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Write Away!

**140 Writing Prompts for
Grades 4–6**

Arnold Cheyney

Aligns to
NCTE
Standards

Dedication

To the Staff of the Children's Department, Wooster Public Library
Wooster, Ohio

My thanks to my wife, Jeanne, for her input, help, and encouragement,
and my utmost gratitude to Bobbie Dempsey, our editor, for her continued
support and editorial skill over the years.

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A Division of Social Studies School Service

10200 Jefferson Boulevard

Culver City, CA 90232-0802

www.goodyearbooks.com

(800) 421-4246

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Cheyney, Arnold B.

Write away! : 140 writing prompts for grades 4-6 /
Arnold B. Cheyney.

p. cm.

ISBN-13: 978-1-59647-087-3

1. English language--Composition and
exercises--Study and teaching (Elementary)--
Juvenile literature. 2. Creative writing (Elementary
education)--Juvenile literature. 3. Prompting
(Education)--Juvenile literature. I. Title

LB1576.C498 2006

372.62--dc22

2006043514

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Printed in the United States of America.

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ISBN-13: 978-1-59647-087-3

NCTE Standards

Write Away! contains lessons and activities
that reinforce and develop skills as defined
by the National Council of Teachers of English
as appropriate for students in grades 4 to 6.
These include, and are not limited to, a
wide range of writing processes and basic
writing activities in the language skill areas
of vocabulary mastery, punctuation, parts of
speech, grammar and usage, various written
forms of communication, and the use of print
and non-print sources (books, newspapers,
magazines, video forms), standard English
reference works (encyclopedias, dictionaries,
thesauruses), and the contents of school and
public libraries. See www.goodyearbooks.com
for information on how specific lessons correlate
to specific standards.

Cover Design: Gary D. Smith, Performance Design

Cover photo by Gary D. Smith, Performance Design

Text Design: Doug Goewey

Cartoons on pages 26–28 by Jeanne Cheyney

Drawings on pages 115–116 by Jeanne Cheyney

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Introduction

The pages in *Write Away!* are designed to encourage students to write effectively while improving English grammar skills. To accomplish these objectives, the upper-elementary classroom must be a language environment where writing skills are practiced throughout the day.

How This Book Is Organized

This book of writing activities is divided into three sections: “The Process of Writing,” “The Basics of Writing,” and “The Poetics of Writing.” “The Process of Writing” contains activities that encourage students to view writing as a desirable form of communicating with others. Here they learn that their written thoughts are important. There is some evidence that writing freely about personal experiences may lead to better basic skill development. The activities in this section offer a great number of opportunities to get students to write. “The Basics of Writing” contains activities that are useful in helping student writers become more precise and competent in using correct standard English. This section may be of value when students are required to take achievement tests to determine writing performance. Here they learn or reinforce their knowledge of punctuation, parts of speech, and grammar and usage. “The Poetics of Writing” activities allow for more creativity in the use of words and thought but also have overtones that connect with the two previous sections.

Students can take what they’ve learned about the basics and writing itself and turn it into a creative piece.

Suggestions for Using the Writing Activities

1. Consider making the classroom a Writing Workshop where the students and you, the teacher, *both* write each day on topics of their choosing and *both* share with each other what they write.
2. Challenge students to find their own topics. The Freewriting, Discovery, and Picture Writing activities in “The Process of Writing” section are the first of many activities that serve as encouragement to creative thinking.
3. Label file folders with titles such as Adults, Teenagers, Children, Wilderness Scenes, Farm Scenes, Urban Scenes, Animals, Foreign Lands, and so on. Ask students to bring appropriate discarded magazines from home. Ones that have colorful pictures of people, scenes, and animals are particularly helpful. Cut off and discard any words in the pictures. Paste the pictures on blank paper. These files will be one source of writing ideas for your students. (See the Picture Writing activities on pages 7, 8, and 9.)
4. Five minutes before a class ends, or at the end of the school day, have students write what they learned in class. Encourage children to share what they learned with their classmates and their parents. You may be surprised what students learned—or did not

learn! Parents are delighted when their children tell them what they learned in school that day. You may be voted “Teacher of the Year!”

5. Occasionally try Suggestion 4 during the middle of a class session. Allow students to pass notes to their classmates telling what they learned up to this point in the lesson. Passing notes at this time is legal!
6. Every student in the classroom should have a personal file folder for collecting and saving writing. From this file each child can draw upon ideas for future writing projects and have a continual source for determining progress. Having them date each written exercise helps in this process.
7. Your knowledge of your students’ abilities and writing needs determines when and with whom to use the writing activities. As students write daily, their problems in writing surface. At times several students, perhaps all, may profit from one particular activity. At other times only one or two may need specific help.
8. Many of the writing activities suggest print sources outside those regularly found in the classroom. Local and regional newspapers and magazines often have outstanding pictorial features that may help students. These publications sometimes use style manuals that vary in punctuation use from that taught from classroom textbooks. These differences may need explanation. Contact your local

newspaper for the services they offer to children in your district. The Web site of the Newspaper Association of America Foundation (www.NAAfoundation.org) is another source of information and classroom help.

Students may have subscriptions to children’s magazines. These publications are also found in school and public libraries. They can be used effectively in the activities found in this book. Here are a few found in one public library: *American Girl*; *Boy’s Life*; *Boy’s Quest*; *ChickaDee*; *Child Life*; *Click*; *Cobblestone*; *Cricket*; *Crinkles*; *Discovery Girls*; *Faces: People, Places, and Cultures*; *Footsteps*; *Highlights for Children*; *Hopscotch for Girls*; and *Jack and Jill*. Newspaper-format publications such as *Scholastic News* and *Weekly Reader* or the magazine *Time for Kids* are also available. Travel, home and garden magazines, catalogs, news magazines, and country life magazines often are useful for their pictorial content as well as their literary material.

Getting Published

There are publications that market the writings of children and young people. Contact your public or school librarian for the latest edition of Kathy Henderson’s *The Young Writer’s Guide to Getting Published*. For adult writers, the *Writer’s Market* publication is available in libraries and bookstores and at www.writersdigest.com.

The Process of Writing



During the actual writing process, students discover what they want to say. So begin with nothingness—not a list of topics, no story starters, no models of other writers. All of us have something to say that is important, at least to us.

Start with the freewriting and journal writing activities. Student writers need the challenge of finding their own way as they develop writing fluency.

Writing by hand slows us down and compels us, as writers, to take time to think as we write. Slowing the writing process allows us to confront our thoughts and may prompt us to say, “Look at that! What an interesting thought.” Writing is thinking on paper and thinking on paper is writing. During the act of writing, writers often discover what they have to say. Start writing, and the act of writing generates more writing, and, hence, more thinking.

A number of the writing activities in this volume require pictures as an aid to encouraging students to write. You can also use these motivators, if only to better understand what student writers experience.

Process writing activities produce writing from the minds of the students themselves. Their writing flowers with daily practice and can be material for their future writing topics.

Freewriting

Everyone has thoughts. Just reading this page requires thinking. In fact, it is hard not to have thoughts for any length of time. Whatever thoughts you have can be written. Your ability to think is the first step to becoming a writer. Here you will do a bit of thinking and writing.

Directions

Write on this sheet of paper, as fast as you can, whatever comes into your mind. Don't stop because you cannot spell a word—just write. After ten minutes, stop! Try doing this exercise every day for a week. Read what you write. Underline parts that you think are interesting and store this writing in your personal folder. You may have use for it later.

Discovery

Perhaps there was a sentence or two in your Freewriting exercise that caused you to think further. You may have discovered something important. Here you can write more about your thought.

Directions

Choose one of the thoughts you particularly liked during your Freewriting exercise. Begin writing about that thought until you discover what you want to say. Writing is a way of discovering thought. This thought discovery helps you create order in your writing. Just start writing and see what happens.

Think Writing

Are you having difficulty understanding a math concept? Did you have questions about a recent social studies assignment? Think Writing gives you a chance to write to your teacher about that difficulty. You may be having trouble with new material or questions about how you might better remember what you are studying.

Directions

Write a paragraph about a problem you're having with a subject in school. Don't worry about grammar or spelling. Your teacher can reply to you on the other side of this sheet.
