:** Help students avoid retelling the plot of the fictional work and instead help them to focus on the details and examples that reveal the change that is seen in the character.

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## GRADE 8

### Prompt 7 Difficulty and Opportunity

#### Writing Situation

American scientist Albert Einstein once said, “In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.” Consider what point the author is making in this quotation possibly regarding perseverance, determination, compromise, or the importance of preparation and practice and how you might apply that idea(s) to your own life.

#### Directions for Writing

Write an essay to a group of teachers in which you explain the central point Albert Einstein makes in this quotation. Help your audience to understand your

ideas by providing specific details and examples of your ideas and by explaining how you can apply these ideas to your own life.

**TEACHING TIP:** Help students to brainstorm potential methods of structuring their ideas into paragraphs for this essay and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each method.

**TEACHING TIP:** Remind students that knowledge of Einstein, his work, or his background is not necessary to respond to this prompt. Although he is identified as the source, the prompt asks the student to write about the quotation, not about Einstein.

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**GRADE 8**  
**Prompt 8      Castles in the Air**

Writing Situation

American author Henry David Thoreau wrote, “If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.” Consider what point the author is making in this quotation possibly regarding individuality, personal dreams, or future goals and the steps you would take to get there.

Directions for Writing

Write an essay to a group of teachers in which you explain the central point Henry David Thoreau makes in this quotation. Help your audience to understand your ideas by providing specific details and examples of your ideas and by explaining the steps you would take to accomplish these ideas.

**TEACHING TIP:** Help students to brainstorm ideas for this essay as a class by listing potential areas of their lives to which this quotation might apply.

**TEACHING TIP:** Remind students that knowledge of Thoreau, his work, or his background is not necessary to respond to this prompt. Although he is identified as the source, the prompt asks the student to write about the quotation, not about Thoreau.