



YOUNG WRITERS PROJECT WEEKLY WRITING CHALLENGES 2016-17

These challenges were designed by YWP writers, interns and staff to inspire YOU to write! The challenges are scheduled each week with a Friday deadline and are sent to schools as part of our regular publication process. ANYONE from ANYWHERE can respond to these challenges and will be considered for publication, particularly in our digital magazines, *The Voice*, and *The Crow* on *medium.com*, as well as *cowbird.com* and our Anthology, which have no geographic restrictions. We also publish in more than 20 VT newspapers, and on *vtdigger.org* and *vpr.net*. Sign up for an account on *youngwritersproject.org* and start writing today!

1 General writing in any genre. **Due anytime through the year.**

2 Photo1-Feet. Write a story or poem inspired by the photo below (by *August Spagnuolo-Chawla of Essex High School*). **Alternate: Stars.** Stargazing one evening you watch as a bright star disappears. Tell the story either from the perspective of the viewer or the star. **Due Sept. 16**



3 Brainstorm. Create a single blog post on *youngwritersproject.org* where you list all your story ideas. Start with a few from your own life, and keep adding as more come to mind. Use this blog to spark your creativity through the year. **Alternates: Learn:** Tell a story about a time when you had to learn something you didn't know how to do, like using new software, taking a photo, riding a bike. How did you learn it? Who helped? How?; or **Inanimate.** Think about an inanimate object that has been thrown away. Write a story or poem following its journey after it is considered trash. **Due Sept. 23**

4 Never. Create a story of 250 words or less using the phrase "*never saw it coming.*" **Alternate: Cellular.** Keep a log of how many times you look at your phone in a day (roughly 6 am-10 pm). Is it more or less than 46 times,

the U.S. average for all age groups? Write about how your cell phone affects your life. What would you do if you lost it? **Due Sept. 30**



5 Photo2-Cabin. Write a story inspired by the photo above (by *Steve Mint, Creative Commons license*). **Alternates: Scary.** "*On this black night ...*" Begin or end your story with this phrase. Make it terrifying! or **Mirror.** What is your most defining feature? What do you like most about yourself and how does it define you? **Due Oct. 7**

6 Sports. Write a story about one of your best sports moments or create a slideshow of your own images that show how a sport or sports affect your life. **Alternate: President.** What message would you like to send to the next president of the United States? **Due Oct. 14**

7 Sound1-Witch: Listen to the sound on this prompt (at *youngwritersproject.org/prompts16-17*) and write a story inspired by it; **Alternates: Five.** What are five things you wish you could tell your 5-year-old self? or **Beauty:** What is beauty to you? Do you have a unique view of beauty, one that might not be shared by others? Describe someone or something that is beautiful to you. **Due Oct. 21**



8 Photo3-Lights. Write a piece inspired by the photo above (by *Alagich Katya, Creative Commons license*). **Alternate: Silence.** "*The house was dead quiet ...*" Finish the story. **Due Oct. 28**

9 Ridiculous. Write a ridiculous lecture about anything – use nonsense words, make crazy connections, be silly. Record yourself delivering the lecture and post the audio on your blog. **Alternate: Chocolate.** Write a persuasive essay or poem in rhyme about why chocolate is the best thing in the world. (Replace chocolate with ice cream, liverwurst or any other favorite food.) **Due Nov. 4**

10 Sound2-Funk. Listen to the sound on this prompt (at *youngwritersproject.org/prompts16-17*) and write a story inspired by it; **Alternates: World.** Create a new world, either in words or drawings. You can go elaborate or simple -- it's your world! or **Veteran.** Interview a veteran about his or her experience. Write a story about the person's overall experience, or focus on one aspect of it. **Due Nov. 11**



11 Photo4-Chair. Write a story or poem based on the photo (by *Gabrielle McKitty of Essex High School.*) **Alternate: Shirley.** Write from this scenario: "*Shirley stepped off the train with three things in her bag: a notebook, a picture, and a loaded handgun.*" **Due Nov. 18**

12 Name. Write about the history of your first name (its heritage, its history in your family, why your parents chose it, etc.) Do you like your name? If you would prefer another name, what would it be? **Alternate: Fable.** Write a fable starting with a specific moral. How do the characters in the fable come to understand the moral? **Due Nov. 25**

13 Fear. Write about a fear you have that others might think is irrational. Why does it have a hold on you? **Alternate: Embarrassing.** Write about your most embarrassing moment. Can you laugh about it now or is it still too painful? **Due Dec. 2**



14 Photo5-Woman. Write a story or poem based on this photo by *Mario Mancuso (Creative Commons license)*. **Alternate: Home:** Where do you feel most at home, most confident, most strong, most *you*? A room, a park, a workshop, a sports field? Why? **Due Dec. 9**



15 Sound3-Talking. Listen to the sound on this prompt (at youngwritersproject.org/prompts16-17) and write a story inspired by it; *Alternate: Recognition.* Tell a story about two characters who pass each other on a strange street and immediately recognize each other, but are not sure from where. Do they turn around or keep going? Describe what happens. **Due Dec. 16**

16 Catch 22: Pick 22 random words or phrases that you find on your phone or see around you. Include all 22 in your piece. *Alternate: Day.* You literally wake up on the wrong side of the bed (perhaps you also bump your head), and it just goes downhill from there. Describe this bad day. **Due Dec. 23**



17 Photo6-Balloons. Write a story or poem based on the photo above (by *Josie Elderslie, Creative Commons license*). *Alternate: Laughter. "I knew I shouldn't laugh, but ..."* Finish the story. **Due Jan. 13**

18 Opposite. We think a lot about who we are and what we want to be. Now think about what and who you are *not* – and create a character, your alter-ego. *Alternate: Erase.* You are given the chance to erase something you have done or a memory that haunts you. Do you take the chance? If so, what do you erase and why? If not, why not? **Due Jan. 20**

19 It. Write a story or poem that begins or ends with the phrase, *"It changed everything ..."* *Alternate: Me.* What is one thing

that people might be surprised to learn about you? Details, please! **Due Jan. 27**



20 Photo7-Window. Write a story based on the photo above (by *Alagich Katya, Creative Commons license*). *Alternate: Thingamabob.* Write a love letter, or love poem, to an object. **Due Feb. 3**

21 Lies. Create a fictional story about a parent's "little white lie" that gets out of control. What prompts the parent to tell it? What happens? *Alternate: Lamp. "A lamp flickered on in the house ..."* Write a piece that includes this phrase. **Due Feb. 10**

22 Sound4-Chimes. Listen to the sound (at youngwritersproject.org/prompts16-17) and write a story or poem. *Alternate: Bully.* Write a letter to a bully or from a bully. The story can be real or imagined. Don't use real names. **Due Feb. 17**

23 Art. Think of your life as a piece of art. What's in the picture? Are you viewing it or are you in it? Describe the size, medium, colors. *Alternate: Awkward.* Write the dialogue of an excruciatingly uncomfortable experience. **Due Feb. 24**



24 Photo8-Stairs. Write a story or poem based on the photo above (by *Carmella Clark of Essex High School*). *Alternate: Mistake.*

Sometimes we mess up and hope no one notices. Write about a situation in which this backfires in the worst possible way. **Due March 3**

25 Gym. Write about your most memorable experience in gym class, good or bad, funny or sad. *Alternate: Door.* You're left alone at home one night and you discover a door that you have never seen before. Of course, you open it. Then what? **Due March 10**

26 Letter. Write a letter to someone who has had a big effect on your life. Or write a letter to someone you want to meet and convince them that they should meet you. *Alternate: ER.* Write about an experience in a hospital emergency room, real or imagined. **Due March 17**

27 Attic. In the attic of your grandmother's house, you find a box labeled with your name. What's inside? Do you tell anyone else about it or keep it a secret? Is it surprising, shocking, heart-warming, disturbing? *Alternate: Invention.* Create something outrageously wacky that makes life so much more fun! Let your imagination run wild! **Due March 24**



28 Photo9-Hoodie. Write a story or poem inspired by this photo (by *Bailey Danforth of Essex High School*). *Alternate: Illegal. "I know it's illegal, but it's the weekend!"* This is a real quote! (Check out the story: www.vice.com/read/american-hero-arrested-for-having-80-speakers-in-his-van-vgtrn?utm_source=vicefbus. Make your own story that begins or ends with this quote. **Due March 31**

29 Sound5-Thunder. Listen to the sound (at youngwritersproject.org/prompts16-17) and write. *Alternate: Technology.* If you could create any technology, what would it be and how would it be used? **Due April 7**

30 Perfect. Write about something that works out perfectly, real or imagined. *Alternate: Crush.* You've had a crush on someone for a year, but the person doesn't even know you exist. How do you deal with that? Real or imagined. No names! **Due April 14**

31 Backpack. You're digging to the bottom of your backpack when you come across the most incredible thing. Describe it. *Alternate: Lucky.* What is your lucky number? Tell a story about it and your luck. **Due April 21**



32 Photo10-House. Write a story or poem based on this illustration (by *Ava Kendrick, Harwood Union High School*). *Alternates: Peeves.* Describe your pet peeve(s). Write your best rant; or *Road.* Think about Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken" and write about two characters at a crossroads. **Due April 28**

33 Arm. You have grown a third arm. How does the extra arm come in handy or get in the way? *Alternate: Family.* Write a story or poem that includes: "They sat at the dining-room table, the family of four..." **Due May 5**

34 Today. Write about the most interesting thing you heard or discovered today. *Alternate: Unsaid.* Write about something that should have been said, but never was (real or imagined.) **Due May 12**