

Descriptive Prompts for Elementary, Middle and High Schools

Note: Most states do not ask students to describe people, so only one prompt of this type is included in the suggested topics. Some states require that students write only a visual description and others ask students to include other senses such as feel, touch, smell, and taste. You will need to modify these prompts to fit the requirement of your particular state.

1. Describe a place you always wanted to visit.
2. Describe the most beautiful scene in nature that you can imagine.
3. Describe a kitchen that you have seen or would love to see.
4. Describe the ocean. Think about what it looks like on and below the surface.
5. Describe a storm. This could be a thunder storm, a snow storm, a hurricane, a tornado, a hail storm, a rain storm, or any type of storm.
6. Describe a place where you feel safe and protected.
7. Describe a toy you love(d). Think of all its good points.
8. Describe your ideal playground.
9. Describe the perfect shopping mall.
10. Describe a place where people congregate (like a zoo, a church, a circus, etc.)
11. Describe your bedroom the way you want it to be.
12. Describe your favorite dessert (or food).
13. Describe a beach (a desert, a mountain, a city, or a plain).
14. Think of your favorite animal and describe that animal.
15. Describe your best friend so that the reader can picture him or her.

Note: An attempt has been made to phrase the last 25 prompts as they might appear on the test. Use them as you see fit. In many states, on the actual tests, these prompts would be divided into three separate paragraphs. In the interest of space, I have omitted these separations and have written each prompt as one paragraph. Write them for your students the way they might appear on your state's writing test.



16. Think of your favorite place. What do you like about this place? What do you do there? How does it look, smell, and feel? Now write an essay describing your favorite place so that your reader will be able to picture it.
17. Some people prefer dogs as pets, some like cats, and others prefer birds, snakes, fish, rabbits, pigs, horses, and other animals. What is your perfect pet? What does it look like? Is it soft or hard? Does it make any sounds? Now describe your idea of a perfect pet so that your reader can picture it.
18. Different teachers decorate their classes in different manners. Think of your idea of the perfect classroom. Is it colorful? Does it have desks or tables? What does it look like? How does it smell? Are there any sounds in it? Write an essay describing your idea of the perfect classroom.
19. Each season of the year is beautiful in some way. Think of which season is your favorite: winter, summer, spring or fall. Think of what your town looks like during that season. What does it feel like? Is there a smell or taste to it? Now write an essay describing an outdoor scene during your favorite season of the year.
20. Everyone has a favorite object that they treasure. Think of some object in your room that you really like. It could be a toy, or a doll, a game, a stuffed animal, or a book, but whatever it is, it is special to you. What does it look, feel, smell, and sound like? Now, describe this object to your reader so that he or she will be able to picture it clearly.
21. Every person has a favorite place to play. Think of your favorite place to play. It may be your backyard, or a playground, or a nearby woods, or an open field. What does this place look like? What are the sounds you hear there? What does it feel and smell like? Describe your favorite place to play so that your reader can see it without being there.



22. Almost all houses have kitchens. Some are big and some are tiny. Think of the kitchen at your home. Think of how you might change it to make it even better. What is in it? What does it smell like? Now, describe this perfect kitchen to your reader so that he or she can see it clearly.
23. There are trees everywhere, even in the middle of big cities. Think of a tree you have seen. What does it look, feel, and sound like? Describe that tree so that your reader can picture it too.
24. People gather at places like malls, fairgrounds, schools, gymnasiums, sports fields and swimming pools. Think of a place in your town where there are lots of people. How does it look, sound, smell, and feel to be there? Now, describe that crowded place so that your reader can feel as if he or she is there.
25. Every child enjoys playing on a playground. Think of the playgrounds you have played in. Think of what makes them better. Maybe you've already seen it, but think of what makes the perfect playground. Think of how it looks, sounds, feels, and smells. Now, describe your idea of a perfect playground so that your reader can see it clearly.
26. Even in the desert it rains sometimes. Think of what the world looks like outside your window when it rains. Think about how it looks, smells, and feels. What sounds do you hear? What does rain taste like? Describe what the world looks like outside a window when it rains.
27. Flowers always make a yard or a room look very pretty. Think of a garden or a bunch of flowers you have seen. Make it even better and prettier in your mind. What does it look and feel like? Does it smell? Describe the garden or a bunch of flowers so that your reader can see it and smell it in his or her mind.
28. Cities and towns have lots of things going on in them, lots of stores, traffic, people, churches, schools, parks, and maybe even a zoo. Think of your city or a city you have visited. As you walk down the sidewalk in the middle of that city, what do you see, hear, smell, taste, and



feel? Describe that city for your reader and what it is like to be there.

29. Even in big cities, there are parks where there are woods. There are woods everywhere in this big country of ours. Think of a woods you have been in or played in. What does it look like? Now describe this woods so that the reader can see it.
30. Alice visits Wonderland in *Alice in Wonderland*. Wonderland is the land of her dreams. What is the ideal place for you? What place do you dream about? What does it look like? Does it have a smell? How does it feel? Do you hear sounds there? Describe the ideal place of your dreams in such a way that the reader can picture it, too.
31. We all eat to stay alive, but everyone has a favorite food. What is your favorite food in the world? What does it look like? How does it smell and taste in your mouth? Describe your favorite food so that your reader can see it and almost taste it as well.
32. Many people love the beach and others love the mountains for a vacation. Which do you like better; the beach or the mountains? Even if you have never been to either, you have seen pictures. Choose one—either a beach or the mountains. What does the place look like? Does the place have a feel to it? What smells are there? What sounds do you hear? Describe your beach or mountains so that your reader can picture the scene you see in your mind.
33. Everyone has a favorite game, dominoes, checkers, cards, Clue, Chutes and Ladders, Monopoly, and so on. What is your favorite game? What does it look like when you play? What sounds do you hear as you play? Describe your favorite game so that the reader can see it and hear the action as you play.

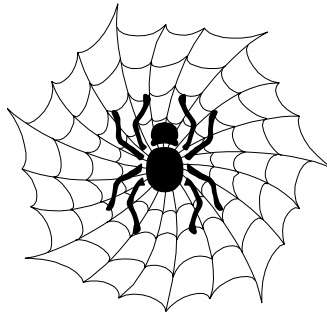


34. Everyone has to shop for food or clothes sometime. Think of a store to which you like to go. What does it look like inside the store? Are there sounds? What do things feel like there? Does the store have a smell? Write a description of a store you like to visit so that your reader can feel as if he or she were there.
35. People live in houses, apartments, tents, cabins, trailers, and other buildings. Where do you live? Think of your ideal living place. Perhaps it's where you live now. What does it look like? Does it have a smell? Describe your ideal living place or the place where you live so that your reader can picture it clearly.
36. I imagine that you were on a ship in the middle of the ocean. What does your ship look like? How does the ocean look? What does the sky look like above you? What do you see, hear, feel, smell, and taste as you look about? Describe your ship in the middle of an ocean of water.
37. Everyone has been in a thunder storm. Think back to when you last experienced a thunder storm. What was it like? What were the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and feelings during the storm? Describe a thunder storm so that your reader can experience and picture it.
38. I imagine that someone gave you a very special ring. What does this ring look like as it sits on your finger? How does it feel? Is it heavy? Is there a taste to it? How does it sound if you rap it on the desk? Does it smell? Describe this ring down to the last detail so that your reader can picture it on your hand.
39. Our country has a flag with fifty stars representing the fifty states and thirteen stripes representing the thirteen colonies. Your state has a flag, too, with things that represent important historical events and items of your state. I imagine that you had a flag which represented you. What would it look like? How does it feel? Does it have a smell? Does it make a sound as it waves in the breeze? Think of some images it would have on it to represent you to the world.



Now, describe your personal flag so that your reader can see it clearly.

40. Almost everyone has had an encounter with a spider, has read the book *Charlotte's Web* and has seen pictures of spiders in their webs. Think of a spider and web you have seen. It could have been real, in a book, or in your imagination. What do this spider and web look like? Do they make a sound? What do they feel like if you touch them? Do they have a smell? Now, describe your spider and its web so vividly that your reader can see it as if it were right in front of him or her.



Expository/Clarification Prompts for Elementary, Middle and High Schools

Note #1: Stress in expository/clarification topics that the main part of the essay should be devoted to the last thing asked. Usually this is to propose solutions or to explain why. Descriptions and explanations of choice of items should be written in the introduction. You must make this clear to your students, or you could have a few of them ignore the main thrust of the topic.

Note #2: Since all grades that are tested require that students write an expository/clarification essay, I have included many more prompts for practice.

1. Write about what you think the world will be like in 100 years.
2. We are learning all the time. Write about something you have learned recently and how it has affected you.
3. You have been asked by your principal to recommend one course which will help you prepare for the job you want in the future. It could be a course your school is already offering or a new course. Write an essay to explain to your principal the course you would recommend. Be sure to give the reasons for your suggestion.
4. Explain the main reasons why you think students drop out of school.
5. Talk about your favorite music and why you like it.
6. Think of your favorite year in school. Explain why it was your favorite year.
7. Friends are important, but everyone has a different opinion of what makes a good friend. Explain what, in your opinion, makes a good friend.



8. Some teachers are special. Without giving any names, explain why one particular teacher in your life was special.
9. If you could change one thing about your school, what would you change? Explain why.
10. We all get angry at times, but different people react in different ways. Some people show their anger openly, and some hide it within themselves. Explain and describe what you do when you get mad.
11. Friends sometimes experience conflicts. Explain why this happens.
12. If someone were new to your town, explain to him/her the highlights.
13. If you could make changes to your school lunchroom, what would you do?
14. Most people like one particular animal more than others. Explain why your favorite animal is your favorite animal.
15. Most people remember one day that really was special. Think about a special day you have had and write an essay explaining why that day was so special.
16. Your generation faces many problems. I identify one of these problems that you feel is the most important, explain it, and propose some possible solutions to the problem.
17. Much has been written about the negative effects of television on young people. Are all television shows bad for children? Write an essay describing a show you feel has a positive impact on today's teens and explain how the show could be helpful.
18. Rules are important in our daily lives. We have rules for driving, rules for studying, and even rules for playing. Think about the rules you have in your school. What three rules should every school have? Write an essay explaining to the reader the three rules you selected.



Give clear reasons why each one is needed.

19. Games are fun and often teach us something as well. Think about your favorite game. Write a paper telling about your favorite game. Explain to the reader your reasons for enjoying it.
20. Suppose you have been appointed to a neighborhood improvement committee. You must make recommendations on ways to make your neighborhood a better place to live. Think about some changes you would like to make in your neighborhood. Write an essay to inform your reader of changes you would recommend to improve your neighborhood and why these changes are important.
21. If you could choose any animal for a class pet, what would you choose and why?
22. What is your favorite time of the year? Explain why this is your favorite time.
23. Everyone has something or someone that is important to him/her. Pick an object, a person, or a feeling that is important to you and explain why it is so important in your life.
24. Eating healthy foods is very important. Write an essay explaining why it is important to eat healthy foods.
25. Explain why it is important to learn to read.
26. Think back to when you were little and had a favorite toy. Explain why you liked this particular toy.
27. Everyone has chores to do. Explain why you do the job or chore you have.
28. If you could be any other person for a day, who would you be? Explain why you would like to be that person for a day.



29. We are increasingly worried about our environment. Write an essay explaining about one environmental problem you think is important and propose some possible solutions to the problem.
30. Suggest one change that you think can make this country better.
31. If you had a time machine and could go to any time in the past or future, where you go? Explain why you chose that particular time.
32. Everyone has responsibilities. Write a paper explaining a responsibility you have now or will have in the future and why you shoulder that responsibility.
33. Write an essay explaining whether you prefer a big city or small town in which to live and why you prefer it.
34. Your class is making a box to be seen in 2096. Write an essay explaining the one thing you put in that box and why.
35. Think of your favorite year in school. Now write an essay explaining why it was your favorite year.

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36. Most adults in this world have a job of some sort. Think of the ideal job for you when you complete your schooling. Now, think of some reasons why this would be your ideal job. Write an essay to explain why this is your ideal job.
37. Schools do not offer all the elective courses (like art and music) that students would like to take. Think of one elective course you want to take that your school does not offer at this time. Think of some reasons why you think this course should be offered. Now, write an



essay explaining why you think that this particular elective should be offered in your high school.

38. Everyone has a book that he or she enjoyed reading, whether it be a book recently read or one read as a small child. Think of one book you have read that you really enjoyed. Maybe it was your favorite book when you were little. Maybe it's one you read recently. Think of some reasons why you liked that book. Now, write an essay explaining why you really like your favorite book.
39. Many writers, scientists, and politicians have a view of what the world will be like 50 years from now. What do you think the world will be like by the time you are in your 60's? Think of the future and the direction you think the world is headed. Write an essay explaining what you believe the world will be like 50 years from now.
40. Many students drop out of school before they graduate from high school. Think of some reasons why you think these students do not finish high school. Now, write an essay explaining why you think students drop out of school.

Alternative for younger students:

Many students do not do their work in school and then later often quit school before they graduate. Think of some reasons why you think these students do not do their work and get bad grades. Now, write an essay explaining why you think these students do not work in school and often quit school before graduating.

41. High school English classes require students to read Shakespeare and other classics. Some students object to this practice. Think of some reasons why you think the state requires that Shakespeare and the classics be taught in high school English. Now, write an essay explaining why you think Shakespeare and the classics are required.



Alternative for younger students:

In school, students must read classic books that the teacher picks. Some students do not like to be told what to read. They would rather pick their own books. Think of some reasons why your teachers require these classic books that are so famous. Think of some that your teacher has read to you or that you have read yourself. Now, write an essay explaining why you think the teachers insist that students read and listen to the famous classics.

42. Imagine that time travel to the past was possible. Think of where and when you would like to go for a visit. Write an essay telling where and when you would go in the past and explain why you choose to go there.
43. Imagine that you had no TV or radio for one week. Think of some activities that you can do instead to keep you busy and out of trouble. Write an essay to explain what you can do to keep occupied in a week of no TV or radio.

Or, alternatively, if your students are having trouble with this type of essay:

Imagine that you had no TV or radio for one week. Think of one activity that you would like to do instead to keep you busy and out of trouble. Write an essay explaining one activity to replace the TV and radio for that week.

44. Teenagers (children) are faced with many problems today. School, home, society, peers all complicate your lives. Think of one problem that really bothers you. Now, think of some solutions to that problem that might make it easier to bear. Write an essay offering solutions to your worst problem.
45. Many teenagers (children) complain that adults expect too much of them. Many adults think that teenagers (children) do not help out enough at home, at school, or in society doing volunteer work. What do you think? Do adults expect too much of you? Think of some reasons to support your answer. Now, write an essay explaining whether or not you think adults expect too much of you.



46. Each year many teenagers are killed by driving under the influence of alcohol or by being in a car driven by another teen who has had too much alcohol. How can the number of alcohol-related deaths be reduced? Think of some solutions you and your friends could implement to solve this problem. What do you think would work to reduce the deaths? Now, write an essay proposing some solutions to help stop teenagers from risking their lives and driving under the influence of alcohol.

Alternative for younger students:

Each year many teenagers are killed by driving under the influence of alcohol or by being in a car driven by another teen who has had too much alcohol. Think of what you and your friends, as younger persons who cannot yet drive, can do to keep your older brothers and sisters and friends from drinking and driving when drunk. Write an essay explaining your ideas to keep these teens out of the car if they drink.

47. Pollution, excessive garbage, toxic and industrial waste, using up non-replaceable resources are all problems facing our environment. Think of one particular environmental problem that you believe could be solved. Now think of some possible solutions to that problem. Write an essay proposing and explaining your solutions to the environmental problem you chose.
48. We all have a place where we can imagine or go where we relax, let our troubles disappear, and have a good time. For some it is a place far away, and for others it is a place close to home. Think of your favorite place where you can feel an escape from the hassles of your world, a place you love to be, your favorite place. Now, write an essay explaining why this place is your favorite.
49. Everyone has something they do to relax and have fun. Some like to read; others prefer sports; still others like to chat with friends. What is your favorite thing to do to relax and have fun? Think of why you enjoy this activity so much. Now, write an essay explaining why your favorite activity is your preferred way to relax and have fun.



50. In the past few years, there have been more and more incidents of violence reported on school campuses. In fact, there have been many reports of violence even at the kindergarten level! What do you think is the cause of this rise in violence? Think of some possible reasons. Write an essay explaining why you think there have been more incidents of violence in schools in recent years.
51. By the time we reach high school, at least one teacher has made an impact in our lives. Think of a teacher you have had who influenced you and really helped you to learn and to mature. Think of some reasons why this teacher made such a positive impact on your life. Now, without mentioning the teacher's name (use Mr. or Ms. X), explain why this teacher has had such a positive influence in your life.
52. Many kids hear their parents and grandparents talk about "the good old days." Is this just a figment (imaginary thought) in older people's minds as they remember their youth? Was life really better twenty or forty years ago? What do you think of this statement? Is life for teens harder now or when your parents and grandparents were young? Now, write an essay explaining your answer to this question.
53. Philosophers have written books and books about the meaning of life. Each one is different. What is your philosophy of life? What is life all about? Decide what you think are the most important elements that make us human, that are the ideas (philosophies) of the way you run your life. Write an essay explaining your philosophy of life.

Alternative for younger students:

There are many books that talk about the meaning of life. Your teacher talks about living a "good" life. What do you think are the most important things to remember to follow in the years to come? What do you think are the most important things to do in your life that will lead to your happiness? Now, write an essay explaining what will make life good and meaningful for you.

54. We all have different personalities, different ways of dealing with life, different points of view. What are the main elements of your



- personality? What kind of a person are you? What are you *really* like inside? Write an essay explaining your personality to your reader.
55. Life is filled with conflicts, conflicts of interest, conflicts of opinion, conflicts of life styles, etc. Most good novels have some sort of conflict in them to add to the interest. Resolving that conflict is what the novel is about. Think about some of the conflicts in your life. Now think how you resolve those conflicts. Write an essay to explain how you usually resolve conflicts. What is your method?
56. Everyone, no matter how young, has a year in his or her life that was not so good. Think of the worst year of your life. Think of reasons why it was your worst year. Write an essay explaining why that particular year was the worst year of your life.

Or conversely

57. Your school (the United States, your state, etc.) is not perfect. No matter how good something is, there are always ways to make it better. Think of one problem your school (the United States, your state, etc.) has that might be improved with some clever plans. Now, think of some solutions, some ways to make that improvement. Write an essay explaining your solutions to the problem.
58. I imagine that going to the future was possible. Think how far ahead into the future you would like to visit. Think about your reasons why you would like to choose that particular time. Write an essay telling how far into the future you would like to go and explain why you chose that particular time.
59. When we are young, we play games—board games, imaginary games, sports games. Think of some reasons why you really liked this game. Now, write an essay explaining why this game was your favorite as a younger child.
60. Medical studies have shown that exercise is a necessary part of our daily routine. What do you think? Do you exercise? Think about some reasons why you exercise. Exercising is important. Write an



essay why it is important to exercise regularly.

61. We consider certain people (real or made up) to be our heroes. Think about a real or made-up person and why he or she is your hero. Now write an essay explaining why that person is your hero.
62. I imagine if you could do anything you wanted for an entire week. Pick one thing you would like to do that week of freedom. Now write an essay to explain why you chose to do that one thing in a week in which you could have done anything you wanted.
63. You have been told for years by your parents and teachers to eat healthy foods instead of junk food. Think of some reasons why eating healthy foods is important. Now write an essay explaining why eating healthy foods is important.
64. At school, at work, and at play we have to work in teams in order to achieve our goals. Think of some attributes that make a good team player whether it be in a sport, at work, or at school when working in groups. Now write an essay to explain what makes a person a good team player.
65. Your parents and teachers insist that respect for others is very important. Think of some reasons why this might be important. Now write an essay explaining why respect for other people is important.



Narrative Prompts for Elementary, Middle, and High Schools

1. Suppose you had invented a time machine. Write a story about what you did with it.
2. Write to tell of a day when you were the teacher. What did you do?
3. Write a story about trading places with your favorite TV, movie, or rock star.
4. One day a spaceship lands on the playground of your school . . .
5. Your shoe must have a story to tell. Tell it.
6. Your class grew plants as a science project. One day you looked at your plant and saw something really strange had grown there.
7. Write a story about what it would be like if you woke up one morning with wings.
8. On your birthday, a strange-looking lady came to your door and handed you a wrapped present. You rattled it. It made a noise. Write a story about this present.
9. Your teacher one day announced that your class was going on a wonderful field trip. Write a story about this field trip. In your story, you can have your class go anywhere you wish.
10. One day, as you were petting and talking to your friend's dog, it answered back! Write a story about this.
11. Write a story about yourself as a hero. What did you do to become a hero? Tell your story.



12. As you walked down the hallway at school, you heard some strange music coming from the custodian's closet. What was it? Write a story about it.
13. Tell a story about children who live in a world where there is no such thing as television, computers, or electronic games.
14. A distant relative bequeathed you a strange ring. As you put this ring on, you discover that it has strange powers. What does it look like? What does it do? Tell a story about this ring.
15. Tell a story about your ideal place to live. What would it be like to live there?
16. (Used twice!) The teacher comes into the room and places a bag on her desk then leaves. The bag moves and wriggles. Write a story about what is in the paper bag.
17. Everyone has a day in his or her life that was extra special or dreams about what he or she would do on a special day. Write a story about a special day you have had or imagine you might have.
18. Every day you pass a door. It's always closed and locked. One day, as you pass, you notice that the door is open. You step inside. Write a story about what was on the other side of that door.
19. Tell a story about what happened when you traveled on a wagon pulled by horses.
20. Tell a story about a day in which everything went wrong.

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21. I imagine you could travel to the future and live there. Think of what you think the future would be like. How different would it be from today? Now, write a story about living in the future.
22. I imagine you could go to any place you wanted for as long as you wanted any time you wanted. What place would you visit? Think about what you would do there. Write a story about a visit to a really neat place.
23. Pretend that you lived in colonial times. Think about what your life would be like, how it would be different living more than 200 years ago. Now, write a story about a young person (or yourself) living in George Washington's day.
24. Novels are fun to read because the action keeps you interested, and the characters almost become your friends. Think of a book you really liked. I imagine that you were a new character in this book. Write a story about what happened.

Note: High school teachers might want to use a specific Shakespearean play or a specific piece of literature.

25. I imagine you woke up one morning and found that you had switched places with a dog or a cat. Think what it would be like. What would you do? Write a story of your day as a dog or a cat.
26. What if you had a personal genie who would grant your every wish? What would your life be like? Think of some of the details. Write a story about having a personal genie.
27. I imagine you had a car that would take you anywhere you wanted to go for one day. Think of where you went in that car and what you did. Write a story about that day.



28. Everyone has a favorite season of the year. What is your favorite season? What do you like to do? Write a story about your favorite season.
29. I imagine one morning there's a knock at your front door. You open the door, and to your great surprise, you find an alien standing there. What do you do? What does it look like? Write a story about your encounter with this alien.
30. On your way to school one morning you see a huge truck speeding down the road. Suddenly, the back door of the truck opens and a large, mysterious box falls off the back of the truck. It sits there in the road. What is in the box? What do you do? Write a story about this mysterious box.
31. One spring day a skunk wanders into your classroom. What are the results? Write a story about the skunk that visited school.
32. I imagine you had a time machine that you could take only to the past. Where would you choose to go? Think of what you would do there, what it would be like. Write a story of your adventure in the past.
33. One day you are sitting under a large tree. An acorn hits you on the head, and you look up. There, on the branch above you sits a squirrel, laughing at you. The squirrel then looks you square in the eye, begins to talk to you, and asks you to return its acorn. What would you do? What would happen if you encountered a talking squirrel? Write a story about the experience.
34. I imagine a world where there was no money. What would people do? What would life be like? Write a story about living in a world without any money.
35. There are times when we all wish, even for just a moment, that we could be someone else for a day. Who would you choose to be for that day? What would you do? Think of some details of your day. Now write a story about what your day was like as that person.

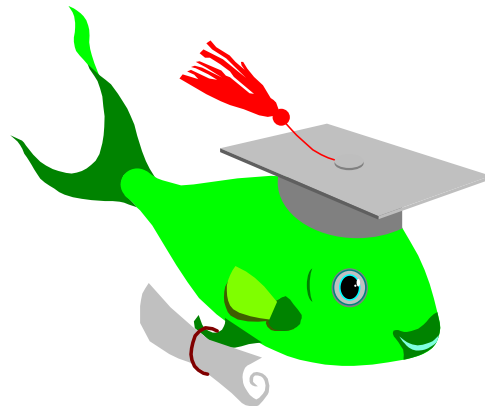


36. In a recent disaster, there were some kids who did some heroic things. Think what constitutes (makes) a hero. I imagine yourself as one. Now write a story in which you were a hero/heroine in a tough situation.
37. A little old lady gave you and a friend some magical glitter and told you to sprinkle it on your hair and something special would happen. What happened when you tried it? Write a story about this mysterious magical glitter.
38. One day you and your friends walked up to an old, seemingly abandoned house. You couldn't see inside due to the dust and cobwebs on the windows. You decide to see if the door is locked. You try the knob, and it turns. The door creaks open as if it has not opened in years . . . What happens next? What do you find? What do you and your friend do? Write a story about entering that old, seemingly abandoned house.
39. Love comes in all forms. We can love our parents, a boyfriend or girlfriend, a favorite pet, a brother or sister, a place, even a thing. Think about someone or something you love. Write a story about that person or thing that involves your feelings.
40. I imagine that your sense of smell was more highly developed than everyone else's. What experiences might you have? How might your life change? What would you be able to smell? Write a story about a person with a very highly developed sense of smell.
41. I imagine yourself temporarily lost in a foreign country where you do not know the language. How do you manage to communicate? What might happen to you? Write a story about a day you might have spent lost in a foreign country without knowing the language.
42. I imagine a city project to have every school student do some hours of community service as a part of the required curriculum. What would you choose to do? What do you think it would be like? What people might you meet? What would you be doing to help? Write a story



about your day of community service.

43. Sometimes family members or friends embarrass you when other people are around. Think of some times this has happened to you. Think of what could happen. Write a story about some embarrassing incident you might have had and how you coped with it.
44. Now and then you, without meaning to do so, break something that belongs to someone else. Think about what might be broken. Think about what might happen as a result. Now, write a story about accidentally breaking something that belonged to someone else and the story of what happened as a result.
45. One day your teacher must go home. Your teacher leaves, telling you that someone else will teach the class for the rest of the time. Who do you think will replace the teacher? What happens as a result? Write a story about a time your teacher had to go home, and someone else took over the class.



60 Persuasive Prompts for Elementary, Middle, and High Schools

1. Convince your parents to raise your allowance.
2. Should at least two years of foreign language classes be required for high-school graduation?
3. Should there be a dress code at your school?
4. Persuade your parents to listen to your favorite music.
5. Your principal has asked you to suggest one way of improving your school to make it a better place for students. Think about the changes that are needed at your school. Pick one change you feel would really make a difference. Write an essay to convince your principal that your idea is one that should be adopted.
6. Convince your teacher to read a favorite book of yours to the class.
7. Children watch too much television. Do you agree? Take a stand and support it. Convince your reader of your position.
8. Are part-time jobs for high school students a good thing or do they hinder getting an education? Take a stand.
9. Students are allowed to drop out of school at age 16. Should the state lower the school dropout age? Write an essay to support your view on the subject.
10. Should your school require uniforms? Convince your reader why or why not uniforms should or should not be required in your school.
11. Convince your parents to take you to a particular place.
12. Should gum chewing (use whatever is forbidden at your school) be allowed on the school campus?



13. Should community service be a requirement for graduation from high school?
14. Suppose you want a pet, and your parents are not sure you should have one. Think of the reasons for having a pet. Think of what you can say that would change your parents' minds. Write a paper to convince your parents to allow you to have a pet.
15. Persuade your mom to let you have your favorite food any time you want it.
16. Should the state legislature add ten days to the school year? Write to convince your reader of your side of the argument.
17. Should we do away with extra-curricular activities such as Art, P.E., and Music and go back to the basics, or are these classes necessary to a student's education?
18. Should homework be eliminated?
19. Considering the rights of non-smokers, write an essay about whether smoking should or should not be permitted in public places. Convince your reader of your position.
20. Should students be allowed to drop out of school?
21. If you could make a suggestion to change the school dress code, what one suggestion would you make? Now write to convince your reader to adopt your suggestion.
22. Your teacher has asked for suggestions on a place to visit for a field trip. Where would you like to go? Now write to convince your reader to adopt your suggestion.
23. We have rules everywhere. Argue to support the need to change a rule or situation that affects you.



24. Vandalism is becoming a problem in today's society. Do you think teenagers who vandalize should pay fines or serve mandatory community service to help repair the damage? Write an essay to convince your reader of your position.
25. Should students hold after-school jobs? Convince your reader of your point of view.

Note: An attempt has been made to phrase the last thirty-five prompts as they might appear on the test. In many states, on the actual test, these prompts would be divided into three separate paragraphs. In the interest of space, I have omitted these separations and have written each prompt as one paragraph. Write them for your students the way they might appear on your state's writing test.

26. Parents, courts, and cities often impose curfews on teenagers. What do you think of curfews? Are they helpful in saving lives and keeping teenagers out of trouble, or are they just another insult to responsible teenagers? Think of some arguments to support your opinion.

Alternative for younger students:

Most people make their children come in before dark. What do you think of this? Does having to come home early keep kids out of trouble, or are they just another insult to responsible kids? Think of some arguments to support your opinion. Now, write an essay to convince your reader of your opinion regarding requiring kids to be home after dark.

27. Many adults disagree whether sex education should be taught in the schools. What is your opinion on this matter? Should sex education be taught in the schools? Take a stand. Write an essay to convince your reader of your point of view on whether sex education should be taught in the schools or not.



Alternative for younger students:

Some things are taught in school that students do not think should be taught. Think of one thing you are required to learn in school that you do not think should be included in the curriculum. Now, write an essay to convince your teachers to abandon that part of the curriculum.

28. The state writing assessment test puts pressure on students and their teachers. On the other hand, student writing all over the country has improved since this test has been implemented. What is your opinion on the matter? Should there be a state writing assessment test, or should this particular test be eliminated? Write an essay to convince your state of your opinion on whether there should (or should not) be a state writing assessment test.
29. Parents, schools, and society all impose rules, but schools especially have a set of rules that must be followed. Think of one school rule that you really dislike. Think of some arguments against having this rule at your school. Now, write an essay to convince your principal and teachers to abandon this particular rule.
30. Universities require that an entering freshman must have taken at least two years of a foreign language in high school in order to be considered for admission. Some teacher and politicians think that high schools should require two years of a foreign language for graduation. What do you think of this possible requirement? Should high schools require two years of studying a foreign language for graduation? There are many arguments for and against this. Write an essay to convince the powers-that-be whether or not two years of a foreign language should be a requirement for graduation from high school.

Alternative for younger students:

Research has shown that the younger you are, the easier it is to learn a foreign language. Should we start requiring that students begin taking a foreign language in elementary school? Take a stand, and convince your



reader of your opinion on requiring foreign language in elementary school.

31. Most families assign chores to the children (teenagers). Most children (teens) object to having these chores imposed upon them. What is your opinion? Do you think that children should have assigned chores to do at home, or do you think you have enough to do already?
32. There is controversy (argument) going on in the country about requiring seat belts in school buses. What is your opinion? Should seat belts be required in all school buses? Write an essay to convince the powers-that-be of your opinion regarding the matter of whether seat belts should be required on school buses.
33. High schools do not offer all the elective courses that students would like to take. Think of an elective course you would like to take that your school does not offer at this time. Think of some reasons why you think this course should be offered. Now, write an essay to convince the administration at your high school to offer the course of your choice.

Alternative for younger students:

34. In Europe, the driving age is 18 because those governments feel that teens are not mature enough to handle the responsibility and the rules of driving in order to avoid accidents. In America, the driving age is still 16. Some people would like to raise the driving age in America to 18. What do you think? Should the driving age be raised to 18? Write an essay to convince the legislature of your position in the matter of raising the driving age to 18.
35. Most school systems have a separate school for pregnant teens to keep them away from other teens and to give them special classes to help them raise their babies. Do you think that pregnant teenagers should have to attend a special school, or do you think that they should be allowed to remain in their current school? Write an essay to convince your reader of your point of view. Should pregnant teenagers have to attend a special school?



Alternative for younger students:

Many school systems have special schools for students who misbehave all the time and disrupt the classroom so that little learning can take place. Do you think this is a good idea? What is your opinion? Write an essay to convince your school system of your point of view.

36. Many students object to the requirement of taking P.E., saying that it is not necessary. What do you think? Should physical education remain a required course at your school? Write an essay to convince your principal of your point of view.

Note: You can substitute any unpopular course here. In my county, it would be Life Management Skills.

37. American teenagers have argued that they drink anyway even though it is illegal for them to do so. Adults feel that they are too young to drink alcohol. Should the drinking age be lowered? What do you think about this? Think about some teens that you know. Think of some arguments to support your opinion. Now, write an essay to convince your reader of your opinion on whether the drinking age should be lowered or not.

38. In recent years, there has been much controversy over the previously solemn ritual of high school graduation. Students (and parents) at some graduation ceremonies have become rowdy and playful. What do you think of this? Should high school graduation continue to be the solemn occasion it has been in the past, or should students (and parents) be allowed to yell and “cut up” during the ceremony? Write an essay to convince your graduation committee of your opinion concerning the matter. Should graduation be a solemn occasion?

Alternative for younger students:

Some schools have graduation ceremonies in the fifth and eighth grade before students have completed their education. What do you think of this? Should students have graduation ceremonies before they finish all of their education or not? Think of some reasons to support your opinion. Now,



write an essay to convince the reader of your point of view.

39. You hear the older generation complaining that they wished they had watched what they ate when they were younger so they wouldn't have the health problems they have as older persons. What do you think of this? Should teens (children) watch what they eat? Should young people be health-conscious and eat healthily even though they have few health problems now? Write an essay to convince your reader on your point of view on whether or not children should watch their health through their choices in food.
40. Teachers and educational experts say that TV is rotting the mind of today's youth. They maintain that young people watch far too much television. Do you think this is true? Do you think that children watch too much television? Should parents restrict the number of hours their children watch? Write an essay to convince your parents of your point of view on this issue. Should parents limit your TV viewing?
41. Years ago, in some cities, there were separate public schools for girls and boys, especially at the high school level. Boys went to one school and girls went to another nearby, an entirely different school. Do you think this is a beneficial idea? Should boys and girls attend separate schools? Write an essay to persuade school officials whether or not they should separate boys and girls into different schools.
42. Most teens (children) complain that they get too little allowance. What do you think? Should you get more allowance? Think of some arguments to raise your allowance. Now, write an essay to the adults in your home to convince them to raise your allowance.
43. In many households where teens reside, possession of the family car is a conflict. How would you convince your parents to lend you the car? Think of some arguments you could use. Write an essay to convince the adults in your home to lend you the car whenever you want it.



Alternative for younger students:

In many households where there are children, there are many arguments over the use of the telephone. How would you convince your parents to get you a phone of your own? Think of some arguments you could use. Now, write an essay to convince your parents that you need a phone of your own.

Note: If some of your students have no phone in their home, perhaps they could convince parents to buy an outfit or handheld video game that their parents could afford.

44. Students complain about having too much homework. Do you think this is true? Do your teachers assign too much homework, or do they not give you enough for you to learn the subjects? Write an essay to convince your teachers either to give you more or less homework.
45. Test scores show that the United States is educationally behind other developed countries in Europe and Asia. We need to take a course of action to improve our education. Some think that the school year should be extended year-round with only short breaks between semesters. Others think it would not help. What do you think? Write an essay to persuade the reader of your opinion on the matter. Should the school year be lengthening?
46. Many people think that smoking is a dangerous habit that kills many from lung cancer. They think that cigarette smoking is not only dangerous for the people who smoke, but also for others around them. They think that the tobacco companies lure young people into smoking (convince young people to smoke) with their clever advertisements. Do you think that smoking should be made illegal? Do you think that no one should be allowed to smoke at all? Or, do you think the choice of smoking should be up to the individual person? What is your opinion? Take a stand. Should all smoking be banned and made illegal? Write an essay to convince the reader of your point of view.
47. In the 1920's it was illegal to sell or to drink alcohol. Today alcohol still causes many problems for the people who drink and for their families. There are also many deaths caused by people (teens) who



- drink and drive. Should alcohol be made illegal again? Would making it illegal solve some problems, or would it impinge (limit) the rights of adults to do what they want to do? What do you think? Should the sale and drinking of alcohol again be made illegal? Write an essay to convince the reader of your point of view.
48. Many people are convinced that violence on TV influences children and teens to be violent in real life. Do you think that this is true? Do you think that the violence on TV is responsible for increased violence among today's youth? Take a stand on this issue and write an essay to convince your reader of your position on whether TV causes violence in real life.
49. Some schools in the United States are requiring that students volunteer for several hours each semester to help on a community problem. What do you think? Write an essay to persuade your reader of your point of view on whether students should be required to volunteer for several hours each semester to help on a community problem.
50. School dress codes often cause conflict among students and teachers. If you were on a committee of teachers and students to set the dress code at your school, what one item of your dress code would you argue to allow students to wear? How would you convince your fellow committee members to accept your idea to allow students to wear this item? Now, write an essay to convince your fellow dress-code committee members that the clothing item you chose be allowed at your school.

Note: Conversely, (to be contrary) you could have a prompt to argue one item of clothing that should not be allowed at your school.

51. Your local TV station is going to hire a student reporter for the evening news program, and you would like the job. Think about your local evening news program and why you should be chosen as the student reporter. Now write an essay to convince your local TV station to hire you as their student reporter.



52. The drama teacher is selecting students to act in a play about famous people. Think of yourself and some of your friends. Think who would be best suited to act in such a play and why they would be good at it. Now write an essay to convince the drama teacher to use that person in a play.
53. A national organization is honoring a teacher. Who should that teacher be? Think of some of the excellent teachers you have had in the past or have this year. Pick one whom you think should be honored by this award. Think of some reasons why you picked this teacher. Now write an essay to convince the national organization to honor the teacher you picked.
54. The School Advisory Council has money to spend in one of the following ways: improving the cafeteria, buying computers, getting interesting speakers for assemblies, or taking field trips. Pick one of these choices and think why you chose it over the others. Now write an essay to convince the School Advisory Council why they should spend their money on the choice you suggest.
55. The City Council wants a teen as a member to represent your age group. Think of yourself and the teens you know. Who would make an excellent representative on the City Council? Think of some reasons why you chose this person. Now write an essay to convince the City Council to select your choice.
56. I imagine that your school does not have a school newspaper. Your principal wants to begin one. Is a school newspaper a good idea? What do you think? Write an essay to convince your principal of your point of view.
57. A good friend of yours is thinking of moving to your town. Think of some attributes of your town that would appeal to your friend. Now write an essay to convince your friend to move to your town.
58. I imagine that you had a friend who ate only junk food, and you know that this is not good for him or her. Think of some reasons why eating junk food is not good for people. Now write an essay to convince your



friend that eating healthy foods is a good idea.

59. A movie director is looking for teens to act in a movie that will be set in your town. Think of yourself and all the teens you know. Who would you choose to act in this movie? Think why you would choose this person. Write an essay to convince the movie director of your choice.
60. If your school is going to grant your grade level one privilege that other grades in your school will not have, what should that privilege be? Think of one privilege that you would like to have that you do not have now. Think why your class should be granted this privilege. Write an essay to convince the administrators of your school to grant this privilege to your class for the rest of the year.

