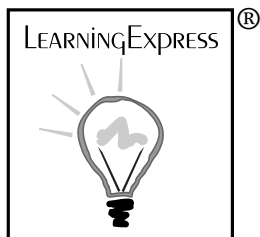


501

Writing Prompts



NEW YORK

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1

Persuasive Writing Prompts

Choose one of the persuasive writing prompts from the list below and write an essay. A certain number of prompts have model essays in the answer section that you can use to compare and contrast your writing. A scoring guide, or rubric, is also included in the answer section. You can use this guide to give you an idea of the way your essay may be graded. If you have trouble interpreting the scoring guide, see a teacher or professor for help. Sample responses to the prompts in bold can be found at the end of the section.

- 1.** Many people believe that television violence has a negative effect on society because it promotes violence. Do you agree or disagree? Use specific reasons and examples to support your response.
- 2.** According to some people, elderly drivers should be required to reapply for their driving licenses because with age comes diminished vision, hearing, and reaction time. How do you feel about this issue? Explain what you think should be done and why.

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3. Medical researchers, cosmetic companies, and others often perform experiments on animals. Many people feel that experimentation on animals is wrong and should be stopped immediately because animals do feel pain, and there are other alternatives. How do you feel? State your position and explain your reasons.
4. In order to save money, your principal is thinking about canceling all field trips for the remainder of the year. Write an essay persuading him or her to allow students to continue attending field trips. Use specific reasons and examples to support your response.
5. Some people are actively involved in promoting and supporting a cause, such as the release of international political prisoners or protecting the environment. Is there a cause you actively support? Write an essay convincing readers to support that cause.
6. Since the cloning of the sheep Dolly, there has been much debate over whether or not human beings should be cloned. Many people feel this is a violation of the natural order of things and that all research in the area of human cloning should be banned. Others feel that this is a natural progression of science and human evolution and that research in the area of human cloning should be a priority. How do you feel about this issue? Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.
7. **Many parents give children a weekly or monthly allowance regardless of their behavior because they believe an allowance teaches children to be financially responsible. Other parents only give children an allowance as a reward for completing chores or when they have behaved properly. Explain what you think parents should do and why.**
8. Many people volunteer their time to help others, either through non-profit organizations, churches, or other charitable venues. Write an essay convincing readers to find a charity and volunteer their time.
9. All-girl schools have been gaining popularity in recent years because of the belief that girls learn better when they aren't

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competing with or intimidated by boys, who statistically get more attention in the classroom. Do you think single-sex schools are a good idea? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.

- 10.** We all have favorite activities that we enjoy. Write an essay convincing readers to try the activity that you enjoy most.
- 11.** Research shows that the average American watches as much as six hours of television each day. Do you think this is too much? Write an essay convincing readers to spend less time in front of the TV.
- 12.** Many junior high and high schools around the country now require students to spend a certain number of hours each term doing volunteer work or community service. Some people believe this is an excellent idea that promotes good citizenship and cultivates compassion. Others feel that forced volunteerism is not volunteerism at all. How do you feel about this issue? Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.
- 13.** Most states allow people to get a driver's license at the age of 16. Some people feel that 16 is much too young for the responsibility that comes with driving a car and that teenagers should not be allowed to drive until the age of 18. In your opinion, at what age should people be allowed to drive, and why?
- 14.** As part of the "war on drugs" and in reaction to an increase in school violence, many schools across the nation now conduct targeted searches of student lockers and backpacks. Although the Supreme Court has ruled that public school officials have the right to search students' persons and property when they have reasonable cause to suspect weapons or drugs, many people feel this is a gross violation of students' right to privacy. Others feel that since school officials are responsible for the well-being of students while they are in the building, they have the right to search for drugs or weapons at any time. How do you feel about this issue? State your position and explain your reasons with specific examples.

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- 15.** Write an essay convincing readers to break a specific habit that is harmful to their physical, emotional, or financial health.
- 16.** In many countries, citizens are required to serve in the military for a year or more. Do you believe the United States should institute a similar practice? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- 17.** Have you ever traveled to a place that you found very meaningful and rewarding? Write an essay that persuades others to visit this important place.
- 18.** Many of us spend hours in front of our computers and communicate more by e-mail or instant-messaging than in person. Some people believe that this is good because it helps shy people communicate more openly with others. Others believe that computer communication prevents us from developing interpersonal skills and limits our ability to have meaningful relationships with others. How do you feel about this issue? Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.
- 19.** Some companies offer a paternity leave that allows fathers to stay home with their newborns for several weeks while still earning partial pay and benefits. Do you think this is a good policy? Why or why not? Explain your answer.
- 20.** According to some health organizations, many foods on our grocery store shelves are made with genetically modified ingredients. Most of these foods, however, do not have a GMO (genetically modified organism) label. Do you think there should be a law requiring manufacturers to label foods containing GMOs? Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.
- 21.** **More and more farmers and food manufacturers are genetically modifying their crops to reduce susceptibility to disease, improve flavor, and reduce costs. Do you think genetically modifying foods is a good idea? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.**

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- 22.** A few decades ago, many families had half a dozen or more children. Nowadays, more and more families are choosing to have only one or two children. Are smaller families better than larger ones? Why or why not? State your position and support it with specific reasons and examples.
- 23.** Representatives of credit card companies can often be found on college campuses offering special incentives to get students to fill out credit card applications. Many people feel that this takes advantage of students, who are often low on cash during their college years. Others feel that it is an excellent way to help students begin to build credit and learn financial responsibility. How do you feel about this issue? Take a position and use specific reasons and examples to support your argument.
- 24. Good habits improve our physical, emotional, and/or financial health. Select one of your good habits and write an essay persuading readers to make that habit a part of their lives.**
- 25.** What is your all-time favorite movie and why? Write an essay persuading readers to watch this film.
- 26.** Today, there are more and more reality shows on television. Do these shows make good television? Why or why not? Explain your answer using specific reasons and examples.
- 27.** Is “an eye for an eye” a good basis for determining an appropriate punishment? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to explain your position.
- 28.** Many cities suffer from serious air and noise pollution—as well as endless traffic jams—because of too many cars. Some people feel that cities with extensive public transportation systems should ban passenger cars and force people to walk, bike, or use public transportation. Do you think this is a good idea? Why or why not?

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- 29.** On today's talk shows, guests and audience members often argue heatedly with each other, and on more than one occasion, guests and audience members have been hurt. Do today's talk shows go too far? Explain your answer.
- 30.** Have you ever made a change that improved your life or the lives of others? Write an essay that convinces readers to make a change for the better.
- 31.** The singer and songwriter Bob Dylan once wrote, "A man is a success if he gets up in the morning and gets to bed at night and in between does what he wants to do." Do you agree with this definition of success? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.
- 32.** Carpooling, recycling, and planting trees are all activities that are good for the environment. Write an essay convincing readers to actively participate in one of these activities.
- 33.** The Internet includes many websites with images and content that are inappropriate. Should websites like these be censored by parents? Why or why not? State your position and support it with specific reasons and examples.
- 34.** Some people prefer to live in the quiet of the country; others prefer the hustle and bustle of the city. Which do you think is the better choice? State your position and support it with specific reasons and examples.
- 35.** **Is there a book that you feel should be required reading for everyone? Write an essay persuading your audience to read this book.**
- 36.** Some people go right on to college after high school; others take a year or more off to work or travel. Which do you think is the better choice? State your position and support it with specific reasons and examples.

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- 37.** Some people think of the United States as a nation of “couch potatoes.” Write an essay persuading readers to be more physically active.
- 38.** You have been asked to write a brochure to attract visitors to your hometown. Write an essay that convinces people to visit the place where you live.
- 39.** Many states have increased the speed limit from 55 miles per hour to 65 miles per hour or more on major turnpikes and thruways. Do you think it is wise to allow motorists to drive over 65 miles per hour? Why or why not? Explain your position using specific reasons and examples.
- 40.** Nowadays, the private life of a politician is hardly private. In your opinion, should we be so concerned with the private affairs of a politician or political candidate? State your position and support it with specific reasons and examples.
- 41.** Today’s top professional athletes often have salaries and bonuses in the tens of millions of dollars. Do you think these athletes deserve such high compensation? Why or why not? Explain your position and use specific reasons and examples.
- 42.** Many parents do not allow their children to play with toy guns. In your opinion, is this a wise decision? Explain what you think parents should do about toy guns and why.
- 43.** For centuries, people have wondered about the possibility of life on other planets in the universe. Do you believe extraterrestrial life exists? Write an essay persuading others to share your point of view.
- 44.** Many science fiction stories deal with the possibility of being able to “design” our children by choosing the specific physical and personality traits we would like them to have. Do you think this is a good idea? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.

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- 45.** If someone discovered a formula that would enable us to live forever, would that be a blessing or a curse? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- 46.** Some educators argue that every child in every school should have access to computers. Others believe that the value of computers in the classroom is overrated and that computers may actually interfere with the learning process. In your opinion, how important are computers in the classroom? Use specific reasons and examples to explain your answer.
- 47.** Should the United States invest more time, money, and effort in space exploration? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to explain your position.
- 48.** Some people believe that students aren't learning enough in high school. Should school standards be higher? Explain your answer using specific reasons and examples.
- 49.** It has often been said, "Ignorance is bliss," and "What you don't know won't hurt you." Do you agree with these statements? Why or why not?
- 50.** Although foreign aid spending is typically only a very small portion of our annual budget (currently about .1% of the Gross National Product), the United States still spends billions of dollars a year on foreign aid. Some people feel this is too much and that we should spend nearly all of our money addressing problems here at home. Others feel it is not nearly enough and that we should spend a great deal more helping other nations. How do you feel about this issue? Explain what you think we should do and why.
- 51.** Some people fish to eat what they catch; others fish simply for the "sport," returning the fish to the water after they've caught it. Many animal rights activists argue that sport fishing is cruel and should be abolished. How do you feel about this issue? State your position and support it with specific reasons and examples.

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- 52.** Many schools employ security guards and have installed security equipment such as video cameras and metal detectors in the building. In your opinion, how should security in public schools be handled? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- 53.** Across the country, public places such as libraries and museums are now smoke-free environments, and restaurants are required to have separate smoking and non-smoking sections. Some smoke-free advocates are now campaigning to ban smoking in all restaurants and bars. Do you think this is a good idea? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.
- 54.** In a small minority of schools across the nation, students do not earn grades; rather, they receive regular written and oral evaluations of their work. Some people believe that this is more effective for learning than the grading system, which they believe rewards students unevenly and encourages a competitiveness that is counterproductive to learning. How do you feel about this issue? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- 55. Is reading fiction a waste of time? Why or why not? Explain your answer using specific reasons and examples to support your position.**
- 56.** Many schools offer students who are native speakers of another language the opportunity to take classes in their native tongue so that they can more easily assimilate and better understand the material. Some educators believe that this is a disservice and that these students should be immersed in the English language. How do you feel about this issue? Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.
- 57.** Many people immigrate to the United States because they believe that it is better than their native country. In fact, many people believe that the United States is the best country in the world. Do you agree? Why or why not?

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- 58.** Some people think that school cafeterias should be required to provide low-fat and/or vegetarian lunch options to accommodate the eating habits of all students. Do you agree or disagree? Explain your position and use specific reasons and examples as support.
- 59.** Elementary and secondary schools around the country are beginning to actively address the problem of bullies. In your opinion, is bullying an issue that should be addressed by schools or left to parents? Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.
- 60.** Most private schools require students to wear uniforms. Should public school students wear uniforms too? Argue for or against school uniforms for public school students. Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.
- 61.** Do you think that the movie and/or TV ratings systems are effective or useful? Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.
- 62.** Many people believe that honesty is the best policy. In your opinion, is it ever okay to lie? Explain your answer using specific reasons and examples.
- 63.** In order to solve your school's recent litter problem, your principal asked students to take better care of the campus, but the litter problem continued. Your principal's reaction is to cancel all extracurricular activities until the problem is resolved. Do you agree or disagree with his reaction? Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.
- 64.** If an alumnus donated a large sum of money to your school, how do you think that money should be spent? Write an essay convincing school officials to allocate the money in the way you think is best for the school.
- 65.** Many people feel that American society is too competitive. Do you agree? If so, is this a good thing or a bad thing? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

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- 66.** If it were up to you to choose one item from the twenty-first century to place in a time capsule for future generations, what would you choose? Use specific reasons and examples to support your choice, explaining both the item's significance and the reasons why it embodies the culture of the early twenty-first century.
- 67.** Who makes a better leader: someone who is loved, or someone who is feared? Take a position and explain your answer.
- 68.** Some people are concerned that many teachers are not sufficiently qualified for the classroom and argue that they should be required to pass competency tests before they are allowed to teach. Do you agree? Why or why not? Explain your answer with specific reasons and examples.
- 69.** If it were up to you to choose one professional (a doctor, a reporter, a scientist, a politician, an actor) to travel aboard the next space station, who would you choose and why? Use specific reasons and examples to support your choice.
- 70.** In our increasingly global society, many people feel that all students should be required to learn a foreign language before graduating from high school. Do you agree? Why or why not? Explain your position using specific reasons and examples.
- 71.** Today, more and more colleges and universities are offering not only individual courses but entire degree programs online. Some educators worry that online programs do not provide the same quality as an on-campus education and that in an online program, students can get others to do their work. Others believe online courses offer convenience and flexibility enabling students, who might otherwise not be able, to earn a degree and complete their educations. In your opinion, should colleges and universities offer degrees entirely online? Why or why not?
- 72.** Is a good education a right or a privilege? Why do you think so? Use specific reasons and examples to explain your answer.

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- 73.** The network that runs your favorite television show has suddenly decided to cancel it. Write a letter convincing the station to continue running the show.
- 74.** What would improve your hometown? Write an essay convincing town officials to make a change that would improve your neighborhood.
- 75.** Many people complain that American news shows focus too much on sensational items, such as local crimes and celebrity gossip, and spend too little time on important national and international news. In your opinion, should television news devote more time and coverage to international news and global issues? Why or why not?
- 76.** Most students enjoy the long stretch of summer vacation, but some parents and educators feel that two and a half months is too long a break from school. Some argue that students and families would be better served if the school year were extended through July, with a three or four-week break in August, a longer winter break, and a week off each in the spring and fall. Does this sound like a good idea to you? Why or why not? Explain your answer.
- 77.** **Many people feel that the use of surveillance cameras in public places, such as parking lots, is a good idea that can help ensure our safety. Others worry that too many cameras violate our right to privacy and give law enforcement officials too much power. In your opinion, should we install more surveillance cameras in public places? Why or why not? Support your position with specific reasons and examples.**
- 78.** It has often been said, “a little knowledge is a dangerous thing.” Do you agree? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to explain your answer.

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- 79.** Recent studies have shown that students often perform better on exams if classical music is played softly in the background. However, some students may find the music distracting. Should schools play classical music during exams and/or allow students to listen to it on headphones? Take a position and explain your answer.
- 80.** All across the country, state laws require drivers to wear seatbelts. Not everyone believes the use of seatbelts should be mandatory. What do you think? Make a case for or against mandatory seatbelt use. Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.
- 81.** Most schools require students to read “old” texts such as ancient Greek tragedies or Shakespearian plays. Many students wonder why they should read these texts instead of more contemporary material. Make a case for or against the reading of classical literature in English classes.
- 82.** Should a parent be a child’s disciplinarian, or a child’s best friend? Take a position and explain your answer using specific reasons and examples.
- 83.** More and more Americans are deciding to eliminate meat from their diets and become vegetarians. Do you think this is a good idea? Argue for or against becoming a vegetarian. Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.
- 84.** With the current popularity of sport utility vehicles many people believe that it’s more important than ever for Congress to pass legislation requiring automobile manufacturers to use more fuel-efficient engines. Do you agree that such a law should be passed? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to support your argument.
- 85.** Every year, millions of people visit zoos around the world. But some people believe that zoos are inhumane and that animals should not be kept in captivity. Do you agree? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.

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- 86.** Politicians come from all sorts of professional backgrounds, from lawyers and chief executive officers to actors and even professional wrestlers. On a few notable occasions, politicians with criminal backgrounds have even been elected. In your opinion, should candidates with a criminal record be allowed to run for office? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- 87.** Students who don't want to do their homework can find dozens of sites on the Internet that offer essays for sale. Do you think this is a legitimate business, or should these enterprises be shut down? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- 88.** Do you think the SAT or ACT exam is an accurate measure of a student's aptitude for college? Support your position with specific examples.
- 89.** It has often been said that we can lie with silence as well as with words. Do you agree? Why or why not? Explain your answer.
- 90.** Many students complain about having to learn history. Why do we need knowledge of the past? Write an essay convincing skeptics that learning about the past is important.
- 91.** Woodrow Wilson once said, "Friendship is the only cement that will hold the world together." Do you agree? Use specific reasons and examples to explain your answer.
- 92.** Charles Simmons said, "Live only for today, and you ruin tomorrow." Do you agree? Why or why not? Explain your answer.
- 93.** Thomas Edison, the renowned inventor, is famous for having said, "Genius is one percent inspiration, ninety-nine percent perspiration." Do you agree with this definition of genius? Why or why not?
- 94.** Many of us are fond of music that speaks to our particular generation. Write an essay that convinces others *not* in your generation that your music is worth listening to.

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- 95.** Alexander Smith said, “The great man is the man who does a thing for the first time.” Do you agree with this definition of greatness? Why or why not?
- 96.** The eighteenth century writer Samuel Johnson wrote, “Ignorance, when voluntary, is criminal.” Do you agree? Use specific reasons and examples to explain your answer.
- 97.** For decades, elementary school children across the country had been required to stand and say the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag every school-day morning. That practice has recently been called into question, and standing and reciting the pledge is now voluntary. In your opinion, should students be required to say the pledge, should it remain voluntary, or should the practice be completely abandoned? State your position and use specific reasons and examples to support it.
- 98.** Currently, Americans pay taxes based upon how much they earn: the higher their income, the higher the percentage of that income they must pay in taxes. Many people have been arguing that a flat tax, in which everyone pays the same rate regardless of income, would be a more equitable and desirable tax system. Which of these two tax systems do you think is best, and why? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- 99.** The great inventor Charles F. Kettering said, “The price of progress is trouble.” Do you agree with Kettering’s assessment of progress? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- 100.** The writer Thomas Mann said, “War is only a cowardly escape from the problems of peace.” Do you agree with this claim? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- 101.** Activist Jeannette Rankin once said, “You can no more win a war than you can win an earthquake.” Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

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- 102.** Write an essay explaining why you should be admitted to a particular college.
- 103.** The Roman leader Seneca said, “A great fortune is a great slavery.” Do you agree with this claim? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- 104.** If your readers were to learn a foreign language, which language do you think they should learn, and why? Write an essay convincing readers to learn that particular language.
- 105.** Many albums and CDs now contain stickers warning parents that the lyrics of some of the songs may not be suitable for children. Some people argue that simply putting a sticker on a label is not enough. What do you think the record industry should do to warn parents about inappropriate lyrics? Explain what you think should be done and why.
- 106.** Should we devote time and money to building a space station on the moon or Mars? Why or why not? Explain your answer.
- 107.** Should people lease or buy new cars? Make a case for the option that you think is best. Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.
- 108.** The inventor and statesman Benjamin Franklin said, “Money never made a man happy yet, nor will it. There is nothing in its nature to produce happiness.” Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.
- 109.** Some states have now made it illegal to drive while talking on a hand-held cellular phone. Do you think this is a good law that should be passed in other states as well? Why or why not? Explain your answer.

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- 110.** The poet W. H. Auden wrote, “Machines are beneficial to the degree that they eliminate the need for labor, harmful to the degree that they eliminate the need for skill.” Do you agree? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to explain your answer.
- 111.** Are students learning enough science in high school? Argue for or against an expanded science requirement in secondary schools.
- 112.** According to an old Greek proverb, “All things good to know are difficult to learn.” Do you agree? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to explain your answer.
- 113.** William Hazlitt wrote, “Man is a make-believe animal—he is never so truly himself as when he is acting a part.” Do you agree? Explain your answer using specific reasons and examples.
- 114.** Imagine that you have a relative who is unfamiliar with computers and has never been on the Internet. Write an essay convincing this relative to get a computer and get online.
- 115.** Imagine that you have found a great apartment to share, but your new roommate doesn’t want any pets. Write an essay persuading your roommate to let you bring your pet with you.
- 116.** According to a Czechoslovakian proverb, “Better a lie that soothes than a truth that hurts.” Do you agree? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to explain your answer.
- 117.** Imagine that your high school (or alma mater) has decided to do away with a club to which you belong (or used to belong). Write an essay persuading school officials not to disband that organization.

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- 118.** “Original” fairy tales, like those recorded by the Brothers Grimm, often contain violence. Some literary critics and child psychologists believe these tales are good for children because they address children’s real fears, feelings, and desires. Others argue that contemporary “sanitized” fairy tales still convey the main themes of the tales and are far more appropriate for children. How do you feel about this issue? Use specific reasons and examples to explain your answer.
- 119.** Imagine that you have made it to the final round of interviews for a new job. Convince your prospective employers that you are the one who most deserves the position.
- 120.** Most high school schedules include a study hall period several times a week. Is study hall a waste of time, or a necessary break from class? State your position and use specific reasons and examples to support your position.
- 121.** Imagine that you have a friend who doesn’t have any money in his or her savings account. Convince this friend that it’s important to create and follow through with a savings plan.
- 122.** During the Christmas holiday season, images of Santa Claus are everywhere, and young children often line up to take pictures with adults dressed as Santa. Some people feel that children should not be led to believe that Santa Claus is real. Do you agree? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.
- 123.** Is there something that you believe is truly worth fighting for? Write an essay persuading others that this cause is worth a fight.
- 124.** Write an essay convincing your best friend to try your favorite brand of junk food.
- 125.** Imagine that you have been asked to help raise money for a local charity. Choose a charity and write an essay convincing readers to contribute to the fundraising campaign.

2

Expository Writing Prompts

Choose one of the expository writing prompts from the list below and write an essay. A certain number of prompts have model essays in the answer section that you can use to compare and contrast your writing. A scoring guide or rubric is also included in the answer section. You can use this guide to give you an idea of the way your essay may be graded. If you have trouble interpreting the scoring guide, see a teacher or professor for help. Sample responses to the prompts in bold can be found at the end of the section.

- 126.** Explain outdoor living to a person with an apartment in the city.
- 127.** Explain how two people of different interests and backgrounds could become unlikely allies.
- 128.** Describe a family celebration that has special meaning for you.
- 129.** Tell about a world-class athlete. Explain why you include this person in that category.

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- 130.** Explain the problems, both personal and societal, that result from obesity.
- 131.** Describe your vision of an ideal vacation.
- 132.** Explain, in detail, a situation where a change of plans becomes necessary.
- 133.** Describe the purposes of the Internet. Include various viewpoints, including that of users and providers.
- 134.** Describe how and why people choose the particular foods they eat.
- 135.** Describe various styles of shoes as well as reasons for their popularity.
- 136.** Math is a required subject. Explain why it is so important.
- 137.** Discuss the causes of and problems resulting from teenage smoking.
- 138.** Discuss a public health concern that you believe is serious enough to warrant immediate attention.
- 139.** Describe a major environmental problem and what you believe should be done about it.
- 140.** Discuss how a person achieves fame and fortune and how it changes the individual's life.
- 141.** Discuss how conveniences change people's lives.
- 142.** Describe techniques or methods that could help teachers do their job more effectively.
- 143.** Describe how communication has changed in the last 20 years.
- 144.** Describe, in detail, a team sport that interests you.

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145. Explain why a particular adjective describes you perfectly.
146. Explain what cooperation means to you and why it is important.
147. Explain the meaning of diversity.
148. Discuss the importance of pride in one's work.
149. What is special about you? Explain what makes you a unique individual.
150. **Discuss the events in the life of your favorite author, sports figure, or performer. Explain how these events relate to the person's achievements.**
151. Describe techniques and behavior that make a person a good driver.
152. Explain why some people may be afraid of sharks.
153. Explain how different modern life would be without computers.
154. Explain pollution to a visitor from another planet.
155. Explain to a doctor what would be helpful during an office visit.
156. Explain the causes and effects of a poor diet.
157. Explain the causes and effects of impulse buying.
158. **Explain the causes and effects of not voting in elections.**
159. Explain the causes and effects of prejudice.
160. Describe how to be a good citizen.
161. Describe your favorite game. Explain why it is your favorite.
162. Tell how to pack for a camping trip.

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- 163.** Describe how weather affects your commute to school.
- 164.** Tell how you can make a new friend.
- 165.** Explain what you should do if you want to end a relationship.
- 166.** Explain some of the best ways to prepare for a job interview.
- 167.** Explain how to have a winning baseball team.
- 168.** You must pass a college admissions test. Explain what you have to do to achieve this goal.
- 169.** You want to buy a new state of the art computer. Detail the steps you would have to take to ensure that you will make an appropriate decision regarding this major investment.
- 170.** Brothers and sisters do not always get along. Describe the kinds of problems this discord creates in families and the best way to handle a situation like this.
- 171.** Explain how to pick the best candidate for an elected office.
- 172.** Describe your favorite season and explain why it is your favorite.
- 173.** Describe a vegetable that you truly dislike.
- 174.** Describe a typical day of your life.
- 175.** Explain what you might do to help a sick friend or relative.
- 176.** Describe how to brush your teeth.
- 177.** Describe how a person should choose a new outfit.
- 178.** Explain how to choose a pet that matches your lifestyle.
- 179.** You decide to write a mystery. Describe the steps you would take to write a bestseller.

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- 180.** Explain how you should read a book to a child.
- 181.** Explain how to set a table for company.
- 182.** Explain how to become a smart consumer.
- 183.** Explain how to write a good resume.
- 184.** Describe a master plan that would make your community a better place to live.
- 185.** Describe your school.
- 186.** Describe how to build a birdhouse.
- 187.** Describe how to paint a room.
- 188.** Explain how you would find a good restaurant in a place you are visiting for the first time.
- 189.** Explain to a person who has a great many debts about life on a budget.
- 190.** Describe the chores and responsibilities that you have at home.
- 191.** Describe what you can do to save money and still cover your basic needs.
- 192.** Explain how to choose the right college.
- 193.** Explain what you would do if you won the lottery.
- 194.** Describe the steps you would take if you wanted to research your family tree.
- 195.** With the hope of preserving family history, describe the kinds of questions to ask an older relative.

501 Writing Prompts

- 196.** You are asked to write an article about a person newly arrived from another country. Discuss the kinds of information you would include.
- 197.** Describe how manners have changed over time.
- 198.** Discuss reasons for appreciating your parents.
- 199.** Describe how to show appreciation to your parents.
- 200.** If you could live in any decade, which one would you choose and why?
- 201.** Describe how to perform your favorite magic trick.
- 202.** Your best friend's birthday is coming up. Describe the plan you created to make this birthday celebration the kind your friend will always remember.
- 203.** Describe the steps you will take to launch a new career.
- 204.** Describe how you would decorate a dorm room, living room, or office.
- 205.** Describe the tasks you need to complete before you attend college in another state.
- 206.** **Your new job requires that you move to a different city. Describe the steps you will take to prepare for this move.**
- 207.** Choose a foreign country you would like to visit and explain why you find that country so appealing.
- 208.** Describe how climate dictates lifestyle.
- 209.** Tell how customers like to be treated in a store.
- 210.** Explain how different modern life would be without phones.

501 Writing Prompts

- 211.** Describe the menu for a satisfying dinner in a restaurant.
- 212.** Describe the menu and setting of a romantic dinner for two.
- 213.** Describe the perfect menu for a picnic at the beach.
- 214.** Describe the most luscious, decadent dessert you can imagine.
- 215.** Tell how you would entertain a group of five-year-olds on a rainy afternoon.
- 216.** Give someone directions from your school to your house.
- 217.** **Many people spend a great deal of time with animals. Write about the relationships that people have with animals.**
- 218.** Tell how you can protect your house from intruders.
- 219.** Describe the best way to honor a hero.
- 220.** You are asked to landscape the front yard of a new house. Describe the steps you would take from the beginning of the process to its completion.
- 221.** Describe a teenage fad and the reasons you believe caused its popularity.
- 222.** Describe a favorite music video to a friend who has not had a chance to see or hear it.
- 223.** You are about to spend a year abroad and must learn a new language. Describe the steps you would take to accomplish this goal as quickly as possible.
- 224.** Describe a favorite movie to a person who wants to know all about it but will not have the opportunity to see it.
- 225.** Explain how not getting enough sleep affects your day.

501 Writing Prompts

- 226.** Describe the most effective teacher you have ever had.
- 227.** Describe a person who is especially interesting.
- 228.** Describe an especially memorable photo or picture.
- 229.** Compare and contrast 1900 with Y2K.
- 230.** Compare and contrast two strategic sport plays.
- 231.** Compare and contrast checkers and chess.
- 232.** Compare and contrast understanding and knowledge.
- 233.** Compare and contrast a screen actor with a stage actor.
- 234.** Compare and contrast any two U.S. presidents.
- 235.** Compare and contrast a budget and an allowance.
- 236.** Compare and contrast public schooling and homeschooling.
- 237.** Compare and contrast learning and teaching.
- 238.** Describe how weather affects your mood.
- 239.** Compare and contrast a vacation in a cold climate and a vacation in a warm climate.
- 240.** Compare and contrast spicy foods and sweet foods.
- 241.** Compare and contrast foods you eat raw and foods that are cooked.
- 242.** Compare and contrast dressing for a formal occasion and dressing informally.
- 243.** Compare and contrast cats and dogs.

501 Writing Prompts

- 244.** Compare and contrast microscopes and telescopes.
- 245.** Compare and contrast whales and sharks.
- 246.** Write a letter to a teacher requesting information about a poor grade.
- 247.** You want to organize a family reunion. Describe the steps you will take to contact people and to organize the event.
- 248.** Write an e-mail message to your colleagues, inviting them to a Memorial Day celebration.
- 249.** Write an e-mail message to a company complaining about a defective product.
- 250.** Describe a four-hour bicycle trip through mountainous terrain.

3

Narrative Writing Prompts

Choose one of the narrative writing prompts from the list below and write an essay. A certain number of prompts have model essays in the answer section that you can use to compare and contrast your writing. A scoring guide or rubric is also included in the answer section. You can use this guide to give you an idea of the way your essay may be graded. If you have trouble interpreting the scoring guide, see a teacher or professor for help. Sample responses to the prompts in bold can be found at the end of the section.

- 251.** Movies and books often talk about the importance of loyalty and friendship. Tell about a time in your life when friendship proved to be of great importance to you.
- 252.** It is often said that animals are humans' best friends. Describe a time in your life when this saying proved to be true.
- 253.** Martin Luther King, Jr., said that he wished for the day when his children "would be judged not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." Write about a time in your life when the content of your character was tested.

501 Writing Prompts

- 254.** People often say “Don’t judge a book by its cover.” Describe a time when you misjudged someone based on his or her appearance or when someone misjudged you.
- 255.** The way a person handles disappointment reveals a great deal about what is important to him or her. Tell about a time in your life when you confronted disappointment and how you handled it.
- 256.** As adolescents, many of us promise ourselves that we’ll never be like our parents. But as we mature, we often find that we think and act a lot like our parents do. Describe a time when you realized you were behaving like your mother or father (or other guardian) and how that experience helped you better understand your parent.
- 257.** When we reflect upon our childhood, we often come back to a few key events that had a major impact on us. Tell about one of those defining events from your childhood.
- 258.** Sometimes lies can have serious consequences. Describe a time when a lie had major consequences for you.
- 259.** There is a saying that you should be careful what you wish for, because you just might get it. Describe a time when you wished for something and got it—and then wished you hadn’t.
- 260.** Major life events like a new job, a new home, the birth of a sibling, or the death of someone we love can have a profound impact on us. Describe a major event in your life and what it taught you about yourself or others.
- 261.** People often say, “What you don’t know won’t hurt you,” but the opposite often turns out to be true. Tell about a time when you were hurt by something you didn’t know.
- 262.** Parents are our first and most important teachers. Describe a time when you learned a valuable lesson from one of your parents.

501 Writing Prompts

- 263.** Recall a time when you found yourself in a perilous situation. Tell the story of how you got into that situation and how you survived it.
- 264.** We often discover something we didn't know about ourselves (or others) when we are forced to handle an unexpected situation. Describe a time when you were faced with something unexpected and what you learned in the process.
- 265.** Many experiences in our lives are memorable because they forced us to examine our basic beliefs and values. Tell about such an experience in your life.
- 266.** Many writers have dealt with the theme of a character losing control and going beyond reason. Describe a time in your life when you lost control, and tell why.
- 267.** Preconceived notions often turn out to be false. Describe a time when you discovered that a preconceived notion of yours (about a person, place, or thing) was wrong.
- 268.** It isn't always easy to do what is right, and sometimes it can even be dangerous. Describe a time when you put yourself at risk (physically, socially, emotionally, or professionally) to do what you thought was right.
- 269.** Some of our richest experiences take place when we travel. Tell about a memorable experience you had when you were traveling.
- 270.** Sometimes we take nature for granted. Describe an experience that made you appreciate the natural world.
- 271.** The first time we try something new can be exciting, frightening, and enlightening. Tell about an important "first" in your life and what you learned from the experience.
- 272.** Animals can sometimes seem remarkably human. Describe an experience with an animal that acted in a very human way.

501 Writing Prompts

- 273.** Most of us have to make many difficult choices throughout our lives. Describe a time when you had to make a tough decision.
- 274.** It has often been said that “Life is a journey, not a destination.” Tell about an important journey (physical, emotional, or spiritual) that you’ve taken.
- 275.** How people handle a problem often reveals a lot about their character. Describe a time you encountered a difficult problem and how you solved it.
- 276.** **It has been said that the truth is often stranger than fiction. Describe an experience you had that was so strange others might think you made it up.**
- 277.** It is often said that you should never judge another person until you walk in his or her shoes. Tell about an experience that enabled you to better understand another person.
- 278.** **We all have things that we are afraid of, and sometimes we find ourselves in situations that force us to face our deepest fears. Tell about a time when you had to face one of your greatest fears.**
- 279.** Sometimes we surprise ourselves with what we are able to do. Describe a time when you accomplished something you didn’t think you could do.
- 280.** When we are faced with challenges and difficult situations, we sometimes discover strengths we did not know we had. Tell about a time when you recognized a new strength in yourself.
- 281.** Sometimes change can be intimidating—especially technological change. Describe a time when you had difficulty with a new technology.
- 282.** No matter how well we prepare, sometimes, unexpected things may happen. Other times, we may simply be unable to prepare. Tell about a time when you were unprepared for a situation.

501 Writing Prompts

- 283.** Some of our most memorable moments are when we achieve an important goal. Tell about a time when you accomplished a goal you had been working toward.
- 284.** Sometimes something negative turns out to be positive—a “blessing in disguise.” Describe a time in your life when something bad turned out to be good.
- 285.** **Moving can be a very exciting but also difficult time in one’s life. Tell about a time you moved and how it affected you.**
- 286.** When we are unhappy with a situation, we can either accept it or do something to change it. Tell about a time when you initiated change.
- 287.** We often learn a great deal from our failures. Describe a time when you failed and what you learned from the experience.
- 288.** **As the saying goes, “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again.” Describe a time when you persisted until you achieved your goal.**
- 289.** Many people believe that it is better to have loved and lost than to never have loved at all. Tell about an experience that shows this statement to be true.
- 290.** Most people believe that there are certain things worth fighting for. Tell about a time when you fought for something you believed in.
- 291.** From the time we are toddlers, we begin to challenge authority to test our limits. Describe a time when you challenged authority.
- 292.** **Movies and literature often deal with the theme of “counting your blessings.” Tell about an experience that led you to appreciate someone or something you’d taken for granted.**
- 293.** Even if we know money can’t buy us happiness, we are often disappointed when we are unable to afford something we desire. Describe a time when you could not afford something you deeply desired.

501 Writing Prompts

- 294.** Our first foray into the world of work is bound to generate some interesting experiences. Tell about a memorable incident from your first job.
- 295.** We often put people we admire so high on a pedestal that we forget they're human. Describe a time when you realized that someone you admired was imperfect.
- 296.** Though some say, "rules are meant to be broken," breaking the rules often has serious consequences. Tell about a time when you broke the rules and what happened as a result.
- 297.** In many situations, as the saying goes, "two heads are better than one." Describe a time when you accomplished something through teamwork that you could not have achieved on your own.
- 298.** People often say, "It's better to be safe than sorry." Tell about an experience that proves this saying to be true.
- 299.** Sometimes the course of our lives can change in an instant. Describe an experience that changed the direction of your life.
- 300.** Tell about a time when you found something important that you thought you had lost.
- 301.** Once words are uttered, it's impossible to take them back. Describe a time when you said something you wish you had not.
- 302.** First impressions are often very important. Describe a time you got (or gave) the wrong first impression.
- 303.** In one of his most famous lines, Shakespeare's Hamlet says, "I must be cruel, only to be kind." Describe a time when you, too, had to be cruel to be kind.
- 304.** We are often surprised, even awed, by the experiences of our ancestors. Describe a time when you learned something important about your family history.

501 Writing Prompts

- 305.** Unfortunately, conflicts over money have the power to destroy even the strongest of relationships. Describe a time when you had a conflict over money.
- 306.** There are many sides to every story. Tell about a time when many people were involved in a conflict.
- 307.** Have you ever forgotten something very important? Tell about your experience.
- 308.** When we meet someone we haven't seen in a long time, we are often surprised by how much they have changed. Describe a time when this happened to you.
- 309.** Describe a time when you received a valuable gift.
- 310.** **Most of us remember exactly where we were and what we were doing when we received shocking or important news. Tell the story of what you were doing when you heard about an important event and how that news affected you.**
- 311.** Some people believe that you should seize the day—take every opportunity to live life to its fullest. Describe a time when you decided to seize the day.
- 312.** The quality of our character is often reflected in how much we are willing to sacrifice for others. Describe a time when you sacrificed for someone else.
- 313.** Tell about an experience you had while volunteering your help.
- 314.** Sometimes the extraordinary can happen during the most ordinary of tasks. Describe your experience.
- 315.** It is often both frightening and exciting to do something on our own for the first time. Tell about a time when you first did something on your own.

501 Writing Prompts

- 316.** Holidays are meant to be special occasions, and they are often very emotional. Describe an event from a particularly memorable holiday.
- 317.** For many of us, sports are a big part of our lives, whether we are spectators or participants. Describe a memorable sporting event.
- 318.** It is often said that “The greatest risk is not taking one.” Tell about a time when you took a chance.
- 319.** For many of us, our roles—as parents or children, supervisors or subordinates, teachers or students—are very clearly defined. But sometimes the tables turn, and we end up switching roles with another. Tell about a time when you experienced a role reversal.
- 320.** **Many things can interfere with our plans. Sometimes an illness prevents us from doing something we really want to do. Describe a time when you became ill and missed out on doing something you’d really been looking forward to.**
- 321.** One of Robert Frost’s most famous poems tells about a man who takes the road less traveled. Tell about a time when you also chose the less-traveled path.
- 322.** We often learn valuable lessons in the workplace. Describe an experience at work that taught you something important.
- 323.** It has been said that we can lie with silence as well as with words. Tell about a time when you “told” a lie by keeping silent about something important.
- 324.** Sometimes a simple misunderstanding can lead to a major conflict. Describe a time when this happened to you.
- 325.** **Many of our fondest memories are associated with food. Describe a memorable experience that took place while preparing or eating food.**

501 Writing Prompts

- 326.** Some of our most memorable experiences take place outdoors, away from the comforts of home. Write about a memorable experience you had while in the great outdoors.
- 327.** Many people believe that hatred is our most destructive emotion. Describe an experience that proves this statement to be true.
- 328.** Louis D. Brandeis said, “Behind every argument is someone’s ignorance.” Describe a time when someone’s lack of knowledge led to an argument.
- 329.** Most of us have done things we didn’t want to do because of pressure from our peers. Tell about a time that you gave in to peer pressure.
- 330.** There is a bumper sticker that reads, “Perform random acts of kindness.” Describe a time when you performed or witnessed a random act of kindness.
- 331.** Tell about a time when you left the safety of a place or situation to explore or try something new.
- 332.** Sometimes an experience can trigger a powerful memory of someone or something from your past. Describe a time when this happened to you.
- 333.** Tell about an experience that prepared you to help someone in a challenging situation.
- 334.** Baltasar Gracian, a Spanish philosopher, once said that, “The things we remember best are those best forgotten.” Describe an experience you wish you’d never had.
- 335.** The French playwright, Molière, wrote, “The greater the obstacle the more glory in overcoming it.” Tell about a time you overcame a great difficulty.
- 336.** Describe an experience that led you to change a long-held opinion.

501 Writing Prompts

- 337.** As children, our strongest bonds are usually with our parents and then with our siblings. Tell about a memorable experience with one of your siblings or a close relative.
- 338.** Superheroes, like Spiderman, don't use weapons to subdue their foes. Rather, they rely upon a few special tools and their own ingenuity. Describe a time when your quick thinking saved the day.
- 339.** We often have memorable experiences when we are learning a new skill or task. Describe an experience you had while learning something new.
- 340.** There is a saying that states, "You can never go home again." Describe a time when you returned to a place from your past and how you and the place had changed.
- 341.** **Try as we might to avoid them, accidents happen. Tell about a time when you were involved in an accident.**
- 342.** **Describe an experience you had that would be considered a near miss or a brush with disaster.**
- 343.** We learn many lessons from many different sources throughout our lives. Tell about a time you learned something that you can't learn from any book.
- 344.** Some of our most difficult experiences are when we find ourselves stuck in a moral dilemma. Describe a time when this happened to you.
- 345.** We are tested in many ways throughout our lives. Tell about a time when you were tested.
- 346.** Describe a time when you enjoyed something you thought you would not like.
- 347.** Television shows often depict family conflicts. Describe a time when you had a conflict with a family member.

501 Writing Prompts

- 348.** Describe a time when you witnessed something unbelievable.
- 349.** Many stories and essays describe the writer's school days. Tell about a memorable experience from your formal education.
- 350.** Ours is a highly competitive society. Describe a time when you were involved in a heated contest.
- 351.** Throughout our lives we may be asked to do things we do not want to do. Tell about a time when this happened to you.
- 352.** As we grow older, we take on more and more responsibility. Describe a time when you were given a responsibility that you were not ready for.
- 353.** In Robert Frost's poem "Mending Wall," a man tells his neighbor, "Good fences make good neighbors," suggesting that we need clear boundaries to get along. Describe an experience that proves this statement to be true.
- 354.** It has often been said that there is nothing to fear but fear itself. Describe a time when you overcame one of your fears.
- 355.** Sometimes when we meet someone, we have no idea how important that person will become to us later in our lives. Describe the time you first met someone who later became very important to you.
- 356.** People sometimes say, "Either you're with us, or you're against us." Tell about a time when you had to choose between two sides.
- 357.** It isn't always easy to be ourselves, especially when we are worried about what others may think of us. Tell about a time you pretended to be someone or something you were not.
- 358.** Oscar Levant, a pianist and movie actor, said, "Happiness is not something you experience, it's something you remember." Describe an event that you are happy to remember.

501 Writing Prompts

- 359.** We all need help from others from time to time. Tell about a time you helped someone in need.
- 360.** Describe an experience that shows the accuracy of the following quotation: “Your luck is how you treat people.”
- 361.** Write about a time when you found something of significant emotional or monetary value.
- 362.** Every culture has its own rites of passage. Describe your experience with a rite of passage in your culture.
- 363.** As much as we may love our friends, we sometimes find ourselves very angry with them. Tell about a time when you had a conflict with a close friend.
- 364.** Some people prefer to play it safe; others are always ready to take chances. Describe a time when you decided to take a chance.
- 365.** If you have ever been treated unfairly, you may have been told, “Who ever said life has to be fair?” Describe a time you were treated unfairly and how you handled the situation.
- 366.** Have you ever befriended someone simply because he or she looked like he needed a friend? Describe your experience.
- 367.** When parents set limits and discipline their children, they often say, “Someday, you’ll understand why I’m doing this.” Tell about a time when you realized that your parents were doing what they thought was best, even though it made you very angry at the time.
- 368.** If you could be invisible for one day, what would you do? Write a story detailing the events of this imaginary day.
- 369.** P.W. Litchfield, founder of Goodyear Tire & Rubber, wrote, “One realizes the full importance of time only when there is little of it left.” Describe an experience in your life that proved this statement to be true.

501 Writing Prompts

- 370.** Many stories, like Stephen Crane’s “The Open Boat,” talk about the indifference of nature to human needs and desires. Talk about a time in your life when you experienced nature’s indifference to your needs.
- 371.** Alexander Maclaren, a Baptist minister, said, “The man who has not learned to say *no* will be a weak, if not a wretched man, as long as he lives.” Describe an experience when you should have said *no*, but did not.
- 372.** Our dreams often reflect our subconscious fears and desires. Tell about a time you had a very troubling or enlightening dream.
- 373.** Certain key experiences help us mature from children into young adults. Describe one of those key experiences in your life.
- 374.** Few things give us as much pleasure as creating something beautiful. Tell about a time when you created something.
- 375.** Many conversations begin with the introduction, “You’ll never guess who I bumped into today . . .” Chance meetings can make for very interesting experiences. Describe a time when you bumped into someone, and it led to a memorable conversation or event.
- 376.** Music can often trigger powerful memories. Describe a memorable experience associated with a particular song or piece of music.

4

Literary Response Prompts

Choose one of the literary response prompts from the list below and write an essay. A certain number of prompts have model essays in the answer section that you can use to compare and contrast your writing. A scoring guide or rubric is also included in the answer section. You can use this guide to give you an idea of the way your essay may be graded. If you have trouble interpreting the scoring guide, see a teacher or professor for help. Sample responses to the prompts in bold can be found at the end of the section.

- 377.** **Tone is the mood or feeling the author intends the reader to experience. Using a specific piece of literature, explain how tone enhances the work.**
- 378.** Poetry has been defined as, “putting the best possible words in the best possible order.” Explain what this means and apply this theory to a specific poem.
- 379.** American Beat generation poet Jack Kerouac has embraced other religions and non-western philosophies that can be evidenced in his work. Explain/discuss how this is apparent to his readers. Use specific evidence in your answer.

501 Writing Prompts

- 380.** Often in literature, there is a heroic figure, or archetype. Discuss the characteristics of an *archetype*, using specific examples from a piece of literature.
- 381.** In the novel, *The Lord of the Flies*, by William Golding, a group of boys are stranded on a remote island to fend for themselves. Compare/contrast this novel to the popular television show *Survivor*. Use specific details in your answer.
- 382.** The poet Emily Dickinson once said that her sensitivity was comparable to missing a layer of skin. Explain how this analogy is reflected in her poetry.
- 383.** Using a specific literary work, explain how a novel might influence change in society.
- 384.** The theme of a literary piece is the central idea or message that it delivers. Cite a specific literary work and discuss the theme.
- 385.** Anne Frank became famous for keeping a diary during her experiences in the Holocaust. Explain how simply keeping a diary gave Anne such worldwide recognition.
- 386.** Write a lengthy, detailed journal entry from the point of view of someone you have studied in history. Include accurate, historical details in the diary entry.
- 387.** Compare/contrast the fear of terrorism and the concern with safety issues in present day society with George Orwell's novel, *1984*.
- 388.** A haiku is a three-line, non-rhyming poem usually centered on nature. It has also been defined as a snapshot of something ordinary. From your own experience, describe the natural images you feel are worthy of a haiku.

501 Writing Prompts

- 389.** A struggle between two or more opposing forces in a work is called conflict. Cite a piece of literature and explain the conflict embodied in the work.
- 390.** **Personification is the technique wherein a non-human character is given human thoughts, feelings, and dialogue. Illustrate how this technique is used in your favorite novel or short story.**
- 391.** Walt Whitman uses second-person narration—a technique not often used by writers—in his poem *Crossing Brooklyn Ferry*. In second person narration, the narrator speaks directly to you. Discuss another work that uses second person narration. Give examples from the work.
- 392.** The setting of a novel is where the action takes place. Explain how the setting complements the story in a novel you have read.
- 393.** The climax of a work is when all of the events come to a breaking point. Using a piece of literature that you know, explain the events that lead to the climax, what happens at the climactic scene, and how the story changes after the climax.
- 394.** Third person point of view is when the narrator has no part in the action. He or she is simply telling the story using the words *he*, *she*, or *they*. A story would be very different if it were told from the first person (using the pronoun *I*) point of view. Using a novel written in the third person, discuss how it would be a very different story if it were told in the first person.
- 395.** **Many times in Shakespeare’s plays, the setting changes from rural or pastoral to urban. Compare and contrast these settings. Explain the reason for the shift of scenery, using support from specific plays.**
- 396.** Describe the plot of a novel that would portray the attitudes and feelings of the people and the society in the year 2002.

501 Writing Prompts

- 397.** List ten sensory images for each of the four seasons—winter, spring, summer, and fall. Then, write a brief explanation of why you chose those specific images.
- 398.** Narrative poetry tells a story and doesn't necessarily rhyme. Often, narrative poems are written about historical events. Name three historical events that could be considered worthy of a narrative poem. Describe the key elements from each historical event.
- 399.** Describe a character from literature that you would trade places with, and explain why.
- 400.** Imagine that you could become an omniscient character in a literary piece and change the plot somehow. Describe the piece of literature in which the character belongs, and tell how that character would alter the plot. Use details from the literary piece that you have chosen.
- 401.** Explain the popularity of science fiction writing. Use a work from this genre to explain its appeal.
- 402.** Using a work of literature you have read, describe the hero or heroine and his or her characteristics.
- 403.** The protagonist in a story is usually the do-gooder, or the character that most readers empathize with. Identify a piece of literature where the author wants us to empathize with the antagonist, or evildoer. Explain by using details from that work.
- 404.** In drama, when a character speaks his or her innermost thoughts, it is called a monologue. Explain your favorite monologue from a dramatic piece and tell how this monologue affected the plot.
- 405.** Explain the appeal of war literature. Use a piece of literature from this genre to describe its allure.

501 Writing Prompts

- 406.** Foreshadowing is when the author gives hints to the reader about what is going to take place later in the work. Using a piece of literature that you are familiar with, explain how the author uses foreshadowing and how the use of foreshadowing added to the plot.
- 407.** Novels such as John Steinbeck's *The Winter of Our Discontent* and Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* take their titles from lines in Shakespearean plays. Write an essay explaining and interpreting the significance of one of these titles and how it captures the theme of the book.
- 408.** Discuss a character in literature that you loathed. Explain the techniques the author used that caused you to feel this way.
- 409.** In William Faulkner's *Barn Burning*, a young boy must decide whether to turn his father in for breaking the law, or to stay loyal to his family. Write about a situation in real life that is similar to this one.
- 410.** Conflict, in a work of literature, is the struggle between opposing characters or opposing forces. One type of conflict is character vs. character. Explain this type of conflict using a piece of literature that you have read.
- 411.** Another type of conflict is called character vs. nature. Using a piece of literature that you are familiar with, explain how the author uses this type of conflict.
- 412.** A third type of conflict is called character vs. him/herself. This is also referred to as internal conflict, because the character must face self-inflicted fears and problems. Write about this type of conflict, using a piece of literature that you have read.
- 413.** Discuss the key events that you would offer to a person writing a biography of your life.

501 Writing Prompts

- 414.** Novels often become mirror images of life. Discuss a time when you saw a similarity between your life and that of the main character in a novel. Explain the situation and compare the way you handled the situation with the way the character did.
- 415.** Explain the most important lesson you learned from a piece of literature. Use specific details from a literary work you have read.
- 416.** **Discuss a piece of literature in which the author is also the narrator. Describe the way he or she uses actual events from his or her life in his or her writing.**
- 417.** Oral tradition is a form of storytelling that is passed on from generation to generation. It has often been said that an original story could be altered from when it is first told to when it was first written. Give examples of how this could happen using evidence from a story you know in the oral tradition.
- 418.** Explain the items you would want to place in a time capsule.
- 419.** Flashback is a technique whereby past events are recalled while telling a story in the present. Discuss this technique as it was used in a piece of literature that you have read and tell why this was the best way to tell the story.
- 420.** Discuss your favorite character from Greek mythology. Be sure to include details and elements from the myth as you describe this character.
- 421.** Repetition is a technique used by a poet to create sound or to emphasize a subject in a poem. Discuss how and why this technique is used in a poem that you know.
- 422.** Discuss whether or not a piece of literature has ever predicted actual events. Using a work that you are familiar with, discuss this topic using specific details.

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- 423.** Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote in one of his essays that he thought it amusing when a man could wear an expensive wristwatch, but could not tell time by looking at the position of the sun in the sky. Explain what he is saying about modern people and society.
- 424.** Often, in literature, a character is viewed as an outsider or a loner. Using a piece of literature that you are familiar with, discuss such a character. Be sure to describe this character's attitudes towards himself or herself, and how he or she deals with the isolation that comes with these two labels.
- 425.** Discuss a character from literature that seems to be present only for comic relief. Explain how this character adds to or detracts from the work.
- 426.** Death has been symbolized many different ways in prose and poetry. Using either of these genres, discuss the symbols that authors use when they write about death. Describe the impact of these symbols.
- 427.** Often, an author will give the reader more information than the characters have. Using a piece of literature that you are familiar with, speculate on the reasons an author would use this method.
- 428.** Sometimes an author will write dialogue that illustrates a person's intelligence, speech pattern, or locality. Discuss a piece of literature in which this happens. Also discuss whether this technique helps or hinders your reading.
- 429.** Discuss a piece of literature that uses the theme of personal survival.
- 430.** Frequently, popular novels are adapted into motion pictures. Discuss a novel that you have read and that has been made into a motion picture. Compare/contrast the plot, setting, and characterization in both mediums.

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- 431.** The *coming of age* theme is very popular in literature. This term refers to a pre-adolescent boy or girl going through many difficult, life altering experiences in order to reach young adulthood. Using a novel you are familiar with, discuss this theme. Be sure to use supporting details and evidence in your essay.
- 432.** Shakespeare's tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* is a powerful drama about young love and familial conflict. Compare this play to another piece of literature that you have read and that embodies the same themes.
- 433.** Discuss the themes of two fairy tales that you know. Tell how these themes benefit young children.
- 434.** Imagery is the use of descriptive details that appeal to the reader's senses. Using a literary piece that you are familiar with, discuss how the author's use of imagery enhanced your reading experience.
- 435.** Compare how a social studies textbook and historical fiction are similar yet different. Explain which medium you would want to choose in order to learn more about a historical period.
- 436.** Each culture has its own unique literature. Discuss the literary contributions made by one particular culture. Cite a least three major works to illustrate your point.
- 437.** Music and poetry have many similarities. Discuss the connection using specific examples from both musical and poetic works.
- 438.** In the beginning of a novel, an author may present a character one way, but by the end of the novel, this same character may behave differently. Through characterization, we can learn to understand people. Using a piece of literature that you have read, discuss the ways in which the author used characterization to present personality.
- 439.** Explore the theme of social breakdown or anarchy, using a piece of literature that you have read.

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440. Explore the theme of personal degeneration and abandoning morals, using a piece of literature that you have read.
441. Discuss the theme of social injustice, using a piece of literature that you have read.
442. Discuss a piece of literature in which the setting switches between the past and the present.
443. Discuss a literary trilogy wherein the reader must read the succession of novels to understand the plot.
444. Discuss a specific literary work that focuses on adolescent main characters.
445. Discuss how faith is symbolized in a piece of literature that you have read.
446. A burlesque, such as Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, is a literary piece that explores a serious subject in a trivial manner or a trivial subject in a serious manner. Choose a literary work that fits this description and explain why it should be classified as a burlesque.
447. **Discuss how the reader might sympathize with the main character in Christopher Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*, even though he sells his soul to the Devil.**
448. Discuss the theme of prejudice, using a piece of literature that you have read.
449. Discuss a piece of literature that you had to read more than once in order to fully understand it. Explain how and why the meaning of the piece became more clear to you.
450. Using a literary piece that you are familiar with, discuss a character who begins as a minor character, but who evolves into a major character with an important role as the novel progresses.

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- 451.** Discuss a piece of literature that uses an object of worth, such as a sword, as its focus. Discuss the symbolic purpose of this object.
- 452.** Discuss the imagery from a Civil War period novel that you have read.
- 453.** **Discuss a hero in a literary piece that you have read.**
- 454.** Using a piece of literature that you are familiar with, discuss the theme of unrequited love.
- 455.** Discuss why Shakespeare used only men and boys in his dramatic works at the Globe Theater.
- 456.** Using a piece of literature that you are familiar with, discuss how one character influences other characters to change.
- 457.** Discuss a piece of literature that utilizes spirits or ghosts.
- 458.** Discuss a character from literature that embodies a dark mood.
- 459.** Discuss your favorite historical poem, its theme, and the historical events on which the poem is based.
- 460.** Discuss the use of metaphor, imagery, and word play in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*.
- 461.** Discuss an immigrant's point of view in America, using a piece of literature that you have read.
- 462.** Discuss the theme of greed in a piece of literature that you have read.
- 463.** Discuss a prominent leader in our society and his or her literary influences. Discuss what this reveals about that leader.
- 464.** Discuss a piece of literature from the Industrial Revolution and its treatment of issues like child labor, working conditions, and social classes.

501 Writing Prompts

- 465.** Write a literary analysis of a Robert Frost poem. Include theme and symbolism in your discussion.
- 466.** Discuss the effect and significance of Maya Angelou's poetry reading at Bill Clinton's inauguration.
- 467.** Analyze a poem that uses a pessimistic tone.
- 468.** Analyze a poem that uses a hopeful, optimistic tone.
- 469.** Discuss a figure from history, other than Anne Frank, whose journal entries have spawned a classic literary piece.
- 470.** Often in literature, a character has ironic experiences that can be humorous or fateful. Discuss how this technique was used in a piece of literature that you have read.
- 471.** Discuss a piece of literature set in another country, and how this venue enhanced your enjoyment of the piece.
- 472.** Compare the character Holden Caulfield from J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* to someone you know.
- 473.** Analyze a literary work from the Harlem Renaissance.
- 474.** Using a piece of literature that you are familiar with, discuss the theme of personal suffering and loss.
- 475.** Using a piece of literature that you are familiar with, discuss the theme of personal triumph.
- 476.** Using a piece of literature that you have read, discuss the way your views about another culture were changed.
- 477.** Using a piece of literature that you have read, discuss how fate intervened and came to the aid of a character.
- 478.** Discuss your favorite story from Roman mythology.

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479. Using a piece of literature that you are familiar with, discuss a character who served as a guide, and explain that character's purpose.
480. Discuss how irony helped a character in a dramatic work that you have read.
481. Compare a contemporary piece of literature with an older piece that contains the same theme.
482. Discuss a piece of literature with which you are familiar that centers on a physical journey.
483. **Compare the society of *The Scarlet Letter* to our society today. Compare and contrast how Hester Prynne would have been treated today with how she was treated in the novel.**
484. Discuss the theme of nature in a piece of literature that you have read.
485. Discuss a character who goes through a complete mental breakdown, using a piece of literature that you are familiar with.
486. Discuss why the *Harry Potter* series is so popular with readers.
487. Using a piece of literature that you are familiar with, discuss a determined main character.
488. Using a piece of literature that you are familiar with, discuss how the weather or climate affects the mood or tone.
489. Discuss how technology plays a major role in a literary work that you have read.
490. Using a piece of literature that you are familiar with, discuss how struggle is symbolized.
491. Using a piece of literature that you are familiar with, discuss how evil is personified.

501 Writing Prompts

- 492.** Discuss a well-known piece of literature that contains a mythical beast.
- 493.** Using your knowledge of contemporary writers, speculate as to who might become the next literary giant.
- 494.** Discuss a novel that you think might be the best novel of the twentieth century.
- 495.** Discuss someone from literature whose name is indicative of their character. An example might be Willy Loman (or Lo-man) from Arthur Miller's *Death of A Salesman*.
- 496.** Discuss how doom is foreshadowed in a piece of literature that you are familiar with.
- 497.** Discuss the difference between poetry and prose, using literary pieces that you have read.
- 498.** Discuss a novel that has been controversial and perhaps banned, and explain why.
- 499.** Discuss the complicated relationship between Lenny and George in John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*.
- 500.** An allegory is a literary piece in which the surface plot, characters, and theme convey a symbolic meaning. Discuss the use of allegory in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*.
- 501.** Discuss a poem that you think might be used as the keynote speech for a meeting at the United Nations.