

75 Expository Prompts

TEACHING NOTE #1: *Stress in expository 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.*

TEACHING NOTE #2: *Since all grades that are tested require that students write some type of an expository essay, I have included many more prompts of this genre for practice.*

Argumentative

1. 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 your position to your principal on the course you would recommend. Be sure to give clear reasons/arguments for your suggestion.
2. Friends are important, but everyone has a different opinion of what makes a good friend. Explain what, in your opinion, makes a good friend, and try to be convincing to your fellow students.
3. Friends sometimes experience conflicts. Explain your opinion to a friend with whom you have had a conflict why you think this happens.
4. 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.

Cause and Effect

5. We are learning all the time. Write about something you have learned recently and how it has affected you.

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6. 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 and how it affects you.
7. Much has been written about the negative effects of television on young people. Are all television shows bad for children? Think about a show you feel has a positive impact on today's teens and write an essay to explain some reasons how this show could be helpful and have an effect on today's youth.

Evaluative

8. 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/evaluate why it is so important in your life.
9. Eating healthy foods is very important. Write an essay explaining/evaluating why it is important to eat healthy foods.
10. Everyone has chores to do. Explain/evaluate why you do the job or chore you have.
11. Write an essay explaining/evaluating whether you prefer a big city or a small town in which to live and why you prefer the one you like.

Expressive/Imaginative

12. If you had a time machine and could go to any time in the past or future, where would you go? Explain why you chose that particular time.
13. 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.
14. Write about what you think the world will be like in 100 years. Explain what your life would be like.
15. 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.

Favorites

16. Talk about your favorite music and why you like it.
17. Think of your favorite year in school. Explain why it was your favorite year.

18. Most people like one particular animal more than others. Explain why your favorite animal is your favorite animal.
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. What is your favorite time of the year? Explain why this is your favorite time.
21. Think back to when you were little and had a favorite toy. Explain why you liked this particular toy.
22. Think of your favorite year in school. Now write an essay explaining why it was your favorite year.

Informational/Explanatory

23. Explain the main reasons why you think students drop out of school.
24. Some teachers are special. Without giving any names, explain why one particular teacher in your life was so special.
25. If someone were new to your town, explain to him/her the highlights.
26. If you could change one thing about your school, what would you change? Explain why.
27. If you could choose any animal for a class pet, what would you choose and why?
28. Explain why it is important to learn to read.
29. 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.
30. Everyone has responsibilities. Write a paper explaining a responsibility you have now or will have in the future and why you shoulder that responsibility.

Problem/Solution

31. If you could make changes to your school lunchroom, what would you do?

32. Your generation faces many problems. Identify one of these problems that you feel is the most important, explain it, and propose some possible solutions to the problem.
33. 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.
34. We are increasingly worried about our environment. Write an essay explaining one environmental problem you think is important, and propose some possible solutions to the problem.
35. Every country has problems. Think of a problem our country has, and suggest some solutions that you think can solve that problem and would work to make America even better.

TEACHING NOTE: *An attempt has been made to phrase the last thirty prompts as they might appear on the test. Use them as you see fit. 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.*

Argumentative

36. 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, and try to be convincing.
37. 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. Try to be convincing.
38. 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. Be convincing.

39. 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 so that someone you know who doesn't exercise might begin to do so.
40. 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 so that a friend who doesn't eat healthy foods might be convinced.

Cause/Effect

41. 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 and how it affects your outlook.

→ **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.

Evaluative

42. 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.
43. 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 had to read yourself. Now, write an essay explaining why you think the teachers insist that students read and listen to the famous classics.
44. 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.

Expressive/Imaginative

45. Many writers, scientists, and politicians have a view of what the world will be like fifty years from now. What do you think the world will be like by the time you are in your sixties? 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 fifty years from now.
46. 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.
47. 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.
- **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 why you chose that one activity to replace the TV and radio for that week.
48. 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 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.
49. 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 wished.

Favorites

50. 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.
51. 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.
52. When we are young, we play games—board games, imaginary games, sports games. Think of one game you played when you were younger that you really liked. 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.
53. 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.

Informational/Explanatory

54. 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.
55. By the time we reach high school, at least one teacher has made an impact on 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 had such a positive influence on your life.

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:** Some years are better than others. Usually people can think of one that was particularly nice. Think of the best year you have had so far in your life. Think of the reasons that made it your best year. Write an essay explaining why that year was your best year yet.
57. 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.
58. 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.
59. 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.

Problem/Solution

60. Teenagers (children) are faced with many problems today. School, home, society, and 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.
61. Each year many teenagers are killed by driving under the influence of alcohol or by being a passenger 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 a passenger 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,

- 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.
- 62.** Pollution, excessive garbage, toxic and industrial waste, and 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.
- 63.** 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.
- 64.** 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?
- 65.** 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.

Using Quotations to Create a Topic

- 66.** The poet Celia Thaxter said “One golden day redeems a weary year.” What does this quote really mean? Write an essay to explain how this relates to your life experiences so far.
- 67.** The actress Liza Minelli said, “Reality is something you rise above.” Think about this quote. Think about what this means. Then write an essay to explain how this relates to your personal experiences.
- 68.** “Tell me the company you keep, and I’ll tell you what you are,” said the writer Miguel de Cervantes. Think about what this means. Think about how this could apply to your personal experience with life. Now write an essay to explain what this quote means, and use personal experiences and observations to make your point.
- 69.** Franklin P. Jones said that “Bravery is being the only one who knows you’re afraid.” Think about this quote for a minute. Think about what it really means. Then write an essay explaining how this applies to your life and your experiences in life.

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- 70.** Mahatma Gandhi said, “My life is my message.” What message do you want your life to convey? Think about it and then write an essay explaining the messages you wish to convey to the world through the actions you choose (or will choose) to take in life now and in the future.
- 71.** Charles Dickens, the famous English author from the 1800s, started one of his books with “It was the best of times; it was the worst of times.” Think about what he meant by that. How could the best of times be the worst of times? Using personal experiences, explain what Mr. Dickens meant by his quote.
- 72.** Gwendolyn Brooks, the famous American poet once said, “When handed a lemon, make lemonade.” What do you think she meant by this? Think of some times when life handed you “lemons.” Explain how you made “lemonade.”
- 73.** Chamfort, a French author, said that “At every stage in life he reaches, man finds himself but a novice.” A novice is a beginner. Think about this. Apply this adage to your own experiences.
- 74.** Think about the old saying, “The early bird catches the worm.” Think of some incidents in your life where this adage applied. Explain how, in your personal experiences, “the early bird caught the worm.”
- 75.** Think about the aphorism “All that glitters is not gold.” What does it mean? Have you ever thought that something was super, but it turned out to be not so good? Explain the adage “All that glitters is not gold” with experiences from your own life.