Brave Writers!

In these interesting times, **YOU** have the power to create your own world via creative writing!

**How to use this packet:**

- Look through and pick a prompt that looks interesting to you. No need to go in order or to complete any that don’t spark your curiosity. Print the whole thing, or just the pages you want. Respond in your favorite notebook, or delete the lines given and type right on the page. Use extra paper if needed!
- There are no wrong or right ways to respond to any of these prompts. Feel moved to write it in verse, or as a play? Go for it.
- If you finish a piece you’re especially proud of, consider fleshing it out, revising a few drafts, and sharing it with people you love.
- Could one of these prompts eventually become a novel, a graphic novel, a movie script, an epic poem? Sure! Why not?
- Sally forth and enjoy, dear writers.

**There are only two tricks to becoming a brilliant writer:**

1. You must write. A lot. Write down all your thoughts, dreams, and ideas.
2. You must read. A lot. Read everything you can get your hands on.

Until we meet again, I’ll be at home too, reading and writing. – Sarah Starr Murphy
Complete-a-Story

**Directions:** Read the first line, then write the rest of the story. Bonus points for the bizarre, weird, unusual, or funny.

No one noticed the fox as it slipped into the side entrance of the circus tent.
Photo Prompt: Write the story of the person who gets into this cable car next.
Dialogue Story!

Tell the story of these two girls, but ONLY through dialogue. (What they say to each other.)
Each tic mark below starts a new line of dialogue.
Complete-a-Story 2

**Directions:** Read the first line, then write the rest of the story. Bonus points for bizarre, weird, unusual, or funny.

“Carry bear spray – and know how to use it,” Harvey said.
Fairy Tale Twists

Directions:
1. Pick your favorite (or least favorite) fairy tale.
2. Retell the story, using one (or more) of the following twists.

- Change the setting. Outer space! Submarine! Your bedroom! School! The Arctic tundra! Anywhere.

- Remember that “setting” also includes the time-period. Set it in the future, during the Vietnam War, amidst the dinosaurs, etc.

- Change genders. You can do this for one character, or for all of them.

- Change the beginning. Start it before the traditional tale starts or after.

- Change the ending. End it before the original ending, or after it. Or, create a completely alternative ending.

- Give the protagonist a quirk – purple hair or the ability to fly. Or a pet/sidekick. Or a serious bout of anxiety. Change the way they look, the way they think, how much family they have (make that lonely orphan one of ten kids raised by overbearing grandparents, or vice versa.)

- Change the characters to different creatures altogether. Change the three little pigs into crocodiles, or birds, or people. Change Cinderella into a squirrel, or a praying mantis.
Photo Prompt

Directions: Write what happens in the five minutes right AFTER this photo was taken.
Describe the color yellow to someone who cannot see. You won’t be able to say things like “the color of a dandelion” since that person wouldn’t know what you were talking about. Instead, you’ll have to get really creative and think about what the color yellow reminds you of. If it had a smell, what would it be? What would it sound like, taste like, feel like? How does it make you feel?

- From: Spilling Ink: A Young Writer’s Handbook, Anne Mazer and Ellen Potter
Storyboarding

**Directions:** Create a mini graphic novel – tell a story with both pictures and words! You can retell a classic tale (fairy tale, your favorite novel, Romeo and Juliet, etc.) or make up your own!
List Story
Pick one word from each of the three lists to create a story. (For example, a pirate porcupine overcoming its fear of spiders.) Extra points for being as silly as possible while still making some sort of sense.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>zombie</th>
<th>eagle</th>
<th>must overcome fear of spiders</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vampire</td>
<td>lobster</td>
<td>swing set accident</td>
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<tr>
<td>witch/wizard</td>
<td>wolf</td>
<td>drought</td>
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<tr>
<td>pirate</td>
<td>porcupine</td>
<td>is dumped by significant other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mummy</td>
<td>koala</td>
<td>quits school/job</td>
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<tr>
<td>dentist</td>
<td>prairie dog</td>
<td>moves to a new country</td>
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<tr>
<td>police officer</td>
<td>giant iguana</td>
<td>travels to Mars</td>
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<tr>
<td>vice president</td>
<td>kiwi bird</td>
<td>betrays best friend</td>
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Write a story from the point of view of a cat. You have just escaped through a tattered screen window and the wide world is before you. What do you do next?

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# Top Five Birthday Gifts

(Obviously should be as silly as you’d like, while still making sense for the recipient.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For an alien:</th>
<th>For a shark:</th>
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<tr>
<th>For a teacher:</th>
<th>For the town:</th>
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<td>1.</td>
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You thought this was jewelry. But when you opened it....
Photo prompt:
What creature or person is just out of view in this photo, and what do they do next?
Dictionary Story
Write a very short story that uses the following words. You may use them in any order, but you must use all of them, and they must make sense. (You can’t just list them out.)

Have fun!

Challenge Words:

see-saw, plentiful, miracle, interfere, fossil, comfort
Flash Fiction: Write a short paragraph that tells a story about the photo. Make sure it has a beginning, middle, and end!
If you could create your very own superhero, what would they look like? What would they be called? What kinds of things do they do? Where do they live? Write a description or a scene involving your superhero.
Write a flash fiction story starting with the following line:

As she stepped out from behind the tree, she saw an enormous ________________.
You have been chosen to give a speech to a very important crowd. Your speech will shock them to their core. Write it here:

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Phone Poems!

**Directions:** Write your phone number down the left-hand edge of the page. Then, write a poem with as many words in each line as there are numbers. The number 0 can either be empty or a wild card, with as many as you want.

Example:

5 The moose dripped algae, water
5 The lake rippled, waves concentric
5 The birds sang, sweetly sad
4 Night fell, stars sparked
4 Cicadas sang, coyotes yipped
1 Waves
3 The lake sleeps
Number Story

**Directions:** Ten to one. Write a story where the first sentence has ten words, the second has nine, the third has eight... etc. Or do it backwards, where the first sentence has one word, and the last has ten.
Word Sprints

Directions: Set a timer for five minutes. Write like mad for five minutes, trying not to stop to think. The object is just to get as many words on the page as possible. Ready, set, GO!!
Write a Story that has a SECRET or a LIE....

1. Any character can be a liar or have a secret.

2. People lie in different ways – some are well thought out and complicated, some are spur of the moment and the person needs to come up with details, fast.

3. There can be more than one secret or lie in your story!

4. Plan out what the secret or lie is before you begin. Decide who knows, and who doesn’t.

5. It is also possible to have an UNRELIABLE narrator – where the character telling the story isn’t truthful. They can be lying the whole time, or about one thing. Their true identity might be the secret. Or they could even believe themselves to be truthful, but the reader can tell that their perspective is wildly skewed.

6. The secret can also be a place – a secret hiding spot, a secret school, a secret government facility

7. It could also be an object – a secret pet, a stolen treasure, a dangerous chemical...

8. Or a magical/fantastical thing – dragon, etc. that needs to be kept from others
Your Challenge:

Write a story that revolves around a secret or a lie! You can do this in any way that makes sense for you.

- Your character can work desperately to keep the secret
- It could come out at the worst possible moment
- Your character could decide to reveal it
- Or the character could manage to keep it a secret or a lie from everyone but the reader.
- Think about who is harmed by the secret, and who is helped by it
- Remember that people often have trouble keeping the details of their lies straight! Your character might get confused and caught!

My story’s secret or lie is:

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

(shhhh.....)
Write your story with a secret or lie here!
Directions: Fill in the Dialogue, then write (or draw!) what happens next below.
Write a flash fiction story starting with the following line:

As she trudged down the alley, Cecily saw a small _________________.

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If you could create your very own monster, what would it look like? What would it be called? What types of things would it do to scare people? Where does the monster live? If you want, draw a picture of the monster.
Photo Prompt: Write a short story based on the photo below.
Creature Writing

**Directions:** Pick your favorite creature, then write three questions AND the creature’s answers. Have fun!

Three Questions for my favorite ________________________________

(monster/vampire/witch/SlenderMan/mermaid/ghoul/goblin/beast/centaur/ Selkie/troll/etc.)

1. __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   Answer: ____________________________________________________________________

2. __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   Answer: ____________________________________________________________________

3. __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   Answer: ____________________________________________________________________
LIPOGRAMS!

Directions: Write a lipogram. A lipogram is a piece of writing that leaves out (at least) one letter of the alphabet on purpose. Your task: write at least 5 sentences describing your bedroom, without ever using the letter “B.”

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**Dictionary Story**

**Directions:** Write a very short story that uses the following words. You may use them in any order, but you must use all of them, and they must make sense. (You can’t just list them out.)

Challenge Words:

Blather   choppy   dine   haddock   lifeboat   parka   terrific   yuck

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## 2020 New Year’s Resolutions

<table>
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<th>For an alien:</th>
<th>For a cow:</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For a teacher:</th>
<th>For your house (the building itself):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>1.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
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Imagine that you are in your house when a storm comes along and, Wizard of Oz like, picks up your house and carries it away.

- What do you yell, as your house leaves the ground?

- Where does your house go?

- What (or whom) does it land on when it comes down?

- Then, when you step out of the door into this new place, you see something really surprising. Describe what you see here.
Directions: Finish the story.

You are standing at your bus stop on a bleak, rainy February day. Across the street is a field of cows, chewing their cuds, looking at the sky, and staring at you. You start to feel uneasy as the biggest cow walks towards you, stopping at the fence. It looks directly at you and then opens its mouth and says, “Listen buddy, we’ve got a real problem here.”
New School Building Infested with Flying Squirrels
Your character lives in this house. They wake up this morning and.....
**Directions:** Pick one from each of the three lists to create a story. (For example, a pirate platypus who falls in love.) Extra points for being as silly as possible while still making some sort of sense.

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<td>coyote</td>
<td>flood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pirate</td>
<td>hedgehog</td>
<td>falls in love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mummy</td>
<td>kangaroo</td>
<td>starts a new school/job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doctor</td>
<td>flying squirrel</td>
<td>is kicked out of home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>firefighter</td>
<td>Komodo dragon</td>
<td>travels to the moon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>president</td>
<td>platypus</td>
<td>angers best friend</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Directions: Write a story from the point of view of a dog. Your owner has just let you out into the yard and you take a deep sniff of the air and look up to see something surprising and exciting.

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It’s alive!!!!

Prompt: A snowperson comes to life in your backyard. It sees three items on the ground: a rock, a sled, and a raccoon. Tell the story of what happens next.
Time Travel Prompt!

Directions: Write what happened in the five minutes BEFORE this photo was taken.
Friends Prompt

Directions: Pick ONE of the people in the photo above and answer the following questions.

1. What do they like to do on Saturday mornings?

2. What are they most afraid of? Why?

3. What secret are they keeping from the person next to them?

4. What’s their favorite thing to eat?
Genre Bending

**Directions:** Rewrite the following poem as a news article. Then rewrite the news article as a poem.

**The Red Wheelbarrow**

so much depends  
on

a red wheel  
barrow  

glazed with rain  
water  

beside the white  
chickens  

- William Carlos Williams

Rewritten as news article:

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Treehopper Insect Named After Lady Gaga
NFK EDITORS - MARCH 13, 2020  WWW.NEWSFORKIDS.NET

A strange looking insect known as a treehopper has been given an unusual name by Brendan Morris, who’s training as an entomologist. He called the insect Kaikaia gaga – after the singing star Lady Gaga.

Lady Gaga is famous around the world as an award-winning singer. But her outfits and costumes have attracted almost as much attention as her music. They certainly got the attention of Brendan Morris, a long-time fan of the singer. Mr. Morris is studying to get his PhD in entomology (the study of insects) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He’s loved insects since he was a kid. Now he’s focusing his research on a group of insects called treehoppers.

Treehoppers are amazing and unusual insects that often look like something from another world. Their body shapes can be wildly different. They often have strange body parts coming off of them that can look like horns, branches, plant leaves, or other things. That strangeness has made Mr. Morris a fan of the treehoppers, too. “I love outrageous [showy] forms and colors,” he says.

Treehoppers live off of the juices of the plants they land on. One reason for their horns and other unusual body parts is to help them hide on these plants. By making the stems of the plants vibrate, treehoppers are able to “sing” to each other. As part of his research, Mr. Morris borrowed 1,000 examples of different treehoppers from the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh. Some of these treehoppers had never been identified or named. Part of Mr. Morris’s work is to tell different kinds of insects apart and to identify them.

One of these unnamed insects caught Mr. Morris’s eye, because it looked especially unusual. The part of the insect that we might call its face looked “totally different”. The insect has two pointy horns angled out from the top of the “helmet” on its head. Below that, the helmet looks like an armored mask. Two shiny round eyes nearly pop out of the treehopper’s head.

That’s the treehopper he named Kaikaia gaga, after Lady Gaga. The “kaikai” part of the name means “to see” in a language spoken in Nicaragua, where the insect was found. “If there is going to be a Lady Gaga bug, it’s going to be a treehopper, because they’ve got these crazy horns,” says Mr. Morris. “They have this wacky fashion sense about them. They’re unlike anything you’ve ever seen before.”

Mr. Morris tried to get DNA from the treehopper, to learn more about its background, but that didn’t work. The only sample he has was collected in the jungles of Nicaragua about 30 years ago. Mr. Morris is now on his way to Nicaragua to see if he can find any live samples of Kaikaia gaga. Mr. Morris hopes that Kaikaia gaga will spark more interest in treehoppers, and insects in general. He thinks their appearance makes them perfect to act as “spokesbugs”, reminding people to protect the forests and natural areas that insects depend on.
News Story to Poem:
Two Sentence Horror Stories

Rules:

- Can only be two sentences
- Must be the whole, terrifying concept!

Examples:

- The grinning face stared at me from the darkness beyond my bedroom window. I live on the 14th floor.
  - bentreflection
- There was a picture in my phone of me sleeping. I live alone.
  - guztaluz
- They delivered the mannequins in bubble wrap. From the main floor I begin to hear popping.
  - Mikeyseventyfive
- You hear your mom calling you into the kitchen. As you are heading down the stairs you hear a whisper from the closet saying, “Don’t go down there honey, I heard it too.”
  - Comparativelysane

Examples collected from thoughtcatalog.com, “150+ Short Two-Sentence Horror Stories to Freak You Out,” by Michael Koh, 7/31/13
Two Sentence Horror Stories: Your Turn!

Write a two-sentence horror story:

______________________________________________________________________________
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Write another!

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I've never been good at keeping a traditional journal. I've found alternative ways to keep myself writing. You don't have to write in a journal every day for it to matter, and you don't have to write in a traditional notebook! Find a way that works for you.

- Keep a notebook to write down amazing sentences or facts that you read.

- Keep a journal where you write down just one interesting thing that happened to you per day. (Example: A herd of deer eating from my crabapple tree started chasing each other around the yard, nipping at each other's legs like they were playing tag.)

- Keep a journal on your phone or computer, if that's easier. Wherever you're writing is just fine!

- Create a record of the natural world.
  - Inside: Sit at the same window, every day at the same time, and record what you see – birds, animals, trees, plants, weather, clouds, etc.
  - Outside: Sit in the same place every day and record the changes as spring comes. Or, pick a different outside spot to write from each day!

- Write a series of letters. These can be to people you know, people you wish you knew, people you're glad you don't know, etc. You don't have to send them, just write them.

- Create a poetry notebook, or a song lyric notebook, or add a few lines of thought to your sketchbooks. Add drawings, collage, or paint to your journal when you're stuck for inspiration.
Further Inspiration

Stuck for something to write? It doesn’t have to start brilliantly to get you in the groove. Here are some suggestions for next time you’re staring at that terrifying blank page.

- Dialogue snatches. Just a line or two of overheard conversation can spark a whole story. The trick here is it’s better if you only hear a disconnected fragment, rather than a whole conversation. Like, “I told her that the acrobatics lessons were a bad idea.”

- Google Maps Street View! Pick a place you’ve never been. Zoom way in. What do you see? Who might be going into that magic shop, or leaving that gloomy-looking cathedral? Who’s buried in that enormous cemetery, and why is that tall dude going to visit? Or, pick a place you have been and know well. Start writing a description of what you remember, incorporate something else you see on the map.

- Disconnected word vomit. Close your eyes. Write down a word, any word. Then try your best to change your whole train of thought to come up with a completely unconnected word. Then do it again. At the end, look at all your words and try to make a story out of them.

- Prompts online are too many to count. Do a Google search, but specify genre for better results, like “dark fantasy writing prompts” or “historical fiction writing prompts” etc.

- Still life. Just like artists often paint or draw a still life scene in front of them, you too can start a story with that rabbit skull on your desk, or that Lego your little brother left on the floor that you just stepped on. If you’re really stuck, start by just describing any object in front of you. Who picks it up? What happens when they do?

- Chicken nugget window. (Courtesy of the book *Spilling Ink* by Anne Mazer and Ellen Potter). Make a window between your thumb and forefinger the size of a chicken nugget. Hold it at arm’s length. Now write your story with what you see through that window.