

**If you got
one whole
day of
being
immortal*,
what
would you
do with it?**

**"immortal" means you can't die or get hurt



photo credit: flickr user slum

Common Core:
Writing Anchor Standard
2: Write informative/
explanatory texts to
examine a topic and
convey ideas and
information clearly.

**ZOMBIE BATMAN. FLYING SHARKS. CANNIBAL
MUPPETS. COME UP WITH THE BEST TWO-WORD MOVIE
PITCH YOU CAN THINK OF, AND THEN EXPLAIN HOW
AND WHY THAT MOVIE WOULD BE AWESOME.**

This is the poem "Fourteen Final Lines" by J. Allyn Rosser.
Which "final line" do you find to be the most powerful? Why?

The favored sight is that which disappears.
Wise angels only hum, and hide their wings.
Some toxins will not drain except by tears.
The monkey throws his feces as he swings.
In heroes, it's the flaw that most endears.
We watch the puppet show to spot the strings.
Success occurs when you forget to fail.
Some people seem more naked when they're dressed.
(The garter and bouquet but not the veil.)
He dreams about the smiles she suppressed.
The prisoner doesn't care who makes his bail.
Some stones bleed if resolutely pressed.
The bay leaf is never served with the stew.
I'd never have said this if not to you.

The Nile in Ancient Egypt. The Great Wall of China. The Mayflower after it crossed the ocean. Think of an important inanimate object or geographic feature from history and imagine you get to interview it. What do you ask? How does it respond? Do a writeup of the imagined interview.

Make sure you introduce your topic, develop your topic with facts, definitions, and details, include linking words and phrases to connect ideas, and end with a concluding statement.

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For over a hundred years, certain students at Oxford had to take an exam that was simply called Essay. For this exam, they had three hours to compose an essay based on just one word. They flipped over a sheet of paper at the start of the exam, and there were no questions on it, **just one word**. They had to write a brilliant essay in three hours based on that one word. One writer described Essay as an "exceptional test of intelligence." Pretend you're in the same situation. Pick one of the words below, and start writing your Essay.

vulnerable	tradition	appearances
nonsense	instruments	nature
forever	mud	surgery
self	questions	gratitude
dancing	grief	regret
delight	underwater	escape

Harry Mounthttp://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/universityeducation/7740812/All-Souls-Oxford-should-continue-to-put-genius-to-the-test.html+

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future	transition	society
bus	rebel	map
fed	pressure	certainty
observation	legend	cloud
security	memory	sleep
skin	streets	perception

Harry Mounthttp://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/universityeducation/7740812/All-Souls-Oxford-should-continue-to-put-genius-to-the-test.html+

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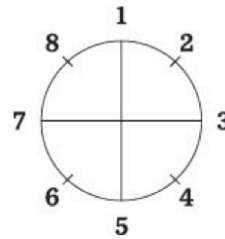
Think of two favorite stories or movies or shows. Got them? Ok, now **swap the main characters**. What changes if the main character from the first is now the main character in the second? What about the other way, the main character from the second goes to the first? **Pick one of the stories and retell it with the main character from the other story.**

Make sure you establish the situation, introduce a narrator, and organize the story in a way that unfolds naturally while using dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences and events. Provide a sense of closure at the end.

DAN HARMON'S STORY CIRCLES

Dan Harmon, who is the creator of a popular TV show, “wanted to codify the storytelling process—to find the hidden structure powering the movies and TV shows, even songs, he’d been absorbing since he was a kid.”* He came up with a theory that all good stories follow this eight-step cycle.

For this prompt, you can either analyze a story you know to see how it aligns with the theory, or you can write your own story that follows the eight-step cycle.



1. A character is in a zone of comfort
2. But they want something
3. They enter an unfamiliar situation
4. Adapt to it
5. Get what they wanted
6. Pay a heavy price for it
7. Then return to their familiar situation
8. Having changed

*quote and image from http://www.wired.com/magazine/2011/09/mf_harmon/all/1

fairy tale therapy

Think of a fairy tale character who experiences something traumatic. Years later, have that character discuss the traumatic events of their fairy tale with their therapist, explaining how it changed their life and perception of reality.



image by <http://adalec.deviantart.com/art/Lil-Red-33977821>

**Every time
you fall
asleep you
find yourself
in the dream
of a stranger.
Describe one
of these
experiences.**



Icon by James Stone from The Noun Project

"We live in an amazing, amazing world, and it's wasted on the crappiest generation of spoiled idiots that don't care." - Louis C.K.



Do people complain about things they shouldn't? Do you? Louis C.K., a comedian, has a whole bit about how often people complain about things like technology. He shares an anecdote about people complaining about the wireless internet not working on an airplane. He has a point, doesn't he? Our lives are pretty amazing compared to some other places and times. What are some things that people take for granted or complain about that are actually amazing? What do you think of his quote at the top? How is everything amazing yet nobody is happy?

My book had come to life right before my eyes. One second I was reading it, and the next second it was standing there talking to me...

Sometimes people talk about favorite books as if they are good friends. Imagine that something like this actually happens to you. Imagine your favorite book becomes a person. What kind of personality does it have? Gender? Appearance? Hairstyle? How does the book-person dress? How does it speak? How well do you get along? Does it fit in with your friends? What are its bad habits? Any quirks? Describe your favorite book as if it was a person.

If you're more interested in telling a story, you could tell the story about this book-person and how it does at transitioning from being a book to being a person.

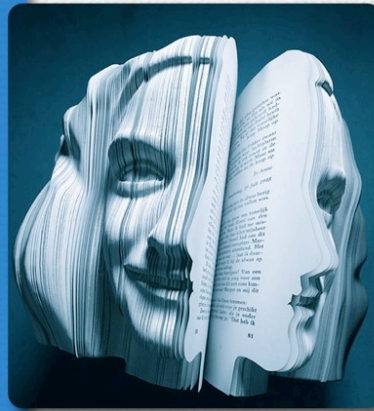


image: "Anne Frank" by Souverein Weesp

Common Core:
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TELL THE STORY OF A FAMOUS HISTORICAL PLAGUE OR EPIDEMIC FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE DISEASE.

Make sure you establish the situation, introduce a narrator, and organize the story in a way that unfolds naturally while using dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences and events. Provide a sense of closure at the end.

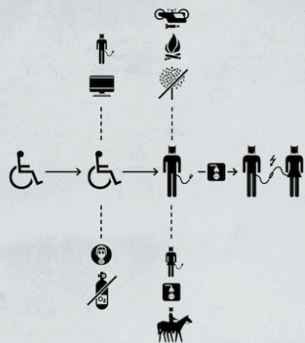
Throughout time, people have believed some pretty weird superstitions. Here are a few*:

- Never take a broom along when you move. Throw it out and buy a new one.
- To dream of a lizard is a sign that you have a secret enemy.
- If you catch a falling leaf on the first day of autumn you will not catch a cold all winter.
- A loaf of bread should never be turned upside down after a slice has been cut from it.
- An acorn at the window will keep lightning out.

Since many of these superstitions are becoming outdated, it's your turn to **make up a brand new set of superstitions**, freshly updated for the 21st century. You could (and should) include things like lack of cell service or what happens when you get two Dr. Who Tumblr posts in a row. Black cats can still be a thing though.



*from <http://listverse.com/20-weird-superstitions/>



Matteo Civaschi*
turns movie plots
into minimalist
pictograms. Can
you do the same
for a favorite film,
book, story, or
episode?

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sequences.

*for more Matteo Civaschi, check out <http://www.h-57.com> or his book *Life in Five Seconds*

Scott Rolen, pitcher Curt Schilling, and catcher Mike Lieberthal, in that order.

The Wizard of Oz. (8-10 p.m., TCM)
— Transported to a surreal landscape, a young girl kills the first person she meets and then teams up with three strangers to kill again.

Inquirer Television Writer Lee Winfrey
and Rick Polito of Universal Press

Do you know *The Wizard of Oz*?
Does this sound like *The Wizard of Oz* that you know?

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Can you do the same thing? Think of a movie or book that you know well and explain the facts of the story in a way that makes it sound as bizarre and ominous as this take on *The Wizard of Oz*.

If you try this one with other people, take turns trying to guess what story they retold.

I saw this newspaper clip online awhile ago and promptly forgot about it, until @tomwoodard posted it on bionicteaching.com, a site which I think is well worth your time.

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Imagine this: using newly discovered scientific methods, governments have gained the ability to wipe out all the memories of the worst criminals. Do you think that this would be a just punishment for some crimes? Do you think these criminals could be released back into society after their memories are wiped? Do you think people who commit crimes do it because of what they've experienced in life or because of who they are? Would wiping their memories restore them to being a cooperative citizen?

You have many options for this prompt: either argue for the justness of this punishment, make your case for releasing these criminals back into society after their memories are wiped, explain your take on nature or nurture in relation to criminal behavior, or tell a story about a criminal who has had his or her memories wiped.

"Imagine you could go back to the age of five and relive the rest of your life, knowing everything that you know now.

You will re-experience your entire adolescence with both [the mental ability you have now] and the memories of everything you've learned from having lived your life previously..."

— Chuck Klosterman

What would you do differently? What would you change? Can you describe what this would be like? What would a typical day be like? What would your life be like now as a result of this?

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You can choose to respond with an opinion piece that supports your point of view with plenty of reasons, or with an explanatory piece that conveys your ideas about this prompt clearly, or with a narrative that tells the story of this situation through effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

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Which three of these skills are the most important for success in life? Why those?

Patience / Common Sense / Humor / Courage / Creativity /
Resourcefulness / Work Ethic / Organization / Integrity /
Pride / Responsibility / Flexibility / Compassion / Love /
Kindness / Self-Control / Obedience / Independence /
Discernment / Wisdom / Initiative / Wit / Friendliness

You can choose to respond with an opinion piece that supports your point of view with plenty of reasons or with an informative/explanatory piece that conveys your ideas about this prompt clearly.

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"I said to someone I know, 'I don't know why this hurts so much.' And she said, 'it hurts because it mattered.' And that was a huge thing for me to realize. That there are things in life that hurt. And they hurt because they were important."

— John Green

What do you think of
this idea? Do you know
what he means? Can you
identify with it? What in
your life has hurt
because it mattered?

Make sure you introduce your topic, develop your topic with facts, definitions, and details, include linking words and phrases to connect ideas, and end with a concluding statement.

Guillermo del Toro on what children's stories should have*:

... try and create a sense of darkness in the tale. A lot of people just make this sanitized super happy-go-lucky, "bright sunshine and clouds" type of childhood movies. And you really need an element of the dark in it.

Do you think that children's stories should have a sense of darkness in them? Do you know any that do? Can you tell a children's story that has a sense of darkness in it? Can you add an "element of the dark" to a children's story you've heard before?



Guillermo del Toro

* from <http://io9.com/5961916/guillermo-del-toro-explains-the-biggest-mistake-people-make-in-telling-stories-for-children>

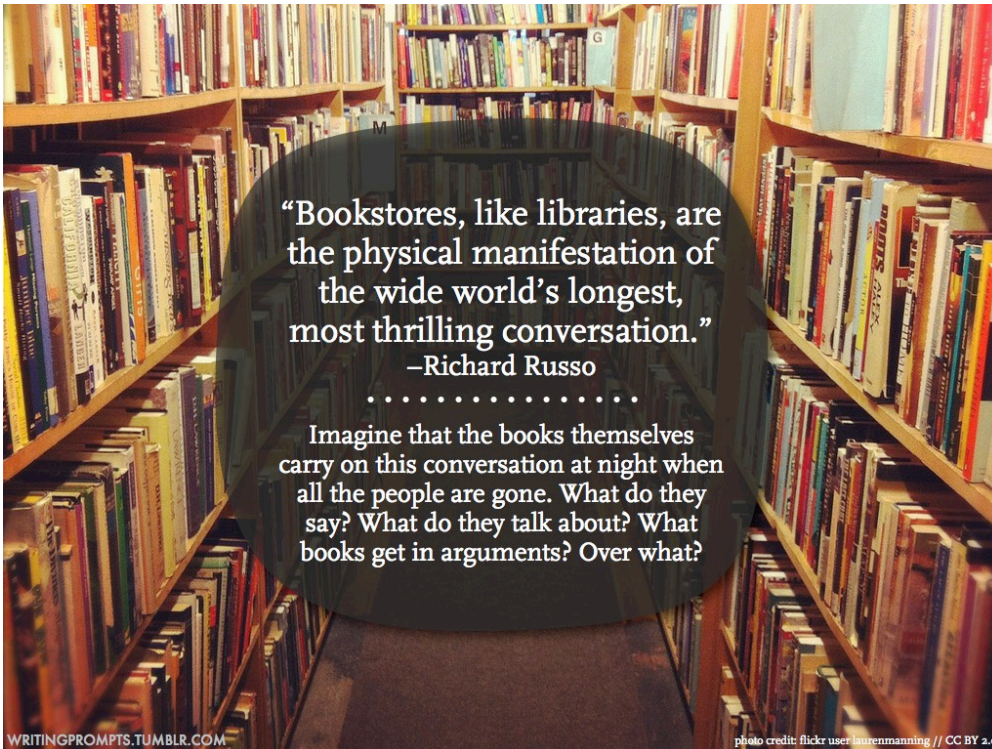
"All these kids are icebergs, we only see the tip."
- a character in the show *Castle*

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How are you like an iceberg? How much do people really know about you? How much do you think you really know about others? How does this explain your friends, or those you are around, or even those who are in charge of you?

Make sure you introduce your topic, develop your topic with facts, definitions, and details, include linking words and phrases to connect ideas, and end with a concluding statement.

image credit: flickr user usoceangov / cc by 2.0



“Wouldn’t it be great to be gifted? In fact...
It turns out that choices lead to habits.
Habits become talents.
Talents are labeled gifts.
You’re not born this way, you get this way.”
– Seth Godin

What do you want to be considered “gifted” at?
Using Seth Godin’s formula, explain, step by
step, in detail, how to become “gifted” at that
thing. For your thing, what are the choices that
lead to the habits that become talents?

If you had to make the case for how great humanity is using only one person from history as your example (and by the way, the other side is using Hitler as its example for why humanity is terrible), who would you use as your example for the greatness of humanity? What would you say about that person to make the case? Who do you think would win the case?

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“I’ve been making a list of the things they don’t teach you at school. They don’t teach you how to love somebody. They don’t teach you how to be famous. They don’t teach you how to be rich or how to be poor. They don’t teach you how to walk away from someone you don’t love any longer. They don’t teach you how to know what’s going on in someone else’s mind. They don’t teach you what to say to someone who’s dying. They don’t teach you anything worth knowing.”
— Neil Gaiman

Teach me something that’s
actually worth knowing.

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“It’s like everyone tells a story about themselves inside their own head. Always. All the time. That story makes you what you are. We build ourselves out of that story.” – from *The Name of the Wind* by Pat Rothfuss

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What is the story that you tell yourself about yourself in your own head? Do you think that story makes you what you are? Do you think that “we build ourselves out of that story”? If that is true, that we become the story we tell ourselves, do you need to start telling yourself a better story? What story are you going to start telling yourself?

background image by flickr user CapturedbyKC

“A good science fiction story should be able to predict not the automobile but the traffic jam.” – Frederik Pohl



What amazing technology do you think future people will have? Do you have an idea? Hoverboards? Self-driving cars? Robot servants? Computers controlled by thought? Now think about this: how is that technology going to malfunction, cause problems, or have negative and unexpected consequences? What’s the downside of teleportation? What could go wrong with flying cars? How will having phones in our heads or elevators to Mars cause problems? Predict and describe the negative consequences of some future technology, or tell a story that shows the downside of some future technology.

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image via flickr user epsos / cc by 2.0

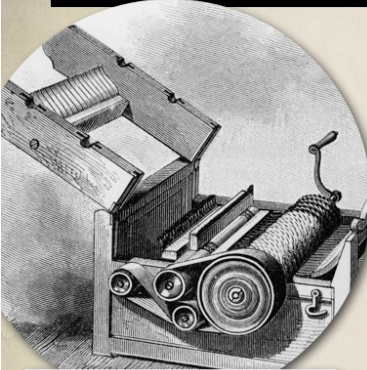
“Normal is a cycle on the washing machine. There is no such thing when it comes to human beings.” – Trisha Goddard



Are you normal? Is anyone? Do you know anyone who you would consider to be normal? Who is the most normal person you know? Why do you think that? What makes someone normal? Do you think that they think they are normal? Does everyone feel different inside their own head? Do you think it's ok for a person not to fit into what society sometimes labels as normal? What goes into that normal label?

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“If Early Inventors Used Kickstarter”



KICKSTARTER

What if Kickstarter (a website that allows people to raise money for creative projects via crowd funding) was available for funding interesting inventions from history? How would history be different if early inventors had a way to get people to chip in to fund their inventions and bring them to scale? What would Henry Ford's Kickstarter page have looked like? How would Edison promote the light bulb? Would Alexander Graham Bell's idea have broken all the previous funding records?

WRITINGPROMPTS.TUMBLR.COM

Thanks to @EHSMrsJ for this idea. The title comes from a Jeopardy category. Image via <http://nattosect.wordpress.com/land-of-cotton/>

**“If forced to choose,
Giacometti once said, he
would rescue a cat from
a burning building
before a Rembrandt.”**

— David Markson



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Is that the right choice? What's the right choice? Which would you save from a burning building: a cat or a famous painting worth millions? What does choosing the cat say about a person? What does choosing the painting say about a person?

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cat image via http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/71/Calico_tabby_cat_-_Savannah.jpg

“young people are narcissists”

— Elspeth Reeve



Narcissism means “excessive interest in oneself and one's physical appearance.” What do you think? Are young people narcissists? Are *all* young people narcissists? Is it not that young people are narcissists, but that all people are narcissists? If you do agree that young people are narcissists, why do you think that is? Do you think they grow out of it eventually? What can we do about it? If you disagree, make the case for why not.

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image via Reddit user PrimeCaliber



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Modern Pangea

What if the continents were suddenly smashed back together, forming a modern version of Pangea, keeping the same country borders that exist today? How would this affect international relations? How would this change daily life? What would happen to tourism, economies, societies, immigration, and government? Would this be a better or worse version of the world?

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Background image by flickr user CapturedbyKC. Pangea image via <http://capitan-mas-ideas.blogspot.com/2012/08/pangea-politica.html>

“It takes a great deal of courage to stand up to your enemies, but even more to stand up to your friends.” – J.K. Rowling

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with reasons.

Do you think this is true? Which takes more courage, standing up to a friend or standing up to an enemy? Do you have a story or example to help explain your opinion?

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background image by flickr user CapturedbyKC

“Stick a shovel in the ground almost anywhere and some horrible thing or other will come to light.” – Margaret Atwood



Have a character stick a shovel in the ground. What does that character find? How does it change them? What does it reveal about someone else that they know? What does it reveal about the town or place they live? What does that discovery set in motion?

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image from flickr user armyenvironmental / cc by 2.0



image: flickr user laurentkronental



image: News of North Carolina (?)

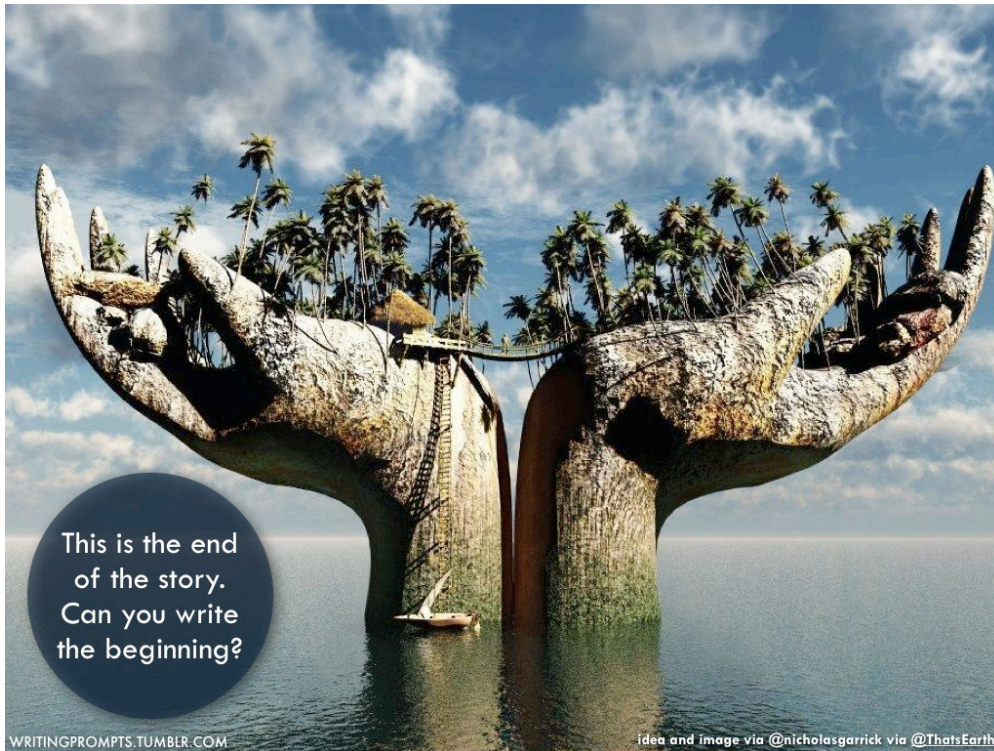
Pick one, and tell the story.



image: college humor (?)



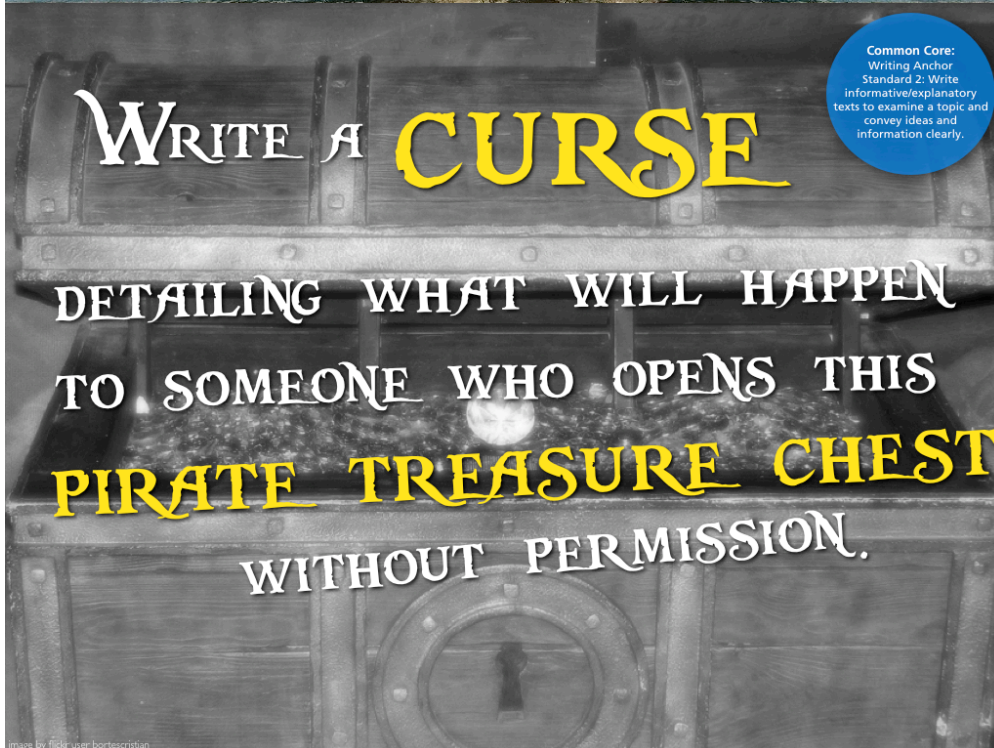
image: teetering bulb on etsy



This is the end
of the story.
Can you write
the beginning?

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idea and image via @nicholasgarrick via @ThatEarth



WRITE A CURSE

DETAILING WHAT WILL HAPPEN
TO SOMEONE WHO OPENS THIS
PIRATE TREASURE CHEST
WITHOUT PERMISSION.

Common Core:
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image by flickr user bortescristian



Write a pessimistic version of what's going to happen in the world in the next 50 years.

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background image by flickr user CapturedbyKC / White House image from Fallout 3 GenscoArt

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background image by Flickr user: CapturedbyKC / Future Yellowstone from <http://theartofmanipulation77.deviantart.com/art/Advent-of-Yellowstone-269756923>

Why was there a secret door
in the back of her closet?
Why had it just opened?
And what could possibly be...

down the steps?

TELL THIS
STORY

Common Core:
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image by flickr user flufflich

TELL THIS STORY

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Image: "Let's get out of here" by Dave Hill

Make sure you establish the situation, introduce a narrator, and organize the story in a way that unfolds naturally while using dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences and events. Provide a sense of closure at the end.

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The mom stopped scolding the toddler for chewing on the walls when she noticed that the toddler had discovered a book typed into the wallpaper. Who had put it there? And what story did it tell?

Make sure you establish the situation, introduce a narrator, and organize the story in a way that unfolds naturally while using dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences and events. Provide a sense of closure at the end.

I could not trace the source on this image. If anyone knows it, please let me know.

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Tell this story:

That's weird, thought Cupid. I've never hit the wrong person like that before.



Image from executive search dating

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“There are many ways to be free. One of them is to transcend reality by imagination, as I try to do.”

– Anaïs Nin

Use your imagination to “transcend reality” and retell your day as an epic struggle between the forces of good and evil...

You can choose to respond with an informative/explanatory piece that conveys your ideas about this prompt clearly, or a narrative that tells the story of this situation through effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

TELL THIS STORY:
A WHOLE VILLAGE OF PEOPLE
WENT TO SLEEP IN THE
NORMAL WAY IN THEIR OWN
HOMES, ONLY TO WAKE UP
THE NEXT MORNING, ALL OF
THEM, IN A FIELD OUTSIDE OF
THE VILLAGE.
WHAT HAPPENED?

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You get to create a dream (or a nightmare) and give it to someone. What do you create and whom do you give it to?

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TELL THIS
STORY

"Dragons stalk the streets, puffing out smoke and clattering their mechanical wings." - Hilary Mantel



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image: flickr user slimdandy / CC BY 2.0



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Writing Anchor
Standard 3: Write
narratives to develop real
or imagined experiences or
events using effective
technique, descriptive
details, and clear event
sequences.

Tell a tale from the evil baby orphanage*:

The evil baby orphanage is "the world's foremost time traveling facility for the preventive parenting of evil babies." Basically, it works like this: "time nannies" go back in time and remove the evil babies from history and take them to the evil baby orphanage where these evil babies can be raised right: "Keep your babies from burning down your orphanage as you try to keep the Unabomber away from the arts and crafts table, Kim Jong Il away from the toy rocket ship, and Caligula away from everyone..."

* Evil Baby Orphanage is a card game that you should go buy at dftba.com/product/132/Evil-Baby-Orphanage-Card-Game



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SHE RAN AFTER HIM.

image by Mikko Lagerstedt at www.mikkolagerstedt.com

A man walking along a sidewalk glances toward the street and suddenly stops. He walks into the middle of the street, bends over, and picks up a wallet. He starts to return to the sidewalk as he opens the wallet to look inside, but suddenly a strange expression comes over his face and he stops in his tracks. For a moment he stares into the middle distance. After a few more moments, he bends down and returns the wallet to the street.



What
was in
the
wallet?

this whole prompt is from Benjamin Davidoff

What happened to all of them?

"Last year in the U.S. alone more than **nine hundred thousand people** were reported missing and not found... That's out of three hundred million, total population. That breaks down to about **one person in three hundred and twenty-five vanishing**. Every year.... Maybe it's a coincidence, but it's almost the same loss ratio experienced by herd animals on the African savannah to large predators."

— Jim Butcher, *Dead Beat*

Come up with an explanation for these disappearances.

Is it some kind of otherworldly predator? A secret clan of mutant ninjas? Aliens? Your explanation should fall into either the science fiction or fantasy genre.

photo credit: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/aftab/4003854870/>

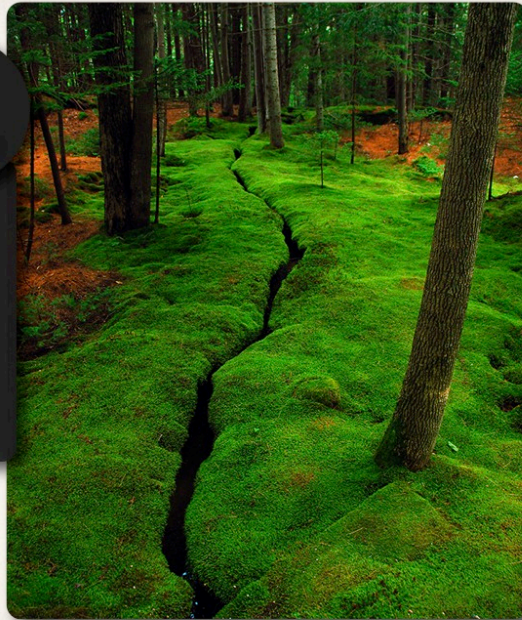
Tell this story:



This image is by Phil McDarby, and it's his interpretation of a scene from my new favorite book, *The Name of the Wind* by Patrick Rothfuss. Image from: http://www.philmcdarby.com/index.php/digital_art/detail/luring_the_draccus/. The beast in the scene is the fictional Draccus (<http://kkc.wikia.com/wiki/Draccus>). They are vegetarians but breathe fire. This particular one has somehow become addicted to a mind-altering substance, which makes him particularly dangerous.

Tell
this
story:

"There it was,
as peaceful
and mysterious
as s/he
remembered:
The Rift. The
place where it
all began."



idea and quote from @laurascricket, photo credit: http://photo.net/photodb/photo?photo_id=11356690

You find yourself in front of seven identical doors.



A voice from above tells you:

“These seven doors lead to seven places:

Narnia, Neverland, Wonderland, Hogwarts,
Camelot, Middle Earth, and Westeros.”

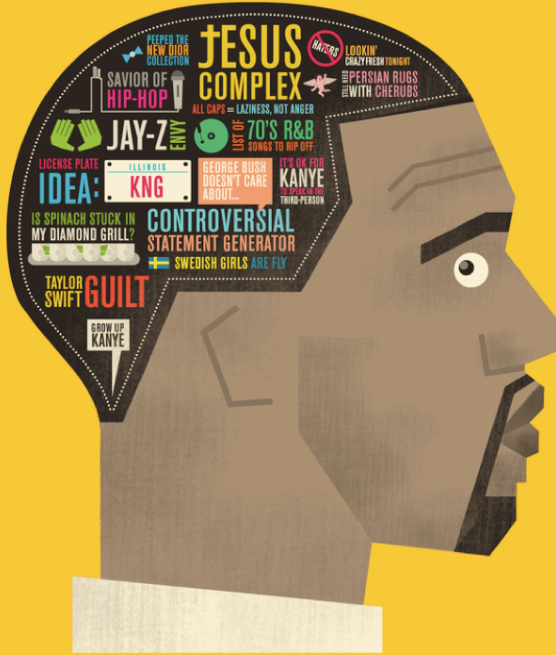
Which door do you go through?

Why that door? What happens?



**Tell this
story**

image by Justin Gerard at
<http://conceptartworld.com/?p=12506>



**DRAW
YOUR HEAD
THEN FILL
IT UP WITH
WORDS
AND
PICTURES
SHOWING
WHAT'S
GOING ON
IN THERE.**

"Inside the mind of Kanye West" from <http://www.myspace.com/everything/photo/2011/02/09/inside-the-mind-of-kanye-west>



**Describe each day of the
week as if it was a person.**



Describe each day of the week as if it was a person.

Tell
this
story:

She was sure this was where he had disappeared.



image credit: Aron Wiesenfeld: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/48947217@N00/6002904823/sizes//in/photostream/>

tell this
story





Your doorbell rings. You answer the door and find this on your front porch. You yell into the house, "We got another one!"

Tell the rest of this story.

**THE HAUNTED HOUSE IS SENTIENT*.
AND YOU'RE STUCK INSIDE.**



*sentient means "able to perceive and feel things"

Pick one from each list to make the most terrifying creature and scary animal combination. Explain why that combination is the most terrifying.

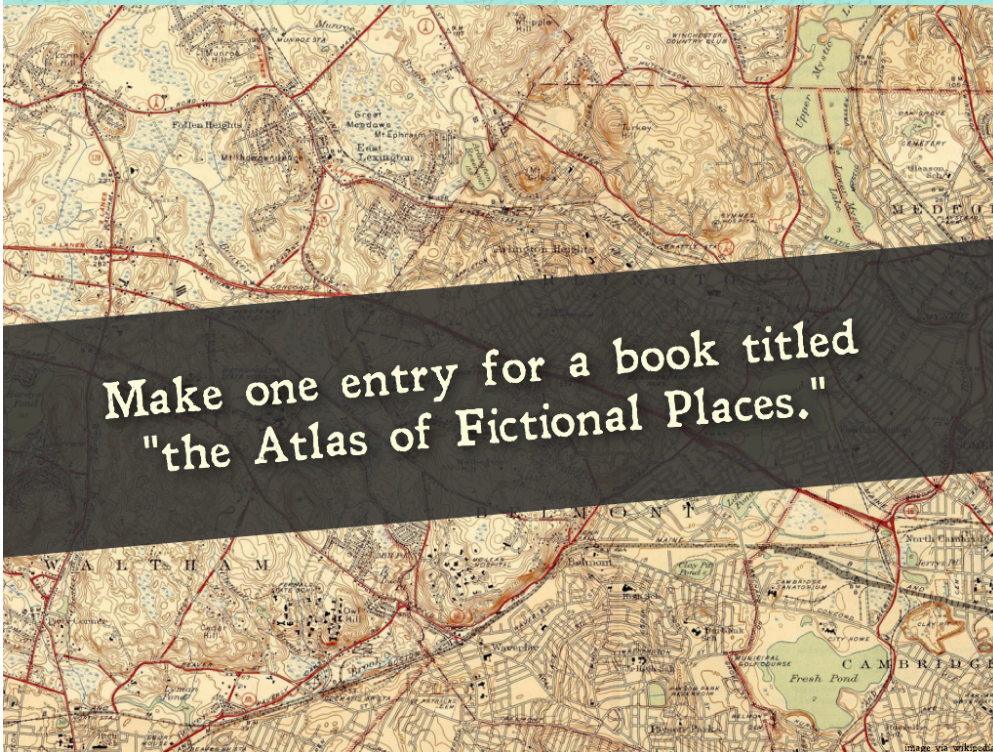
vampire
ninja
pirate
zombie
giant
mummy
witch
clown

alien
werewolf
yeti
goblin
wraith
demon

python
porcupine
alligator
shark
bear
bat
badger
wolf

armadillo
leopard
viper
lobster
monkey
pig
deer

**Make one entry for a book titled
"the Atlas of Fictional Places."**



Common Core:
Writing Anchor Standard
2: Write informative/
explanatory texts to
examine a topic and
convey ideas and
information clearly.

Common Core:
Writing Anchor Standard
3: Write narratives to
develop real or imagined
experiences or events using
effective technique,
descriptive details, and
clear event sequences.

The Tigris River floods; lose two turns. Watt improves the Steam Engine; roll again. The Black Death has decimated the population; go back three spaces. What if all of history (or just a certain time period) was made into a giant board game? What would be on the cards? What if as you played the game you actually experienced different events from history with each roll of the dice? Describe the board game and what it would be like to play the game.

You can choose to respond with an explanatory piece that conveys your ideas about this prompt clearly, or a narrative that tells the story of this situation through effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

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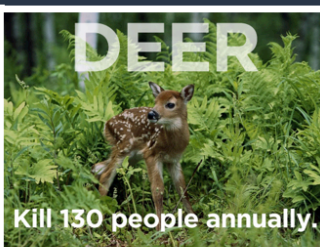
Your story needs to include this line, either at the beginning, the end, or somewhere in between:

"...but if anyone asks,
tell them we're fine."

Make sure you establish the situation, introduce a narrator, and organize the story in a way that unfolds naturally while using dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences and events. Provide a sense of closure at the end.



Why are people so scared of sharks?
Why aren't people more scared of high school football? And deer.
Deer are terrifying. Do you think your fears are rational? Do you
think most people's fears are rational? What deserves our fear?



Images and stats from Buzzfeed: <http://www.buzzfeed.com/awesomer/20-things-that-kill-more-people-than-sharks-every>



Tell this story:
We climbed to the top for
a view of the moons, not
expecting to meet someone,
especially someone like
that, all the way up there.

photo credit: Dr. Akira Takaue/National Geographic Photo Contest