

# Unit 1

## Intro to Creative Writing

### Overview

In this unit, students will know and be able to use various literary techniques. Students will be able to create detailed stories using descriptive language and character traits. Students will be able to create a short narrative using learned techniques.



# Essential Questions

- How does reading the works of other writers help me improve my writing skills?
- How does description/imagery add to the overall feel and quality of a written work?

# Essential Learning Outcomes

- Students will know and be able to use various literary techniques
- Students will be able to create detailed description of a character
- Students will be able to create a short narrative using learned techniques

## Unit Resources

[Writing Prompts](#)

[Variety of Language Worksheet](#)

[Character Map](#)

[Exquisite Corpses Activity](#)

[The 22 Rules of Storytelling Handout](#)

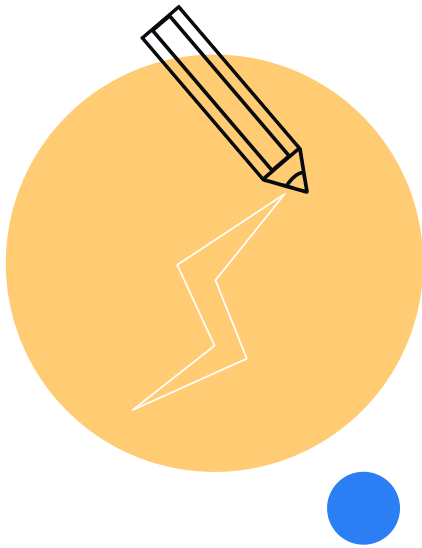
## Video

[Intro to Creative Writing Video Playlist](#)

# Creative Writing Prompts

*Select one of the following prompts to unleash a new story!*

1. You suddenly gain a social media following by many people in another country. Who are they and why do they take interest in your life?
2. Explain what a forest looks like to someone who cannot see.
3. Imagine that someone says to you, "Because that's how we've always done it!" Write this out as a scene. (Think: Who said it, what were the circumstances, how did you respond, etc.)
4. Your science teacher invents a time machine and asks for student volunteers to test run their creation. You decide to volunteer for extra credit. Who do you volunteer with and where do you travel to? Describe your adventure.
5. Select a color and personify it. What does it taste like and sound like? How does it move? What does it want and fear? What special powers does it have?
6. As part of an internship for your dream job, you wind up in a country you've never visited before. Where have you relocated to, and what's your experience like?
7. NASA is sending a package to a neighboring planet to tell extraterrestrials about our civilization. They've asked you to gather different artifacts that would help the aliens get an idea over what life is like on earth. What would you include and why?
8. If you only had one window to look out of for the next six months, what would you want to see on the other side? Describe the view. How would it change?
9. You buy a pair of jeans at a consignment store. When you get home, you check the pockets and find something truly remarkable. What is it that you find and how does it change your life?
10. Write a description of something very dark (like a crow) in a very light place (like a field of snow). Make the dark thing seem innocent and the light thing seem ominous.



# Variety in Language

*Directions: The following statements are bland and nondescript which means they are boring.  
For each of the statements below write down two other ways of saying the same thing.  
Be descriptive in your word choices.*

1. Levi was riding a bike
2. Elijah walked across the room
3. "Do you like me?" Olivia asked
4. Chen was pretty
5. They didn't like each other.
6. "I'm tired." Harper said
7. It was raining.
8. Noor was being annoying.
9. Jawad walked toward Charlie.
10. Parker's garden has flowers.

# Character

In this lesson, students read the first chapter in *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fist Fight in Heaven* by Sherman Alexie. They then identify adjectives that help to define a character's personality, such as those of the main characters in that book. Finally, students write an original story or scene, based on a composite character of their own creation, after exploring a variety of specific character traits.

Character Name:

Physical Description:

Character Struggles:

Character Needs/Wants/Desires:

Main Source of Conflict:

Main Relationships:

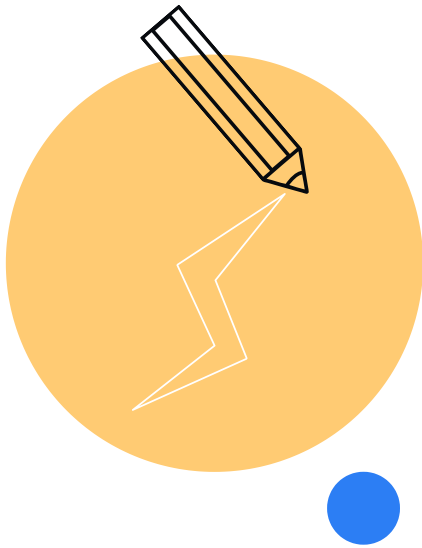
Character Strengths:

Adversary:

Character Weaknesses:

Other Important Info:





# Exquisite Corpse

Exquisite Corpses are a fun, simple way to introduce students to collaborative creative writing. Created by the Surrealists in the 1920s, exquisite corpses are pieces of writing created by a group of people. The first student writes a sentence or two, conceals what has been written and passes the paper to the next student, who writes another sentence and so on. There may be rules regarding the sequence or the students may be allowed to see the last thing written but nothing prior to it.

The activity helps to open students up since the end product is guaranteed to be nonsensical.

# The 22 rules of storytelling, according to Pixar

*By Cyriaque Lamar on Gizmodo.com*

<https://gizmodo.com/the-22-rules-of-storytelling-according-to-pixar-5916970>

On Twitter, Pixar storyboard artist Emma Coats has compiled nuggets of narrative wisdom she's received working for the animation studio over the years. It's some sage stuff, although there's nothing here about defending yourself from your childhood toys when they inevitably come to life with murder in their hearts. A truly glaring omission.

#1: You admire a character for trying more than for their successes.

#2: You gotta keep in mind what's interesting to you as an audience, not what's fun to do as a writer. They can be v. different.

#3: Trying for theme is important, but you won't see what the story is actually about til you're at the end of it. Now rewrite.

#4: Once upon a time there was \_\_\_\_\_. Every day, \_\_\_\_\_. One day \_\_\_\_\_. Because of that, \_\_\_\_\_. Because of that, \_\_\_\_\_. Until finally \_\_\_\_\_.

#5: Simplify. Focus. Combine characters. Hop over detours. You'll feel like you're losing valuable stuff but it sets you free.

#6: What is your character good at, comfortable with? Throw the polar opposite at them. Challenge them. How do they deal?

#7: Come up with your ending before you figure out your middle. Seriously. Endings are hard, get yours working up front.

#8: Finish your story, let go even if it's not perfect. In an ideal world you have both, but move on. Do better next time.

#9: When you're stuck, make a list of what WOULDN'T happen next. Lots of times the material to get you unstuck will show up.

#10: Pull apart the stories you like. What you like in them is a part of you; you've got to recognize it before you can use it.

#11: Putting it on paper lets you start fixing it. If it stays in your head, a perfect idea, you'll never share it with anyone.

- #12: Discount the 1st thing that comes to mind. And the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th - get the obvious out of the way. Surprise yourself.
- #13: Give your characters opinions. Passive/malleable might seem likable to you as you write, but it's poison to the audience.
- #14: Why must you tell THIS story? What's the belief burning within you that your story feeds off of? That's the heart of it.
- #15: If you were your character, in this situation, how would you feel? Honesty lends credibility to unbelievable situations.
- #16: What are the stakes? Give us reason to root for the character. What happens if they don't succeed? Stack the odds against.
- #17: No work is ever wasted. If it's not working, let go and move on - it'll come back around to be useful later.
- #18: You have to know yourself: the difference between doing your best & fussing. Story is testing, not refining.
- #19: Coincidences to get characters into trouble are great; coincidences to get them out of it are cheating.
- #20: Exercise: take the building blocks of a movie you dislike. How d'you rearrange them into what you DO like?
- #21: You gotta identify with your situation/characters, can't just write 'cool'. What would make YOU act that way?
- #22: What's the essence of your story? Most economical telling of it? If you know that, you can build out from there.