

## The Prompt Notebook

Literary Arts “The First 50 Pages” Cohort:

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One of the joys and gifts of being part of the creative classroom is the opportunity to delve deeper into structured play with a writing prompt. The writing prompt offers us a scaffold and nudges us in the direction of our narratives, bringing the story bubbling beneath the surface to the page. Like dewdrops on a leaf, the hint of a prompt revitalizes our writing process and opens windows of thought we never knew existed. Whether you are taking your first steps on your creative journey or are an advanced practitioner of the craft, these writing prompts will be sure to spark creativity. The prompts in this notebook explore character development, dialogue reveal, plot movement, narrative urgency, and more. Each prompt a reminder of the endless possibilities of story and offering homage to the writer-artist’s willingness to shine bright as an instrument of the creative process.

1. **“Take the picture, *please* just take the picture...”**



Start your writing with the line above. This can be a thought a character has or something that they say to another character. Use this to moment to create tension and explore how they interact with other characters.

## **2. The Dialogue Reveal**

Write a dialogue between two characters. Through conversation, one character must reveal a descriptive detail about the other (physical appearance or personality trait). Approach this from another angle by writing dialogue between two characters talking about a third character, revealing details about the third character.

## **3. Explore Character Traits and/or Generate Ideas For Scenes**

Working with either a main or supporting character, write a scene for them in a genre different from the story you are writing (romance, thriller, science fiction, etc.). Reflect on ways your character may react differently in a different genre. See if that gives you insights into your character's personality.

For insight into multiple characters and their motivations, write a scene involving two or more characters three times, each time changing the genre. Notice how characters may react to one another differently as the genre changes. For example, characters in a thriller or horror story may be less trusting of each other than they would be in a romance.

Consider whether your characters' reactions in other genres may transfer to the story you are telling.

#### **4. A Silent Observer**

Imagine you are a living entity in your character's bedroom (e.g. plant, hamster, turtle). Describe what you observe while living in your character's space (e.g. phone calls, feelings/emotions your character experiences). Use these observations to discover private/personal moments in your character's life.

#### **5. The Mind Reader**

Give your character limited mind-reading abilities allowing them to read the minds of three specific people. Who would they pick and what do they hope to learn? Are they surprised by the thoughts? Do they learn anything about themselves? Explore the possibility of heightened tensions or humorous revelations from uncovered insights.

#### **6. Food Memory**

Your protagonist flashes back to a lost memory after tasting a specific food. Where are they dining and what food is the trigger? Do they tell the other diners about the memory? Is it startling or revelatory? What time and place are they transported to? Do they feel



nostalgia, dread, or another emotion? Prepare to be delighted by the power of senses and the memories they can awaken.

#### **7. Uninvited Reminder**

A pen from a forgotten hotel visit reappears in your protagonist's life when a former friend or acquaintance finds it. This trivial object sets off a chain of events that leads to the protagonist confronting a long-buried secret. What are they trying to hide? Do they come clean or continue to hide their secret? Does this revelation change a relationship? Continue this thread of exploration as you write further.

#### **8. Key With No Lock**

Think about one of your characters having a unique key, one that they've always had. Despite searching, they can never find a lock it fits. The key feels important and seems to call to them. Where did they find it? Does it unlock something specific or does it unlock a new journey or memory? Let the mystery lead your character toward something they didn't know they needed.

#### **9. The Cure**

Create a soundtrack for your protagonist's life. Identify the key moments and the songs that represent them. Does a specific scene unfold with each song? What do the songs say about your character and what they were experiencing at that time? Do they elicit specific emotions? Keep this soundtrack at hand each time you intend to deepen this character on the page.

#### **10. The Park**

Your fictional character takes a stroll through a park on a day with many people occupying benches, fields of grass, and pathways. Describe the time of day, how the light looks, the various activities, sounds, and smells in the park. The park can be realistic or a fantasy. Write variations of the scene where the character feels loneliness, joy, or has a random encounter with a stranger.

#### **11. The Return**

Your fictional character returns to a special location that harbors strong emotions and memories. Describe the location's condition and its unique features, as well as the weather, scents, and sounds. How does the environment affect the character's emotions and actions?