



TODAY WE WRITE



TODAY IS THE BEST DAY TO WRITE!

Welcome to **TODAY WE WRITE**, a collection of exercises for student writers.

Each prompt features a beginning brainstorming exercise to get thoughts flowing. You can stop with the basic prompt, and it's a fun writing exercise. Or continue to the challenge prompt to complete a fully developed creative work. Some prompts have Super Challenges for that extra step toward writing greatness. Each day features a visual element to connect writing with the senses.

Use these exercises to enrich learning for students who already love writing, spark interest in emerging writers, or engage reluctant writers.

These prompts are suitable for bellringers, journal prompts, substitute lesson plans, one-off fillers between units, or as an integral part of a writing curriculum.



TODAY WE WRITE

Prompt #1





DESCRIPTIVE | NARRATIVE

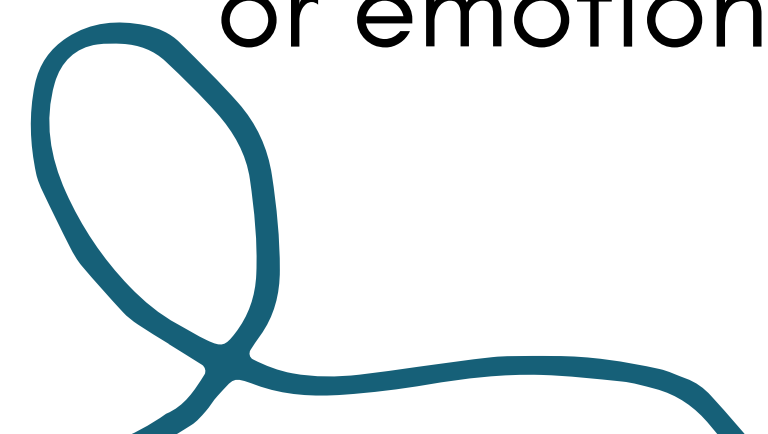




Prompt #1

Tell me about your favorite fork.

Describe what it looks like. What color is it? What shape? Of what material is it made? Detail any engravings or decorative features. Is it one-of-a-kind or one of many? How does it feel when you hold it? Why is this one your favorite? What people, events, ideas, or emotions do you associate with it?





Prompt #1 Challenge

Write a vignette featuring this fork. A vignette is a very short sequence of events, creating a snapshot of one brief moment in time. Work in as many descriptive details as you can, but remember to place them in a narrative. The narrative may be fiction or nonfiction.

Suggested length: 300–400 words



TODAY WE WRITE

Prompt #2





Prompt #2

Write the exposition for a story that begins with the following:

When I opened my eyes, I struggled for a minute to figure out whether I was dreaming or awake...

Remember that exposition gives the background for a story. It introduces characters and setting (time and place), as well as the situation in which the characters find themselves.





Prompt #2 Challenge

Advance the story through the inciting incident, which is the event that reveals the conflict and draws the main character into their journey.

Suggested length: 200–300 words



TODAY WE WRITE

Prompt #3



GLORY

EXPOSITORY | DESCRIPTIVE | NARRATIVE | POETIC



Prompt #3

Glory. What is glory? Take a few minutes to reflect. It's OK to use a dictionary or to Google the meaning.

How does glory look? Sound? Smell? Taste? Feel? How do you know when you achieve glory? What items would be on the checklist? Does glory come from within, or does another's attention or praise bring glory? Is it a conscious goal or a byproduct?

Share briefly an encounter you've had with glory.






Prompt #3 Challenge

Write a poem titled "Glory" that conveys the essence of the word.

Poetic form: whatever works

Suggested length: as long as it takes



TODAY WE WRITE

Prompt #4





EXPOSITORY | NARRATIVE



Prompt #4

Let's talk diction. Words have a couple of different types of meaning. First, there's the dictionary definition of the word, its literal meaning. We call that *denotation*. Second, there are the emotional and psychological associations we have with words. We call those associations the word's *connotation*.

In the complexity of the English language, some words have multiple denotations and connotations. Take the verb *fly*, for example.

In the collage for this prompt, each photo represents a different meaning of the word *fly*. Depending on your interpretation of the image, each also has the potential to have a different connotation, a different psychological or emotional response.

For each photo in the collage, write a paragraph explaining both the connotation and the denotation of the verb *fly* as you experience it when you look at the image.





Prompt #4 Challenge

Share the story of your most recent flying experience.

It could embody a definition of flying similar to one of the prompt photos, or it might be another type of flying altogether.

Narrate events and explain the feelings. Make connections.

Suggested length: 300–400 words



TODAY WE WRITE

Prompt #5







Prompt #5

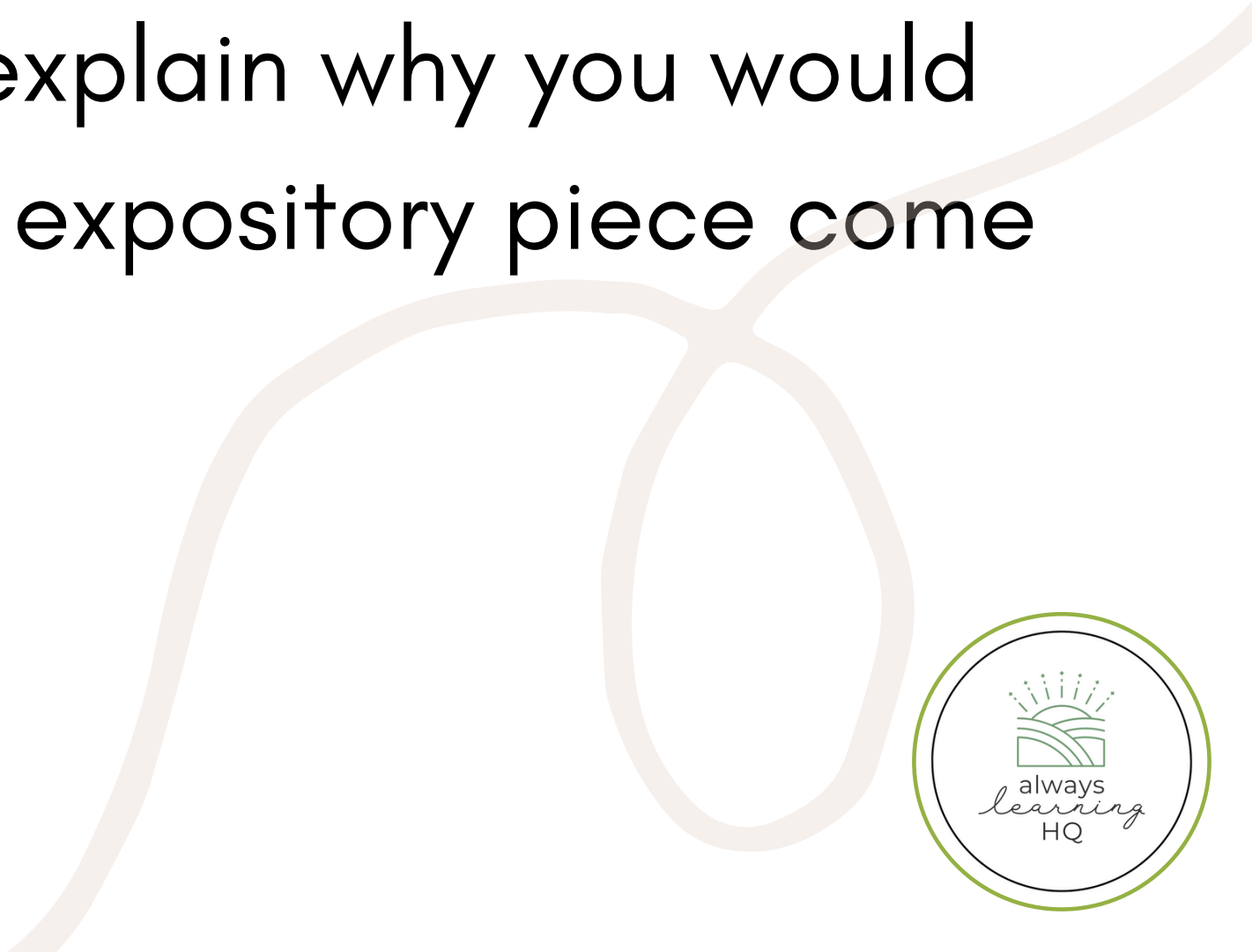
You are packing two boxes of books. One is for yourself, and one is for someone you love. List the books that go into each box. Try to come up with at least ten for you and ten for your loved one.





Prompt #5 Challenge

Pick one or two books from each box and explain why you would choose those. Think deeply. Make this little expository piece come alive.



TODAY WE WRITE

Prompt #6







Prompt #6

Describe this setting. Remember that the setting includes both time and place. Write “beyond the borders of the photo” in your description.





Prompt #6 Challenge

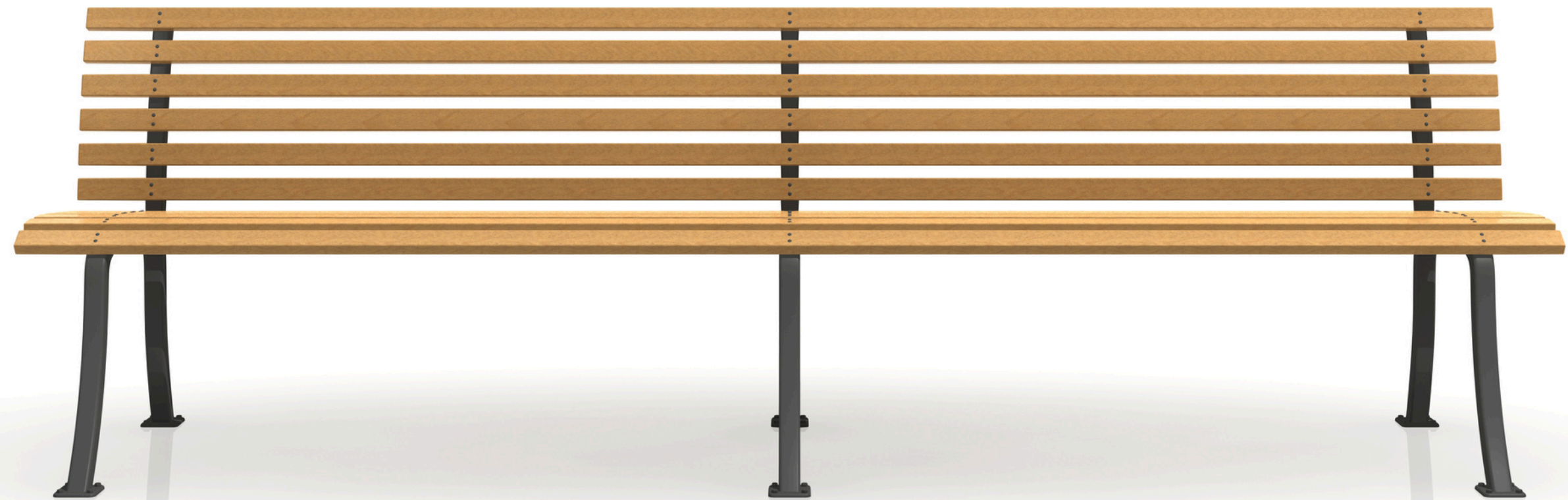
Into this setting, place a character who will find conflict *in* or *with* this space at this time. Tell the story of how that conflict begins.



TODAY WE WRITE

Prompt #7





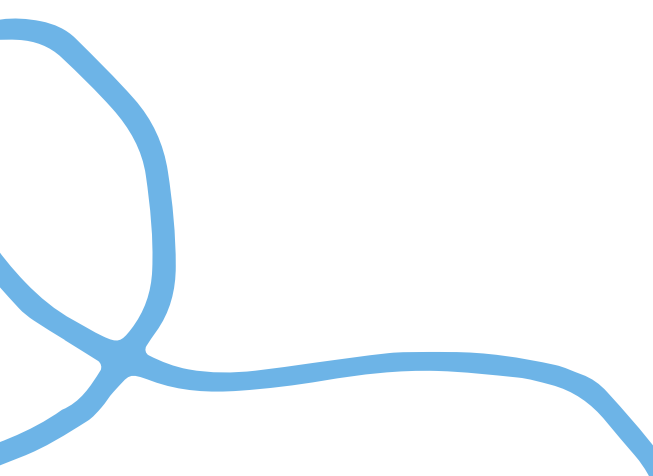
EXPOSITORY | NARRATIVE





Prompt #7

What are you waiting for? Almost always, we're waiting for something. What is it *you* are waiting for? How long have you waited? What has happened during that time? What have you learned? When do you anticipate the wait will be over?





Prompt #7 Challenge

Dream about what will happen when the wait is over. Tell that story.



TODAY WE WRITE

Prompt #8

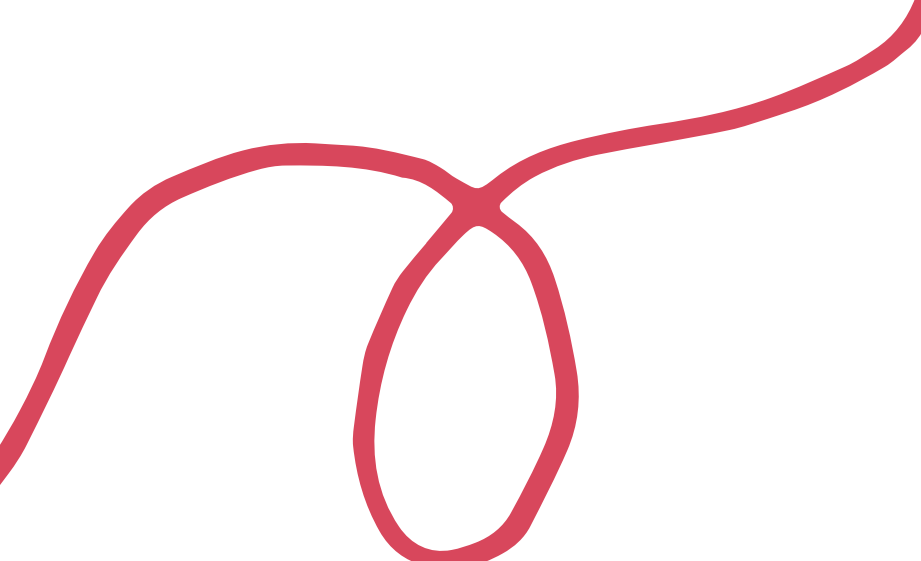




Prompt #8


- Listen. What do you hear? Describe that sound.
- Listen again. What else do you hear? Describe that sound too.
- Listen one more time. What new things do you hear that you didn't notice the first two times you started paying attention to the sounds around you? Describe those things.
- You should have a paragraph for each of the sounds you discovered in each round of listening. Some sounds you heard because they were loudest. Others may have come to you when you listened to your surroundings at a deeper level.
- The sounds may be constant, or they may be—quickly or slowly—passing through your environment.
- Look back at your descriptions. Pull the sounds together into one paragraph, situating them in your surroundings.





Prompt #8 Challenge

Take the next step and write what comes out of the auditory setting you have described. Is it a mental landscape? Is it physical? What activity is happening? Set up the scene for what will happen next.



TODAY WE WRITE

Prompt #9








Prompt #9

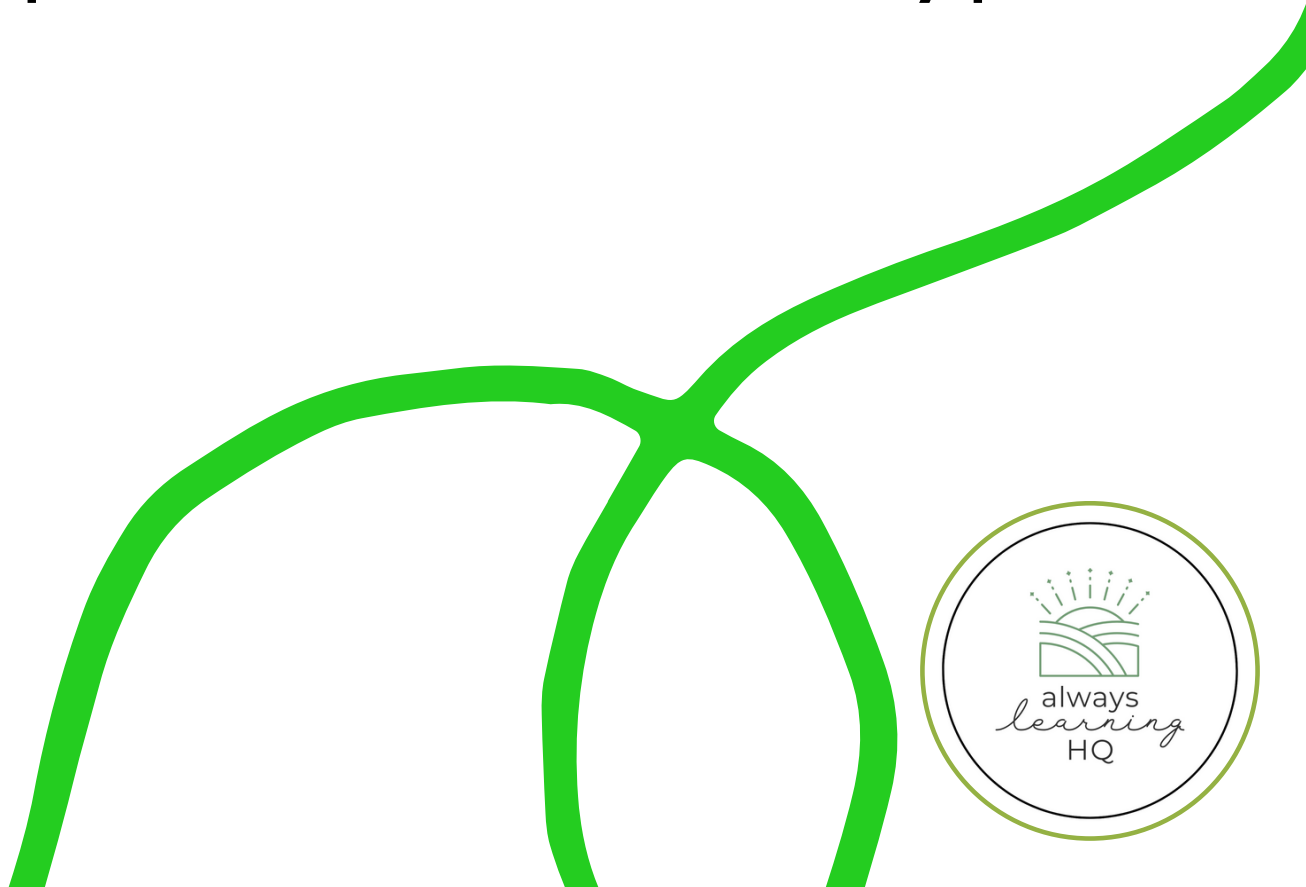
Pretend these gummy flavors come in a package together. On the back is a list of the flavor names and a 25ish-word description of each. Write the names and descriptions of each flavor. Get creative.





Prompt #9 Challenge


Choose one: superpowers or dreams. Go back to your flavor names and descriptions and add which specific superpower or dream type is associated with each gummy color.





Prompt #9 Super Challenge

Write a journal entry from someone who ate gummies containing different superpowers or dreams. Work in the flavor names and descriptions. Detail the experience that followed.



TODAY WE WRITE

Prompt #10




DESCRIPTIVE | POETIC





Prompt #10

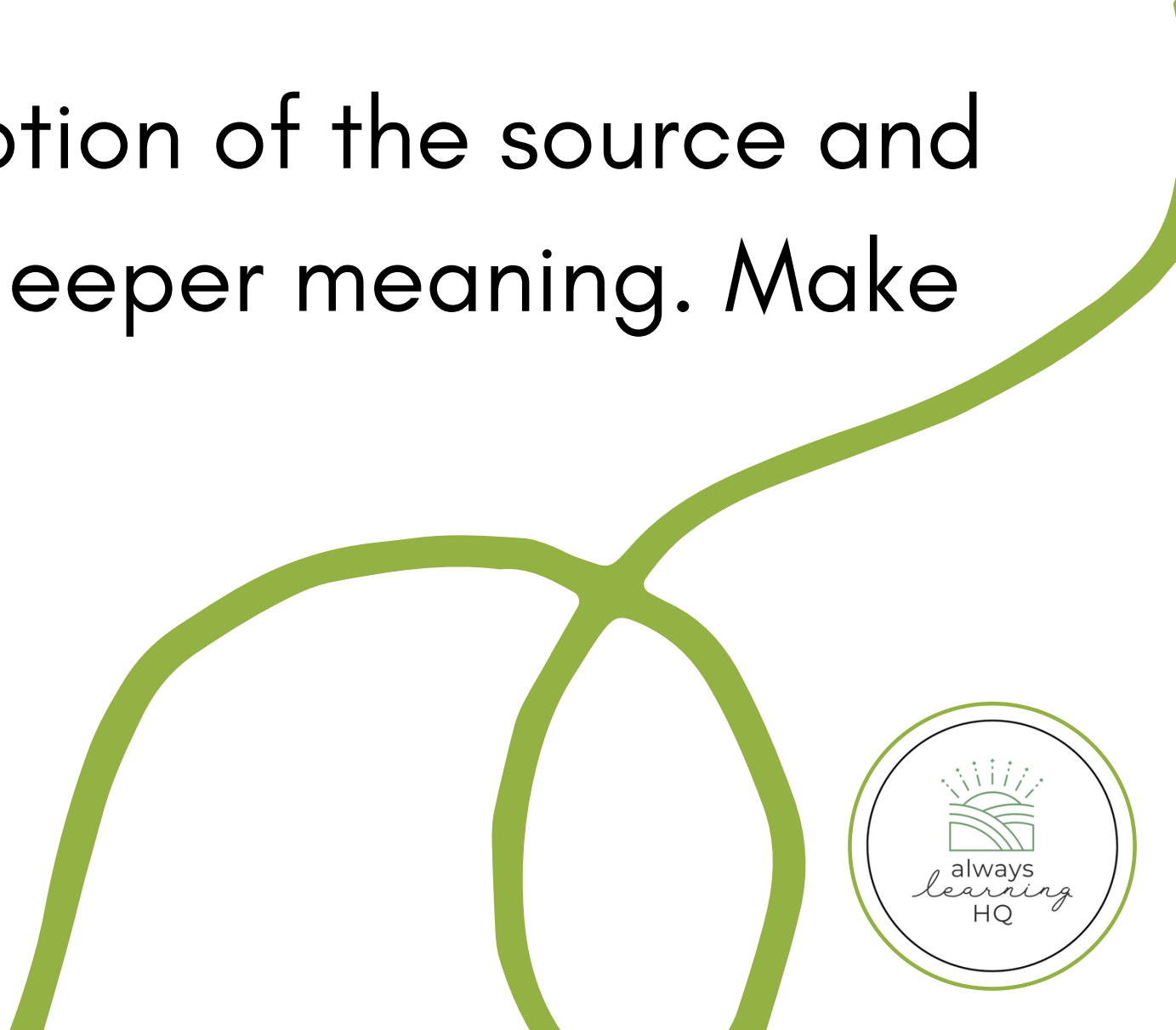
Think of smoke. What is the source of that smoke? Describe how it smells in 100 or so words. Reach for olfactory-friendly words, and don't be afraid to use comparisons to help you get the most vivid description.





Prompt #10 Challenge

Write a poem about smoke. Include a description of the source and striking olfactory images. Give the smoke a deeper meaning. Make observations about life or the world.



TODAY WE WRITE

Prompt #11

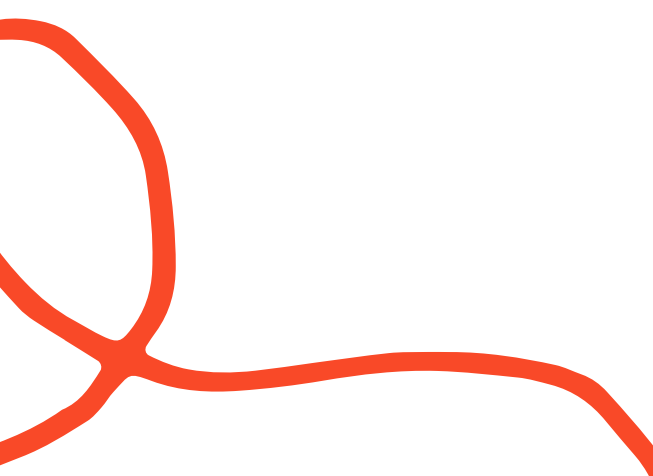






Prompt #11


Describe this photo. Include elements of color, size, shape, and pattern. What visual “textures” are present? What is happening with light? How does the light enable and enhance all the visual elements? Capture with your words a description so vivid that an artist could paint the scene.





Prompt #11 Challenge

Journal about the associations you have with the image in this photograph. They might be psychological or emotional, real-life or imagined. What does it make you think? How does it make you feel?



TODAY WE WRITE

Prompt #12



old

Prompt #12

What in your sphere is old? Think about the people, places, possessions, events, experiences, emotions, and attitudes that characterize your life.

Which of these has been around for a while? Are they still here because they are classics? Are they around because you don't like change? Anything outdated? Unneeded? Unwanted? What does *old* look like in your life?

Identify something from each category above, and write a short paragraph about the history of each in your world.



Prompt #12 Challenge

Title a document with the name of one of the elements you selected for the main prompt.

Divide your writing space into two columns.

In the left column, write why you should keep this old thing. In the right column, make a case for letting it go.

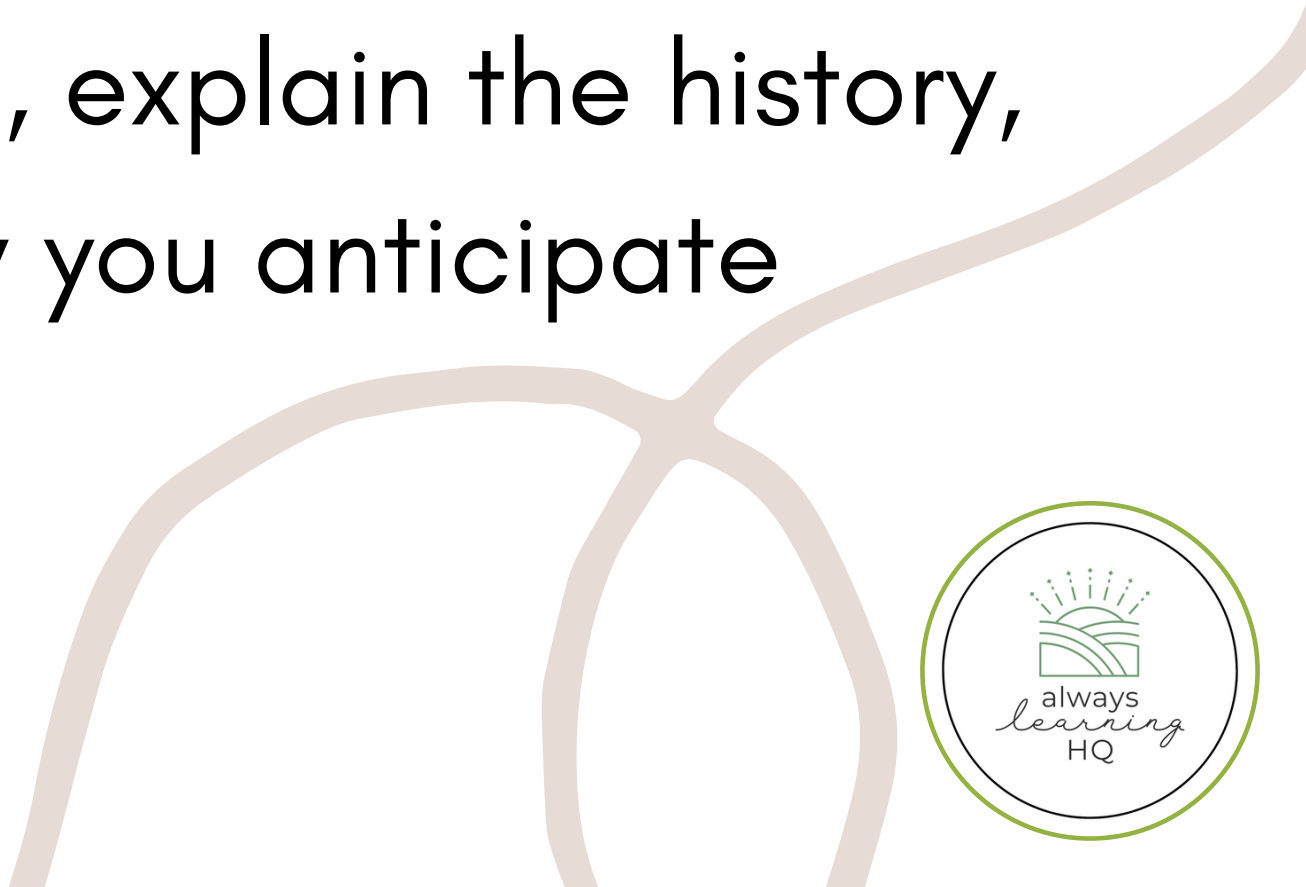




Prompt #12 Super Challenge

Choose one of the following titles: “Growth: A Case for Moving On” or “Growth: A Case for Holding On.”

Write a fully developed work on one old thing in your life that reflects the title you have chosen. In this piece, explain the history, the case for moving on or holding on, and how you anticipate personal growth will manifest as a result.



TODAY WE WRITE

Prompt #13





Prompt #13

You've got 90 days to make it happen. What new thing do you want to see come into your life in the next three months? Is it a skill? Knowledge? Possession? Relationship? Experience?

Make a list of all the new things you'd like to explore in the next quarter. How many can you identify?

Choose one of the items on your list and explore in writing what it is, how you imagine it will impact your life, and what your action steps will be for making it happen.


Again, you have only 90 days, so get going with the groundwork, and make your life sparkle.





Prompt #13 Challenge

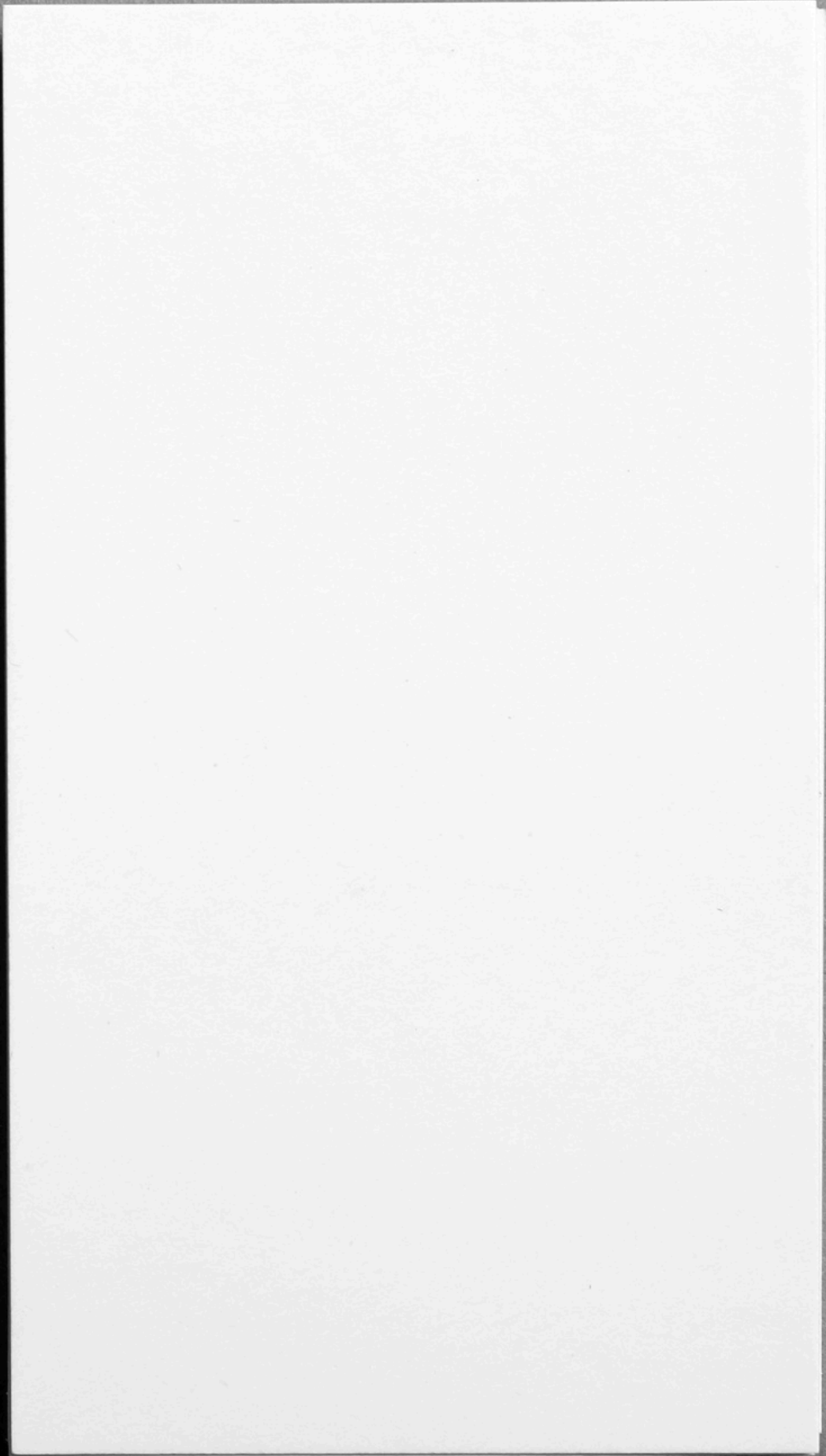
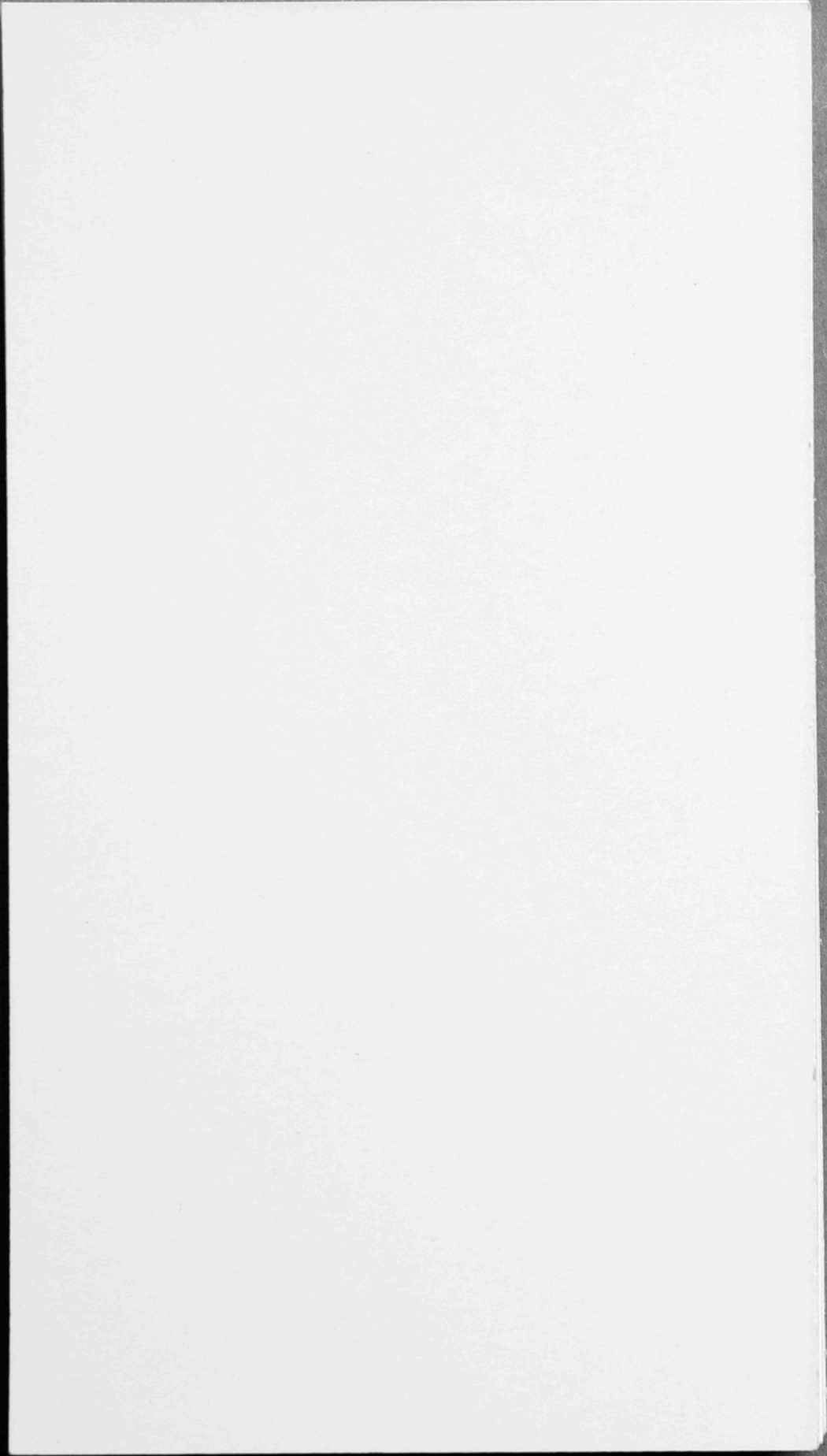
Write a poetic tribute to the new thing you will pursue in the coming months. The form can be as lofty as an **ode**, as basic as a **limerick**, or as unfettered as **free verse**.



TODAY WE WRITE

Prompt #14

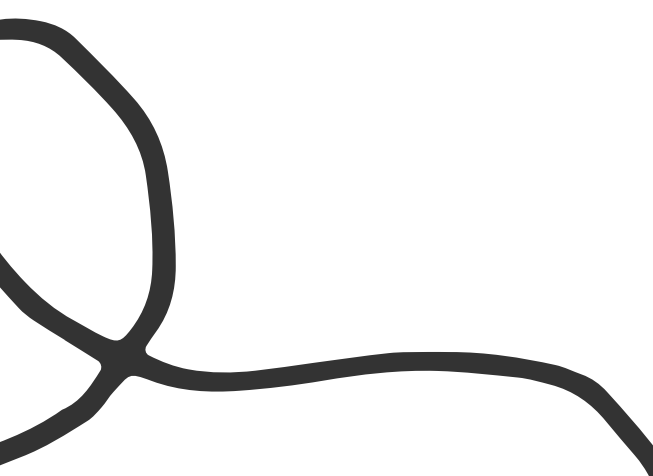







Prompt #14

Here are two stacks of blank index cards. Let's say each one contains ten cards. For the pile on the left, write one thing per card that you are grateful to have done so far this year. For the stack on the right, write one thing per card that you hope to do by the end of the year.





Prompt #14 Challenge

Choose one card from each pile to develop more fully. Use both narrative and descriptive elements as you reflect on the past and dream about the future.



TODAY WE WRITE

Prompt #15





Prompt #15

Wallpaper. It's the background to everything that happens in a room. Sometimes it is so muted that no one notices. Other times, it's so loud that it drowns out everything else.

Good designers coordinate everything that goes into the room with the wallpaper. Harmony abounds. Bad designers ignore it altogether so that sometimes the wallpaper and the objects in the room clash, creating the visual equivalent of cacophony.

Think about your life. What is the wallpaper? What do you have going on in the background? Take a few moments to write a visual description of how the wallpaper looks in the entryway of your life right now. This space represents the part of you that people see when they first meet you. What are the colors? Patterns? Images?

Add details about the objects you've collected, the things you give time and space. To what extent do they harmonize or clash with the things you do?

For this part of the prompt, stick to sensory descriptions--sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures.






Prompt #15 Challenge

Let's go deeper. Explain the meaning behind the wallpaper and the objects that adorn your life's entryway.

Why those colors, textures, designs, and objects? What is their significance? Is there obvious meaning in these things, or is their nature hidden? Why?



TODAY WE WRITE

Prompt #16





Prompt #16

In literature, we associate wind with seasons and change. Wind stirs up, brings in, and carries away. Ponder those three actions for a moment.

Write 100–200 words about a time in your life when change came and stirred things up.

Write 100–200 words about a time when change brought something new.

Write 100–200 words about a time when change carried away something.





Prompt #16 Challenge

Write a poem of 3–5 stanzas that explores the three actions of winds you contemplated above. Use diction and imagery that craft a mood authentic to what you felt in each season.



TODAY WE WRITE

Prompt #17





NARRATIVE



Prompt #17

The Directions

Words are magical. Let's make something spectacular today.

Below you will find five sets of words. Choose one word from each group, and write a sentence using all those words. Look at the lists carefully. Let ambiguity work for you.

You may reorder the words however you like. Include as many additional words as you need. Experiment with sentence structure. Make punctuation do some heavy lifting.

While it's fun to create nonsensical sentences sometimes, you should aim to write a brilliant and, well, magical sentence with this prompt.



Prompt #17

The Word Groups

Group 1

scale
scoop
plant
address
excuse

Group 2

groan
champion
fly
squeak
fool

Group 3

upstage
jam
highlight
bandage
flesh

Group 4

frame
notice
number
produce
report

Group 5

study
type
tower
wave
label





Prompt #17 Challenge

Opening with the sentence you have just crafted, write a narrative of at least 500 words.



TODAY WE WRITE

Prompt #18



SCURRY

SCURRY

SCURRY

Prompt #18

Who or what scurries? Where? Why?

For this exercise, you'll need three columns and seven rows. Label the first column "who/what." Label the second column "where." You choose whether where means location or destination. It doesn't have to be the same for each who/what. Label the third column "why."

Complete your chart. You will have seven who/what's partnered with their own where's and why's.

Write one sentence for each, using your most magnificent sentence-structuring skills.



Prompt #18 Challenge

Select a mood that you feel works well with the concept of scurrying. Write a scene that includes 3-4 of the who/what's from the base prompt. Keep the where's and why's too.

You don't have to use the same sentences you created earlier, but you certainly may. Choose diction that best conveys a scurrying mood. Craft imagery that makes your reader feel, well, scurried.

Hint: You might even want to look up *scurry* to maximize its meaning(s).



TODAY WE WRITE

Prompt #19





Prompt #19

You set sail on an adventure.

- When do you leave?
- Where are you going?
- Who is with you?
- How have you prepared?
- What is your goal?
- What are your fears?

Write the exposition of the story of your journey.





Prompt #19 Challenge

You discover a stowaway on board. It creates conflict. Write the inciting incident scene.





Prompt #19 Super Challenge

Finish the story.

Avoid cliché.

Surprise the reader.



TODAY WE WRITE

Prompt #20





Prompt #20

Sometimes you encounter a work of literature that makes you feel at home. You imagine yourself inside that fictional world, and it feels secure and warm and light and comforting. It's like you belong there.

Write about a work of fiction in which you feel at home. Who are you in that world? What is it like as you inhabit that space and time?





Prompt #20 Challenge

Imagine a perfect day in this literary home. Maybe perfection means the absence of conflict. Perhaps it means victory in a struggle. Write a narrative about this day.



TODAY WE WRITE

Prompt #21








Prompt #21

You have five gifts to give to anyone you want. These gifts can be tangible or intangible. They must each go to a different person. What do you give to whom, and why?



Prompt #21 Challenge

Choose one or two of the gifts you talked about above.
Write the dialogue(s) you imagine would take place
when you present the gift(s).



TODAY WE WRITE

Prompt #22





Prompt #22

You have seeds. Magic seeds. They will yield a harvest of anything you want. Any ONE thing. All you have to do is whisper the name of that thing as you plant the seed. The harvest will be abundant, enough for everyone in the world. What do you whisper as you plant your seed? Share why.





Prompt #22 Challenge

Write a narrative poem that tells the story of planting the seed and nurturing it. Conclude with a description of the harvest.



TODAY WE WRITE

Prompt #23



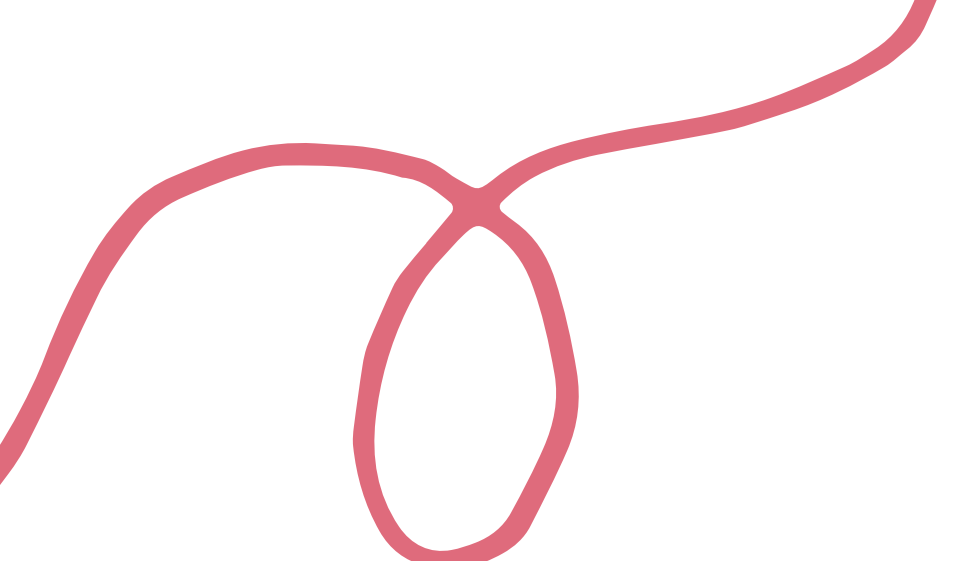


Prompt #23

Make a list of ten things. You can choose ANY common connection for your list—places you would like to travel, chores you need to do on your next day off, theme parties you would like to host or attend, series you want to binge-watch, cars you hope to own, jobs you want to investigate, books you vow never to read/read again, groceries you need to pick up on the way home, etc.

You get bonus points if you come up with your own list not listed in the list of lists above.





Prompt #23 Challenge

First, put your list in order. You may choose any order you wish—best to worst, most to least, favorite to least favorite, etc. What order you choose is entirely up to you.

Then, identify the item at the top of the list and the item at the bottom of the list and explain why those two particular items earned those two particular spots. Don't forget to explain your ranking strategy as you discuss your reasoning.

Each of these two items should be the feature of its own paragraph. Each paragraph should be precisely 94 words.



TODAY WE WRITE

Prompt #24





Prompt #24

With the plethora of planning and organization apps out there, you'd think at least one would be PERFECT for you. But you are unique, and nothing anyone else creates can *quite* meet all your individual needs.

Brainstorm the specifications of the app you would create to organize your life perfectly. Everything you need would be in one place: schedule, reminders, to-do list, contacts, information, documents, socials, work and entertainment links, news feeds, etc. Think of everything you can across all areas of your life.

In this one app, you can include anything that you need to access easily to make your life run as smoothly as possible. List the filters and notifications you need to make life as seamless as possible.





Prompt #24 Challenge

Write an app store description of “App My Life,” your digital product that coordinates all areas of life from one tiny square on your phone screen, tablet, or computer.

Give an overview of the features and benefits.

Explain how you coordinate all that information—does it look like a desktop? A filing cabinet? A giant calendar? A multipurpose room? A house? An office? Something else?

Create a slogan or catchphrase to invite others to purchase the app.

What’s the cost of a year’s subscription?



TODAY WE WRITE

Prompt #25



What's your story?

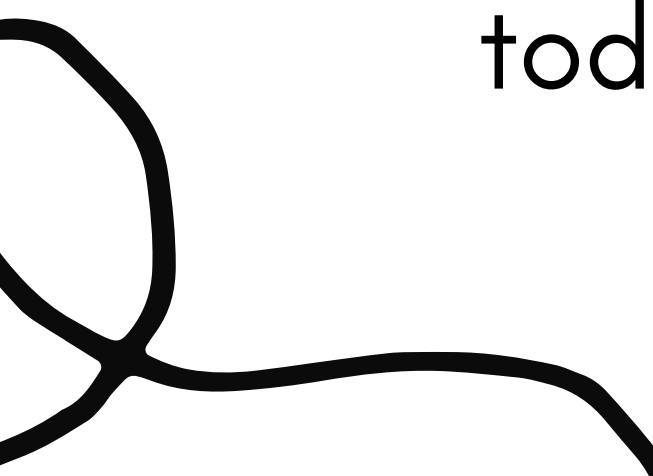
NARRATIVE | POETIC





Prompt #25

Make a list of 15–20 events in your life that have shaped who you are. Think of the stories you could tell about each event. For each major life-shaping experience you identify, write a one-sentence summary of what happened and how it contributed to who you are today.





Prompt #25 Challenge

Write the story of your defining moments in a poem featuring these events. Use the sentences you wrote in the main prompt as a starting point. You are welcome to arrange the events chronologically or in order of impact. You may notice a different organizational structure altogether. Go for it. It's your story.

Your poem may be free verse, or you might decide to challenge yourself by adopting a metrical pattern and rhyme scheme. Whether you decide to embrace freedom from form or choose a distinct structure, the end product should reflect your journey to who you are today.



TODAY WE WRITE

prompts appeared originally on Always Learning HQ as a series titled "On Wednesdays We Write."

Designed in *Canva* ❤️

