



YWP WEEKLY CHALLENGES

September – December 2021



Young Writers Project's writing and visual art challenges are meant to inspire and spark creativity every week through the school year. The following challenges are for the September-December period; January-June challenges will be posted here soon.

YWP writers, photographers, and artists can respond **any time to any of the challenges**, but to be considered for **publication** with our Vermont media partners, responses to the week's featured challenges are due on Friday of that week. YWP publishes weekly in the Burlington Free Press and VTDigger.org, and monthly in the Rutland Herald and Barre-Montpelier Times Argus.

All writing, photos, and art posted on youngwritersproject.org this year – both responses to these challenges and general submissions on any topic – will also be considered for publication in our monthly digital magazine, *The Voice*, and our annual anthology, published every September, showcasing the best work of the previous school year. **NOTE: You can also post about anything, anytime.**

NEW TO YWP? To respond to challenges, click on the title of the challenge. The challenge will pop up. Click "Respond." This will open a new blog form in your account that links directly to the challenge. Fill in Title; select a Category; write in the Body section; and SAVE. You can also post images, add audio and video by going to ADD MEDIA on your blog.

- General submissions: To post about *anything anytime*, log in to your YWP account and Create a Blog Post. Remember to give each post a title, category (poem, nonfiction, visual/photos/art, etc.), and SAVE.
- Journalism prompts: Also watch for our newsy Community Journalism Project challenges every week through the school year.

Special thanks for this year's challenges: YWP summer intern Charlotte Dodds, YWP publications coordinator Anna Forsythe, and our many YWP writers and artists who contributed ideas, themes, and inspiration.

WEEK 1 (Sept. 5-10)

Light: Write a poem or story that includes this line or your own variation: “The tiny lights along the edge of the cabin framed our faces in pale yellow light.”



Summer: How was your summer? Focus on one happy, surprising, unusual or stand-out moment and describe it in words or images.

WEEK 2 (Sept. 12-17)

First Grade: Do you remember your first day of first grade? Were you scared? Deliriously excited? What was your teacher like? For inspiration, read: “First Grade” by Ron Koertge

Folklore: Think of a cautionary tale you were told when you were younger. Was it wise or ridiculous? Did it make a lasting impression on you? Write about it. Need inspiration? “My Grandma Told Stories or Cautionary Tales” by Marlanda Dekine-Sapient Soul

WEEK 3 (Sept. 19-24)



Photo-Colors: In the color wheel, there are two sides – warm and cool. In this challenge, you'll take photos that represent both sides. Warm colors range from red to yellow-green. Typically, when we think of warmer colors, we think of a sunny day. Cool colors range from blue-green to blue-violet. We often associate cool colors with ice or water, but there are many options. Take photos with primarily warm colors, then do the same with cool colors. Do you prefer one side over the other? Post your photos in a colorful slideshow!

Sunrise: Emily Dickinson’s poem, “I’ll tell you how the Sun rose,” is full of color and life. Read the poem, watch the sun rise, describe what you see and experience in words or photos.

Possession: If you could keep only one of your possessions, which one would it be? Describe it. Explain why it is important to you.

WEEK 4 (Sept. 26-Oct. 1)

Heavens: Write your own myth about the creation of our solar system: the stars, the moon, the sun, the planets. Be as whimsical or serious as you wish.

Cheeseburger: All your billionaire friends are interested in space travel, but you, you're obsessed with crafting the world's best cheeseburger. Tell the story of how you got here and give us a hint about your secret recipe.



Photo-B/W: Black and white photography, with its shades and contrasts, can create a mood unlike anything seen in color photos. Experiment with the drama of black and white.

WEEK 5 (Oct. 3-8)

Magnificent: Begin or end a story with this thought: "She had never seen anything so magnificent in her life."

Taste: If you could eat something inedible, like an object or a memory or a feeling, what would it taste like?

WEEK 6 (Oct. 10-15)

Guess: Sometimes a photograph suggests something else is going on, making you guess what the big picture is really about. Create your own mystery photo. You might focus on a small detail with a blurry background, or you might draw the viewer's eye to an unexpected element in the corner. Take a photo that will make people think more about what they're looking at.

Skirts: "Turquoise Water Behind Him," a short story by Maureen Pilkington, begins with the sentence, "It was October, but Margo was still wearing short summer skirts." Continue your own story from here, either with Margo, or your own character.

WEEK 7 (Oct. 17-22)



Photo-Outside: Take your camera outside, observe your surroundings, and take photos – up close, far away, Mother Nature, city sidewalks ... whatever you see, wherever you are. Post your photos in a slideshow.

Dancer: Write a story about an aspiring dancer who always gets stuck with the background role in shows.

Objects: Chilean poet Pablo Neruda wrote many odes to ordinary, often overlooked objects. Depict an everyday object in your life through a form of art (writing, photography, painting, etc.). For inspiration, read: "Ode to a Large Tuna in the Market" by Pablo Neruda.

WEEK 8 (Oct. 24-29)

Ghosts: Write a short story about a group of ghosts who go from abandoned house to abandoned house, staying in each one until it is sold or falls apart. What is life like for this band of squatter ghosts? What happens if one or all of them get tired of moving around so much – and decide to stay when the humans move in?

Melted Lines: Use this phrase, or a variation, in a poem or story, “She found hope between the buttery, melted lines of her grilled cheese.”

WEEK 9 (Oct. 31-Nov. 5)



Action: Hard to pull off, but so rewarding! Action shots make compelling art. In photos or illustrations, try to capture action.

Afterlife: Emily Dickinson wrote, “A death-blow is a life-blow to some / Who, till they died, did not alive become.” Write about a character who finally learns to live in the afterlife.

New Word: Create a new word and describe it. Explain its meaning, origin, why it's useful, how you could use it.

WEEK 10 (Nov. 14-19)



Winter: Describe the approach of winter using as many sensory and descriptive details as you can. Love it or hate it? Show us why in words, photos, illustrations.

Cat Person: What does it mean to be a cat person or a dog person? Are these unfair stereotypes? Have you ever been labeled as one or the other? Have you ever thought of yourself in this way – and does it fit?

WEEK 11 (Nov. 21-26)

Thanks: Write an ode to someone who makes you feel grateful. What is it about them that sparks your gratitude?



Watercolor: Whether or not you think of yourself as an artist, give watercolors a try! Find a palette of watercolors, a paintbrush, some paper, a jar of water, and get to work. Try painting fruit, flowers, your pet, a stack of books, a mug of coffee, a bicycle, a landscape. Have fun and remember to post your work!

WEEK 12 (Nov. 28-Dec. 3)



Window: Paint or photograph the view from your window, including the window frame to give your composition an interesting near-far perspective.

Glittering: Include this sentence in a poem or story: “There they sat, in all their glittering glory, far across the room from me ...”

Boredom: Create a cure for boredom. Is it a potion? Or maybe a dance to shake the boredom out? This could be a poem, a short work of fiction, or even a recipe. Have fun!

WEEK 13 (Dec. 5-10)

Portrait: Ask a friend or family member to model for you. Photograph, draw, or paint them. Pretend you’re shooting the cover of *Vogue*, or maybe you’re Leonardo da Vinci painting the *Mona Lisa* – whatever works to capture your subject in a stunning portrait!

Before Us: In Hayao Miyazaki’s animated movie, “*Castle in the Sky*,” an ancient civilization disappeared, leaving islands and immense buildings floating in the atmosphere. Write a poem, story, or essay (or create a work of art) that describes the remnants of a long-forgotten race. Are the remains more advanced than our modern world? Did the population seem to be human? Did they leave a historical record behind? Describe a real place or invent your own.

WEEK 14 (Dec. 12-17)



Photo-Pets: Donkeys or goldfish, cats or dogs? Share your favorite pet photos or illustrations!



Hope: What is something that you really, *really* hope for – now or in the future? Why is it so important to you?

Red: Brainstorm the color red and jot down everything that it brings to mind. From your list, choose your favorites and create a poetic or photographic tribute to red.

WEEK 15 (Dec. 19-24)

Reach: Begin or end a story with the line, “And that was the moment when I knew it had all flown out of my reach.”

Holidays: What are some images of family holidays that have stayed with you over the years? Describe them – draw or write about what you remember.

WEEK 16 (Dec. 26-31)

Inside Cat: Write a story about an inside cat who longs to find the courage to become an outside cat, an alley cat, maybe even a tiger!

Plane: Write about someone who believes they are stuck in a perpetual plane ride – never landing, never taking off – just up in the clouds, endlessly, in a 747. What happens? How do the flight attendants and other passengers react?

Challenges for January-June 2022 will be posted on our website, youngwritersproject.org, soon. For more information: Susan Reid, YWP Executive Director, sreid@youngwritersproject.org or (802) 324-9538