Winter Writing Prompts

Grades 3–5

There are many fun things to do and see in the winter. Whether you celebrate with outdoor activities such as sledding and skiing or by curling up indoors with a hot cup of cocoa, the snowiest season has something for everyone to enjoy! With these winter-themed writing prompts, children can draw inspiration from their favorite winter activities and practice valuable writing skills at the same time.

Practicing responding to creative writing prompts can help students strengthen skills such as crafting a narrative, establishing a clear sequence of events, developing an argument, and more. Creative writing can also help young students develop stronger reading skills, especially when they are encouraged to read their written responses aloud.

This guide includes fall-themed creative fiction and nonfiction writing prompts for children in Grades 3-5. These prompts would be appropriate for use in the home as well as for classroom use. The prompts were written to encourage responders to draw from various literacy skills included in the Common Core ELA Writing Standards.

Reflection and Feedback—Suggestions for Caregivers and Educators

When administering these prompts, provide children with ample time to respond thoroughly and carefully. After writing, there are a few different feedback methods that may be helpful.

Independent Reflection

- Encourage writers to go back over what they have written to check for spelling, grammar, or logical errors.
- Encourage writers to read their written responses aloud. Some may have an easier time hearing mistakes than seeing them on the page.

Peer Feedback

- If multiple children are participating in this activity, encourage them to read one another's responses. Then, have them share what they liked about the other writers' responses, and any questions they have about them.

Caregiver/Educator Feedback

- Read over the responses. Check for the following elements:
  - Do their responses effectively address the question of the prompt?
  - Did they structure their narratives with a clear progression of events and/or ideas?
  - Did they successfully implement narrative techniques such as dialogue, descriptive language, and sensory details?
  - Do they back up any argumentative claims with logical supporting details?
  - Do their responses include clear and effective conclusions?
  - Did they demonstrate repeated or consistent mechanical errors, such as issues with spelling, sentence structure, or punctuation? If so, provide corrective feedback.
- Pick one or two areas of feedback to highlight for your writers and take time to discuss them together. You may be able to find additional resources on the web to provide practice opportunities in particular areas where improvement is needed. Be sure to also point out a few things that they are doing well in their writing

Lastly, celebrate the writing process! Encourage writers to share their responses with friends, family members, and other loved ones. Perhaps they could send a handwritten copy of their response to a grandparent or call up a cousin and read what they wrote over the phone. And if a writer seems passionate about a specific prompt or topic, encourage them to keep writing about it, either via more guided practice or as something to do in their free time!

Additional Resources

- For more information on writing prompts, read our: Understanding and Responding to Writing Prompts Guide.
- For more information on the benefits of at-home writing practice, see our blog post titled "Literacy Education at Home: Approaches for Practicing Reading and Writing" by Laura Szech, M.A., and Dr. Deborah K. Reed.

Grades 3-5 Writing Prompts

The writing prompts that are listed below are also included on the pages that follow on lined sheets you can print and hand out to children to write their responses.

Fiction

Write a story about a powerful winter wizard. Describe where the character lives, what they look like, and what kinds of powers they have. Be sure to use as many details as you can.

On Valentine's Day, many people bring cards and candy to share with their friends and classmates. Write a story about a child who gets a valentine from a secret admirer. Describe what happens next. Do they find out who the card is from? How? Be sure to use lots of details and to organize the events of the story in a clear order.

In the winter, some people make fantastic sculptures out of ice! Write a story about an ice sculpture competition. Describe the different sculptures with lots of details. What do they look like? Which one wins? Be sure to use lots of specific details and to think creatively!

February 2 is Groundhog Day. Imagine that you are Punxsutawney Phil, the groundhog who emerges from his burrow to predict the weather. If he sees his shadow, it's six more weeks of winter. If he doesn't see his shadow, it's an early spring! What is Groundhog Day like from Phil's perspective? Does Phil spot his shadow? What else happens? Be sure to use descriptive language and to organize the events of the story into a logical order.

The Gingerbread Man is a famous fairytale. It tells the story of a gingerbread cookie that comes to life. Rewrite this story with your own twist. Does it take place in a different setting? Does it have different characters? Does it end in a different way? It's up to you! Be sure to organize the events of the story in a logical way. Also, use lots of descriptive details.

Nonfiction

On February 20, President's Day, we honor all the people who have served as President of the United States. Would you ever want to run for president? If you were the president, what kinds of laws and rules would you make? Be sure to use lots of details and to be creative!

There are many warm, delicious things to drink in the winter. For example, there is hot cocoa, eggnog, and apple cider! What is your favorite winter drink? Write a short essay telling why this drink is the best. Be sure to use lots of convincing details. Also, organize your thoughts in a logical order.

Many people catch colds during the winter months. Have you ever had a cold or other winter illness? What happened? What did you do to feel better? Explain your answer using lots of details.

Sometimes, it snows so much that schools have to cancel classes, giving students a snow day! If your school declared a snow day, what kinds of things would you do? Describe your ideal snow day plans using lots of details.

There are many holidays in the winter. Pick a winter holiday that you do not know much about. For example, Hanukkah, Dongzhi, Christmas, Kwanzaa, Las Posadas, Boxing Day, or Lunar New Year. Research your holiday online. Try to find out where it comes from. Why is it celebrated? What traditions are associated with it? Write a three-paragraph essay explaining what you have learned. Be sure to give lots of details.

IOWA READING RESEARCH CENTER

Student Reading Success Through Research and Collaboration

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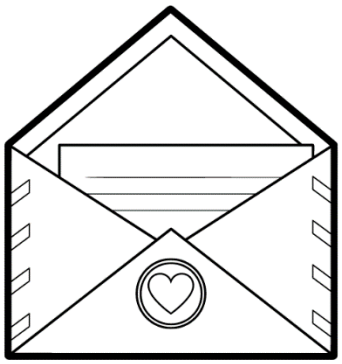

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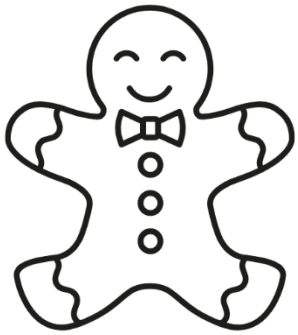

IOWA READING RESEARCH CENTER

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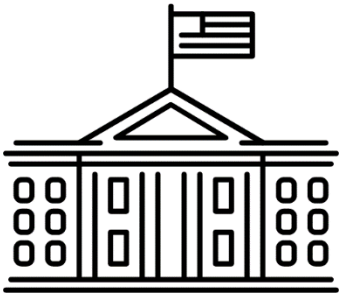

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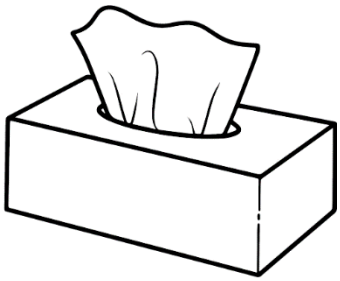

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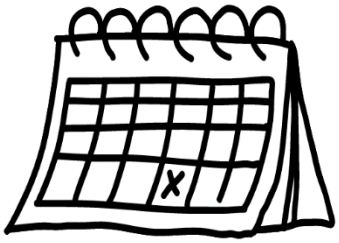
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