

110 journal prompts for middle schoolers

Ready-to-use writing starters for grades 6 to 8, sorted into six categories so you can match the prompt to the lesson, the mood, or the reader in front of you.

Creative writing • 20

Personal narrative and reflection • 20

Social-emotional learning (SEL) • 20

Opinion and persuasive • 18

Fun and funny • 16

Reading response • 16

How to use this pack

1. Pick one prompt and give students 5 to 10 minutes of quiet writing time.
2. Write your own response alongside them, so first drafts look normal.
3. Keep journals private unless the writer offers to share.
4. Rotate categories through the week using the schedule on the last page.
5. Print single-sided if you want students to write on the ruled lines.

Invent worlds, characters, and scenes. Best for students who freeze when asked to write about themselves.

1. You wake up one morning with a superpower you did not ask for. What is it, and what do you do first?

2. Write a dialogue between a time traveler and someone from the year 1850 who agree on nothing.

3. Describe a fictional world using only sensory details. No plot required.

4. You find a mysterious key in your locker. Where does it open, and what is inside?

5. Write a scene where a character is terrified and trying to hide it.

6. Your favorite song turns out to be a spell. What does it do when you sing it?

7. Invent a holiday celebrated only in your town. What are the traditions?

8. Write a letter from a historical figure to their younger self, offering advice.

9. A vending machine at school gives out one object that changes a person's day. What does it hand you?

10. Write the opening paragraph of a story that begins with someone running.

11. Two strangers are stuck in an elevator for an hour. Write what they say to each other.

12. Describe a storm from the point of view of the tree standing in it.

13. Your town wakes up to find every clock stopped at 4:17. What happens next?

14. Write a scene using only dialogue. The reader should still know where it takes place.

15. Invent a creature that lives somewhere nobody has looked yet. Describe how it survives.

16. Retell a fairy tale so that the villain is the one narrating it.

17. You get one message from ten years in the future, and it is nine words long. Write it.

18. Write about a house that remembers everyone who has lived in it.

19. Describe an ordinary object as if it were the most valuable thing on Earth.

20. A door appears in your bedroom that was not there yesterday. Write the next ten minutes.

Personal narrative and reflection

20 PROMPTS

Draw on lived experience. These build the narrative writing skills that state tests and essays ask for.

21. Describe a moment when you felt proud of yourself. What did you do, and why did it matter?

22. Tell the story of a friendship that changed you, for better or for worse.

23. Write about a time you failed at something you cared about. What did you learn?

24. Describe your room or a favorite place. What makes it feel like yours?

25. Who do you admire? Write about one quality of theirs you want to grow into.

26. What is a goal you have for this year, and what is one step you can take this week?

27. Write about a tradition in your family or friend group. Why does it matter?

28. Describe the moment you realized something important about yourself or the world.

29. Write about your first day of middle school as the version of you who lived it.

30. Describe a meal only your family makes. Who cooks it, and what does the kitchen sound like?

31. Write about a time you changed your mind about someone.

32. What used to frighten you that no longer does? What changed?

33. Describe a place you have been only once and still think about.

34. Write about a promise you kept, or one you wish you had kept.

35. Who taught you something without meaning to teach it? Tell that story.

36. Describe the hardest conversation you have had this year.

37. Write about an object you own that other people would throw away.

38. What is one rule your family lives by that other families might not understand?

39. Write about a time you were the new person in the room.

40. Describe a day you would live again exactly as it happened.

Social-emotional learning (SEL)

20 PROMPTS

Build emotional vocabulary and coping skills. Each prompt is tagged with the CASEL competency it practices.

41. Self-awareness: What emotion are you feeling right now, where do you feel it, and what set it off?

42. Self-management: Describe a time you felt angry or anxious. How did you calm down, and what helped?

43. Social awareness: Think of someone who treated you unfairly. Why might they have acted that way?

44. Relationship skills: Who is someone you trust? What do they do that makes you feel safe?

45. Responsible decision-making: You heard a rumor about someone. What is one responsible way to handle it?

46. Social awareness: Describe a moment when you felt like you belonged. Who was there, and what happened?

47. Self-management: What challenge are you facing now, and what small step moves you forward?

48. Self-awareness: List three things you are good at that have nothing to do with grades.

49. Self-management: What does stress feel like in your body before you notice it in your thoughts?

50. Social awareness: Write about a classmate you know almost nothing about. What might their day look like?

51. Relationship skills: Write an apology you owe someone, even if you never send it.

52. Responsible decision-making: Describe a choice you made this week that you would make again.

53. Self-awareness: What is one thing you wish adults understood about being your age?

54. Self-management: Write down every worry you have, then mark the ones you can act on.

55. Social awareness: Someone in your class is having a bad day. What could you do that would help?

56. Relationship skills: Describe a group you are part of and what you contribute to it.

57. Self-management: Write about a skill you were bad at before you were good at it.

58. Relationship skills: What does a good friend do when you are the one who is wrong?

59. Responsible decision-making: You see something online you know is untrue. Write what you do next.

60. Self-awareness: Finish this sentence five different ways. I am the kind of person who...

Opinion and persuasive

18 PROMPTS

Argue a position and support it. These usually produce the liveliest classroom discussion.

61. Should middle schoolers have homework? Make your case.

62. Is social media good or bad for teenagers? Give at least two reasons.

63. What is one rule at your school or home that should change? Why?

64. Are video games a waste of time, or do they have benefits? Explain.

65. Should school start later in the day? What evidence supports your opinion?

66. Is it okay to keep secrets from your best friend? Under what circumstances?

67. Should students help decide what books their class reads? Defend your position.

68. Does everyone deserve a second chance? Name one situation where your answer changes.

69. Should phones be allowed at lunch? Argue the side you disagree with first.

70. Is competition good for people your age? Use an example from sports, school, or music.

71. Should group projects get one shared grade? Explain your reasoning.

72. Is it ever right to break a rule? Give a specific example and defend it.

73. Should middle schoolers set their own bedtime? Build the strongest case you can.

74. Does money change people? Argue yes or no using something you have seen.

75. Should every student join a sport or club? Say who your rule helps and who it hurts.

76. Is honesty always the kindest choice? Describe one case where it is not.

77. Should schools teach cooking, budgeting, and repair? Say what you would cut to make room.

78. Who is more responsible for online bullying, the person posting or the platform?

Fun and funny

16 PROMPTS

Low stakes and deliberately silly. Reach for these when a class has stalled or a writer is refusing.

79. If you were a food, what would you be, and why?

80. Write the world's worst advice column, then answer one of your own questions.

81. Your pet can talk for one hour. What does it tell you?

82. Describe the perfect pizza topping that does not exist yet. How did you invent it?

83. If you could ban one thing from school, what would it be? Give your funniest arguments.

84. Write a text conversation between a pencil and a notebook.

85. Write a product review for something nobody would ever buy.

86. Your homework is late, and it is writing its own excuse note. What does it say?

87. Describe the worst superpower you can think of, then explain how to use it well.

88. Write a weather forecast for the inside of your backpack.

89. Give a tour of your bedroom as if you were a museum guide.

90. Write instructions for a task so obvious that nobody has written them down.

91. Two animals argue about which one humans like better. Write the argument.

92. Invent a useless school subject and describe its final exam.

93. Write the acceptance speech for an award nobody wants to win.

94. Your shoes have kept a diary. Read one entry aloud on the page.

Reading response

16 PROMPTS

Connect a book to writing. Works with whole-class novels, book clubs, and independent reading.

95. Which character reminds you of someone you know? Explain why.

96. If you could give the main character one piece of advice, what would it be?

97. Write a diary entry from a secondary character's point of view.

98. What moment in the book surprised you? Why did you not see it coming?

99. Do you agree with a major decision the protagonist made? Why or why not?

100. Describe the setting using sensory details drawn from the book.

101. Write a different ending. How would it change the characters?

102. Copy one sentence you wish you had written, then explain what makes it work.

103. What does the main character want, and what stands in the way?

104. Write the text message the protagonist would send after the last chapter.

105. Which character would you not want as a friend? Be specific about why.

106. What would you ask the author if you had one minute?

107. Find a place where the book slowed down. Would you cut it? Explain.

108. Describe the book in five sentences to someone who will never read it.

109. What does the title mean now that you have finished? Did it mean something else at the start?

110. Pick a chapter and retell it from a different character's point of view.

A week of prompts

Every prompt below is taken from the 110 in this pack. Swap in others to build week two.

Day	Category	Prompt
Monday	Personal narrative	Describe a moment when you felt proud of yourself. What did you do, and why did it matter?
Tuesday	Creative writing	You find a mysterious key in your locker. Where does it open, and what is inside?
Wednesday	Opinion	Should school start later in the day? What evidence supports your opinion?
Thursday	SEL	Relationship skills: Who is someone you trust? What do they do that makes you feel safe?
Friday	Fun and funny	If you were a food, what would you be, and why?

Notes for next week