

Mystery Writing Prompts



Created by The Word Nerd

LET'S WRITE A MYSTERY!

May is MYSTERY MONTH!

In addition to being an educator, I'm an author. I LOVE writing. I know that isn't the case for everyone, but I truly hope that after spending time with me or one of my resources, people will come to like it just a little bit more!

This resource will help you implement a daily writing routine in your classroom. I start small, asking students to write for 5 minutes, and then each week, add on another, until we are up to 10 minutes. I know that they won't create a finished product in that amount of time, but that's not the purpose of these journal writes. The purpose is to be creative, to put ideas on paper, to experiment, and mostly... just to WRITE. The only way we get better at a skill is to practice it. I give a few more implementation tips on page 4, but if you have more questions, feel free to email me at any time. (wordnerd@amandazieba.com).

I hope these prompts spark both interest and ideas in your students.

Happy Writing!

Amanda Zieba

(AkA: The Word Nerd)

P.S. For more ideas on how to get reluctant writers going, watch [this video](#).

P.P.S. Check out the rest of the writing prompts I've got to offer [here](#).



(https://youtu.be/l7UWA-pw04Q?sub_confirmation=1)



THIS PRODUCT INCLUDES

- 1 5 weeks of printable mystery writing prompts (prompt + writing space)
- 2 A Canva Presentation of the writing prompts to project on a big screen in your classroom. These are editable if you click (FILE - MAKE A COPY) once in Canva.
(Link: https://www.canva.com/design/DAGkzuT8wA8/_A1RkJ_pftanD345rS7xJw/edit?utm_content=DAGkzuT8wA8&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=sharebutton)
- 3 A Gem and Opportunity Feedback form for students and teachers to use when giving a critique.
- 4 A rubric for teachers to use to evaluate the writing products created by their students with these prompts. Students can also use this rubric to self-score/evaluate their writing. I wouldn't "grade" every journal write. Maybe ask students to pick one a week they'd like you to score.
- 5 A list of journal writing tips for students. As well as a video full of ideas for teachers to engage reluctant writers.



5

JOURNAL WRITING TIPS

- 1 Take a minute to think before you start writing. Review what makes a story a mystery. Print out page 5 and give it to students so they can reference common mystery story components while they are writing.
- 2 Put your phone/chromebook/tablet away. Distractions can easily pull you out of the writing flow.
- 3 If you feel like you are stuck or have nothing else to say, but we still have writing time left, re-read what you have written. This might inspire more ideas. Or, you can go back and add in details to your response that you did not include the first time around.
- 4 You can always go back to the text/prompt/image for clues, reminders, ideas to add.
- 5 Before submitting your work, whisper read your work aloud to yourself. This will help you catch small, easy to fix errors.
- 6 Listen to an instrumental playlist to create a blanket of white noise that will help you focus on your task, rather than the distractions surrounding you. Try [this video!](https://youtu.be/aHVKDZRC3g) (link: <https://youtu.be/aHVKDZRC3g>)



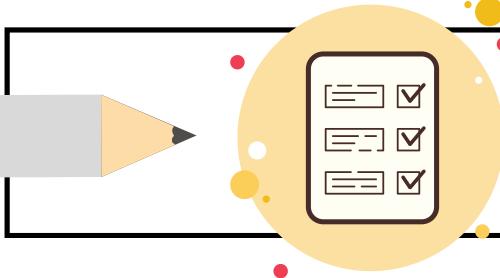
MYSTERY genre

The mystery genre is a type of fiction centered around solving a crime or puzzle, often involving a detective or amateur sleuth who uses clues, investigation, and deduction to uncover the truth. It typically features a suspenseful plot, a shocking crime, a crime solver, a villain, and a resolution to the mystery.



KEY COMPONENTS

- A Puzzle to Solve: Every mystery has a problem or question that needs solving—like a stolen item, a missing person, or a secret no one can figure out.
- Clues and Red Herrings: Writers drop hints (clues) to help readers solve the mystery—but they may also include red herrings, or tricky details meant to distract or mislead the reader or characters.
- Rising Suspense: Mystery stories are all about building tension! The stakes get higher, the clues pile up, and readers feel like they have to know what happens next.
- A Smart (but Not Perfect) Sleuth: The main character (a detective, investigator, or curious kid) uses their brain, instincts, and sometimes help from friends to figure things out—but they may make mistakes or hit dead ends too!
- Suspects and Secrets: There's usually a small group of characters with motives, secrets, or strange behavior. Readers must decide who's hiding something—and why.
- A Twist or Big Reveal: Mystery endings often have a surprise twist, like uncovering the real culprit or discovering an unexpected reason behind the mystery.
- A Tight Timeline: Mystery stories usually happen over a short amount of time—sometimes hours or days—so the action stays fast and focused.
- One Clear Point of View: Readers usually follow just one character (the sleuth!) so they can solve the case alongside them.



JOURNAL WRITING RUBRIC

Use this rubric to first communicate your writing expectations to students and then to evaluate the writing products they create. Students and/or peers can also use this rubric to self/peer score/evaluate the pieces of writing.

The rubric can be found at the bottom of each prompt for easy access for both you and your students. There is also a page with 3 rubrics to print and cut for use with this or other writing tasks.

I assign 2 points if the task was completed and done well, 1 if the task was attempted but not mastered, and 0 if the task was not attempted at all.

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

Total Points = ___/10



MULTI-USE FORMS

The following pages will be used multiple times throughout the resources, but are included just once to save space in the file.

- Free Write Fridays
- Gem and Opportunity Feedback Sheets
- Writing Rubric Sheets



Free Write Friday

Choice A:
Go back and add onto a story you started earlier this week.

Choice B:
Write about a topic of your choice.



Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

Total Points = ___/10

NAME: _____

WRITING PROMPTS

Free Write Friday

Choice A:

Go back and add onto a story you started earlier this week.

Choice B:

Write about a topic of your choice.



Rubric

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

Teacher Comments:

Total Points = ___/10



GEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES



My Name:

Name of classmate I am reviewing:

Date:

Title of Piece/Date Written



GEMS

LIST SEVERAL THINGS THE WRITERS DOES WELL

- *
- *
- *
- *
- *
- *
- *

OPPORTUNITIES

LIST OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE WRITER TO IMPROVE

- *
- *
- *
- *
- *
- *

FINAL COMMENTS

WRITE ANY FINAL COMMENTS OR FEEDBACK HERE:

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

Total Points = ___/10

Comments:

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

Total Points = ___/10

Comments:

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

Total Points = ___/10

Comments:

WEEK 1 PROMPTS

- Monday: Phony Phonebooth**
- Tuesday: Grandpa's Secret**
- Wednesday: A Mysterious Setting**
- Thursday: Atypical Typewriter**
- Friday: Free Write Friday**



The prompts in this resource can be done in any order,
but are organized into weekly collections.



NAME: _____

WRITING PROMPTS
FROM THE WORD NERD

THE MYSTERY GENRE IS A TYPE OF FICTION CENTERED AROUND SOLVING A CRIME OR PUZZLE, OFTEN INVOLVING A DETECTIVE OR AMATEUR SLEUTH WHO USES CLUES, INVESTIGATION, AND DEDUCTION TO UNCOVER THE TRUTH. IT TYPICALLY FEATURES A SUSPENSEFUL PLOT, A SHOCKING CRIME, A CRIME SOLVER, A VILLAIN, AND A RESOLUTION TO THE MYSTERY.



USE THIS PICTURE TO INSPIRE A MYSTERY STORY.

Rubric

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

Total Points = ___/10

Teacher Comments:

NAME: _____

Your Grandpa is hiding a secret...

POV

Take the POV
(perspective) of...

- Grandpa
 - Grandchild
 - Grandpa's Former Boss
 - Grandpa's Pet (who has seen it all!)



Rubric

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

Teacher Comments:

Total Points = ___/10

NAME: _____

CHOOSE A SETTING: WRITE A MYSTERY STORY...
AS YOU WRITE WORK TO INCLUDE SOUND-SENSORY DETAILS!



A FANCY DINNER PARTY



A CAMPING TRIP



A SHOPPING MALL

Rubric

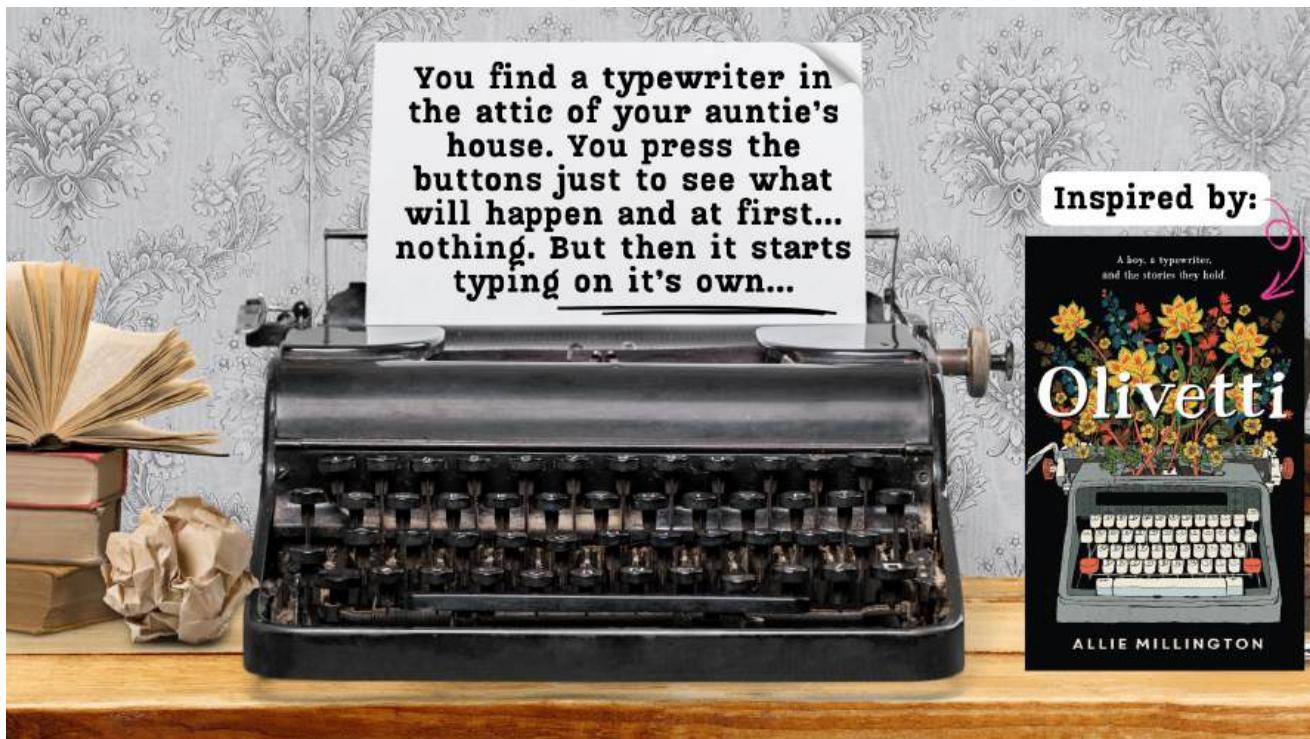
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Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

Total Points = ____/10

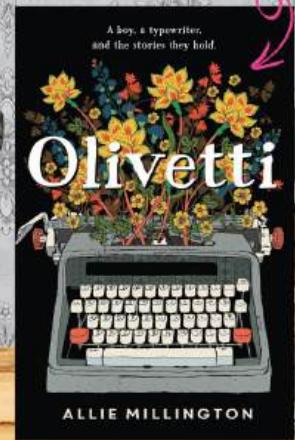
Teacher Comments:

NAME: _____

WRITING PROMPTS FROM THE WORD NERD



Inspired by:



Rubric

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

Teacher Comments:

Total Points = ___/10

WEEK 2 PROMPTS

- Monday: The Cookie Caper**
- Tuesday: Sunken Secrets**
- Wednesday: Crafty Characters**
- Thursday: Mission Moonlight**
- Friday: Free Write Friday**



The prompts in this resource can be done in any order,
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NAME: _____

Mysterious Combo

Write a mystery story that creatively combines these two items...



HOW ARE THESE ITEMS CONNECTED? HOW DO THEY PLAY TOGETHER AND PLAY OUT IN YOUR MYSTERY?

► Rubric

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

Teacher Comments:

Total Points = ___/10

NAME: _____

WRITING PROMPTS FROM THE WORD NERD

WRITE A STORY ABOUT A...

MYSTERIOUS SHIPWRECK

There are all sorts of rumors about a mysterious shipwreck that lies beneath the waters of the harbor in town. Concealed truths and dangerous secrets are lying just below the surface. Is there a conspiracy sunken just off the shore or did mother nature just get angry?



Rubric

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

Teacher Comments:

Total Points = ___/10

NAME: _____

KEY CHARACTERS

WRITE A STORY THAT INCLUDES THESE

01

**YOU!**

02



Mrs. Hanson - Your neighbor who always seems to know everything!

03



Claus the Cat - Claus is always getting into mischief and this time he might have gone too far.

04



Mr. Action - An action figure that has spontaneously come to life and wants to be your sidekick.

Rubric

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

Total Points = ___/10

Teacher Comments:

NAME: _____

WRITING PROMPTS FROM THE WORD NERD

USE THIS PICTURE AND THE DESCRIPTIVE WORD BANK TO WRITE A MYSTERY STORY



WORD BANK

GLOWING

OPAQUE

ILLUMINATED

WROUGHT-IRON

RURAL

MOON-LIT

PARANORMAL

Rubric

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

Teacher Comments:

Total Points = ___/10

WEEK 3 PROMPTS

Monday: Crack the Code

Tuesday: Destination Details

Wednesday: A Search for the Truth

Thursday: Phantom Fairgrounds

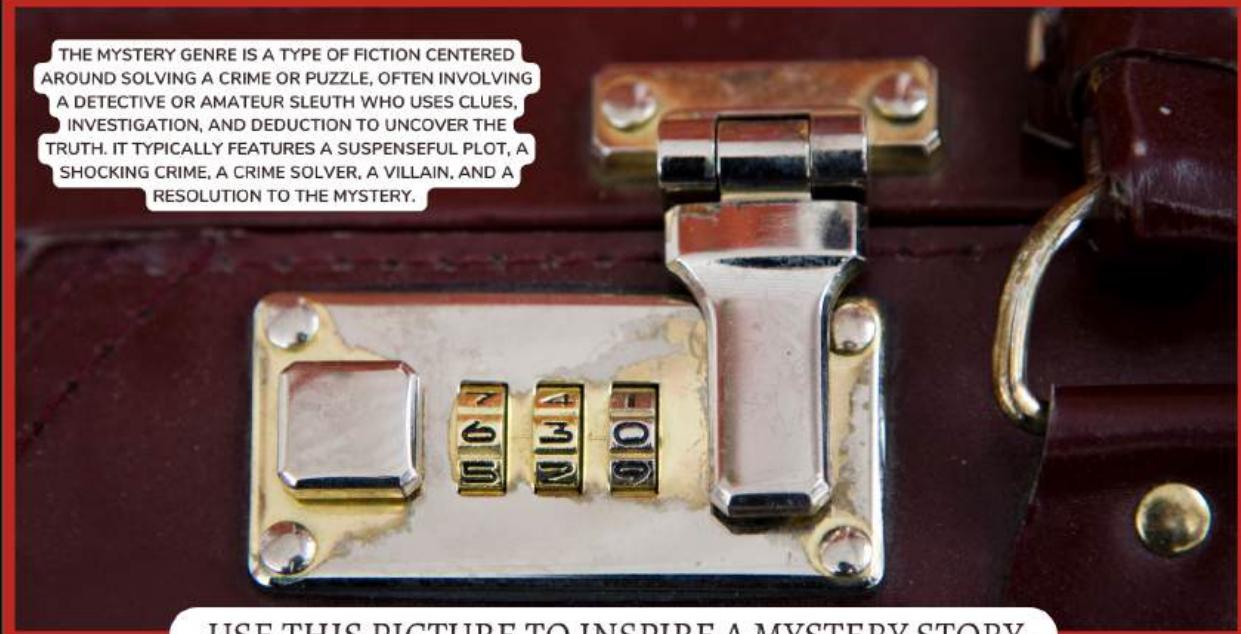
Friday: Free Write Friday



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NAME: _____

WRITING PROMPTS
FROM THE WORD NERD



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USE THIS PICTURE TO INSPIRE A MYSTERY STORY.

Rubric

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

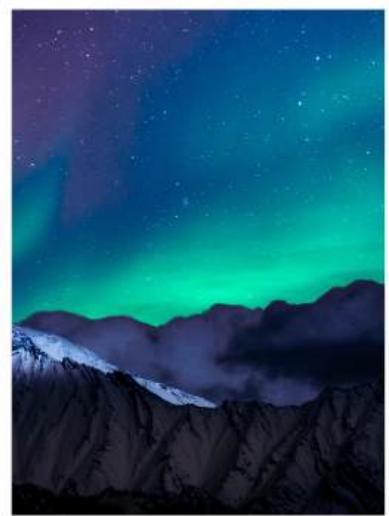
Total Points = ___/10

Teacher Comments:

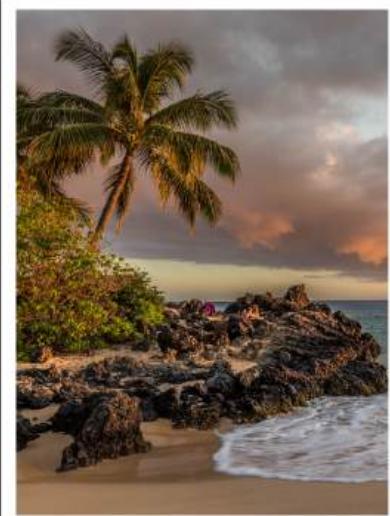
NAME: _____

WRITING PROMPTS
FROM THE WORD NERD

CHOOSE A SETTING: WRITE A MYSTERY STORY...
AS YOU WRITE, WORK TO INCLUDE DESCRIPTIVE DETAILS



FROZEN WASTELAND



TROPICAL ISLAND



UNDISCOVERED CAVE

Rubric

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

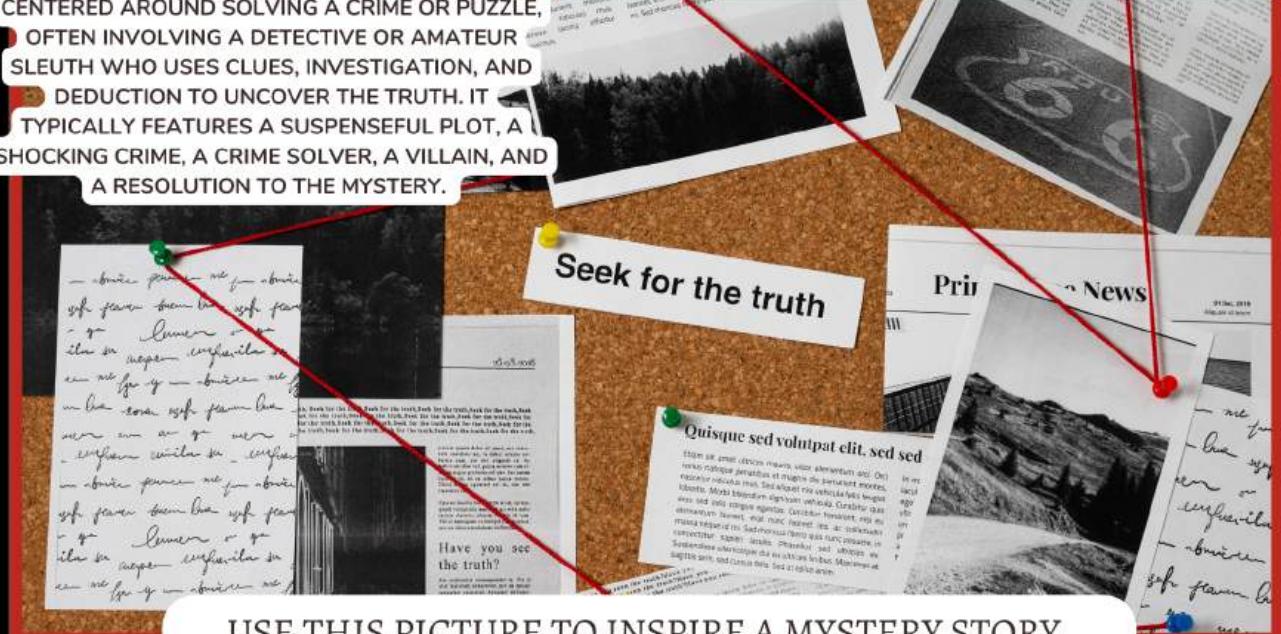
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Seek for the truth

Quisque sed voluptat elit, sed sed

Have you seen the truth?

USE THIS PICTURE TO INSPIRE A MYSTERY STORY.

Rubric

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

Total Points = ____/10

Teacher Comments:

NAME: _____

WRITING PROMPTS
FROM THE WORD NERD

**Urban legend says the carnival
coming to town is run by ghosts...**

POV

Take the POV
(perspective) of...

- Town Mayor
- Ghost Believer
- Ghost Non-Believer
- Carnival Owner



Rubric

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

Total Points = ___/10

Teacher Comments:

WEEK 4 PROMPTS

Monday: Series Screenwriter
Tuesday: I'm Gonna Take My Chances
Wednesday: Mystery at the Beach
Thursday: Skyscraper Secrets
Friday: Free Write Friday



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NAME: _____

WRITING PROMPTS FROM THE WORD NERD



PRETEND YOU ARE WRITING A MYSTERY TV SERIES

- Will your series be a police drama?
- Will your series be about paranormal activity?
- Will your series be about something that has been lost?
- Will your series take place in the past, present or future?
- Which actors will you cast in your TV series?

► Rubric

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

Teacher Comments:

Total Points = ___/10

NAME: _____

WRITING PROMPTS FROM THE WORD NERD

Mysterious Combo

Write a mystery story that creatively combines these two items...



(SALSA OR PASTA SAUCE)



HOW ARE THESE ITEMS CONNECTED? HOW DO THEY PLAY TOGETHER AND PLAY OUT IN YOUR MYSTERY?

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

Teacher Comments:

Total Points = ___/10

NAME: _____

WRITING PROMPTS

FROM THE WORD NERD

WRITE A MYSTERY STORY THAT TAKES PLACE ENTIRELY WITHIN THE FRAME OF THIS PHOTO:



Mystery.

OPEN WATER BEACH BOARDWALK PARKING LOT

ROAD HOUSES BACKYARD/GARDEN

Rubric

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

Teacher Comments:

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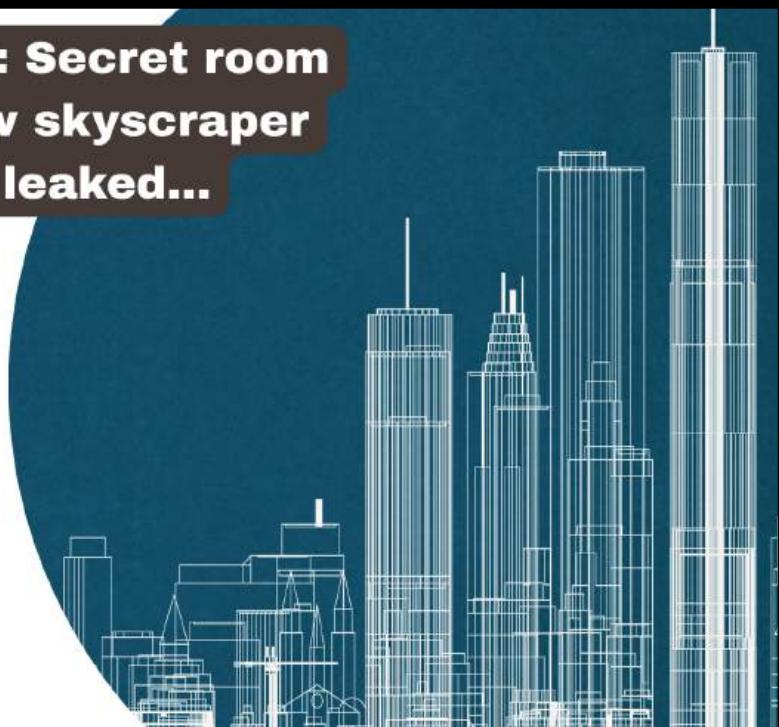
WRITING PROMPTS FROM THE WORD NERD

BREAKING NEWS: Secret room uncovered in new skyscraper blueprints is leaked...

POV

Take the POV
(perspective) of...

- Architect
 - Building Owner
 - Builder
 - Building Custodian



Rubric

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

Teacher Comments:

Total Points = ___/10

WEEK 5 PROMPTS

- Monday: Townhall Tall Tales**
- Tuesday: Character Conundrum**
- Wednesday: Pick a Color, Any Color**
- Thursday: The Dastardly Dentist**
- Friday: Free Write Friday**



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NAME: _____

WRITE A MYSTERY THAT TAKES PLACE IN THE

TOWNHALL ARCHIVES

The archives contain historical records that offer clues to the city's dark past. The dimly lit, dusty archives are definitely creepy, but if you want to uncover the town's buried secrets, it's where you are going to have to go!

Tell what happens when you arrive.
What do you find?



Rubric

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

Total Points = ___/10

Teacher Comments:

NAME: _____

CHOOSE A SETTING: WRITE A MYSTERY STORY...

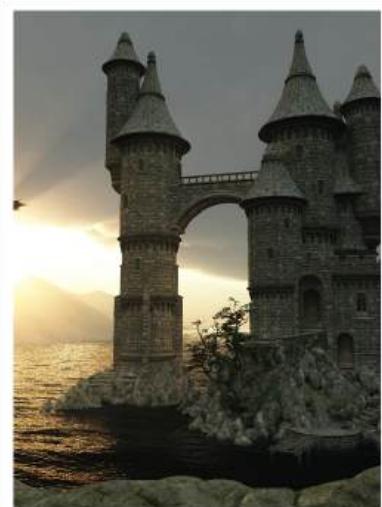
AS YOU WRITE THINK ABOUT THE CHARACTERS YOU'D LIKELY FIND IN THIS LOCATION



A WALK IN THE WOODS



A RAINY DAY DOWNTOWN



AN ABANDONED CASTLE

Rubric

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

Total Points = ___/10

Teacher Comments:

NAME: _____

WRITING PROMPTS FROM THE WORD NERD

Mysterious Combo

Write a mystery story that creatively combines these two items...



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Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

Teacher Comments:

Total Points = ___/10

NAME: _____

WRITING PROMPTS

FROM THE WORD NERD

BREAKING NEWS: The dentist has a side business selling candy...

POV

Take the POV
(perspective) of...

- Dentist
 - Dental Office Secretary
 - News Reporter
 - Kid Patient



► Rubric

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

Teacher Comments:

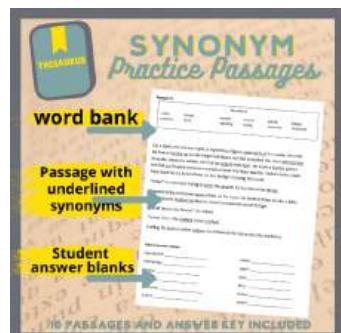
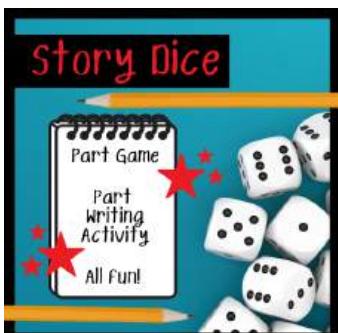
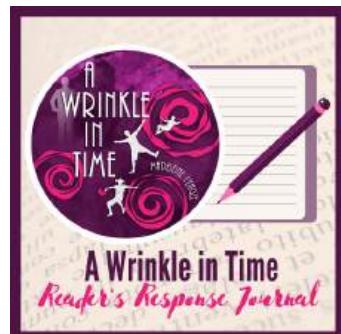
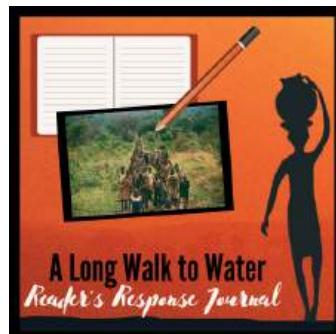
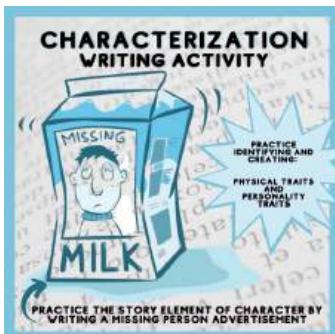
Total Points = ___/10

THANK YOU FOR DOWNLOADING!

A FEW MORE THINGS...

Please leave a review and feedback! By doing this you help future teachers decide if this item is worth their \$\$ and a good fit for their students. You also earn credits to use toward FREE product! ;)

Check out other products in my store! I have more writing resources and activities ready and waiting for you!



CONNECT WITH ME!

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- Facebook Group - [Learning with the Word Nerd](#)
- Instagram: [wordnerd_amandazieba](#)
- Grab your free First Chapter Friday Kit by subscribing to my educator email list. (www.amandazieba.com/teachsignup)