

Rich Prompts for Character Development

See pages 74–75 for reproducible versions of these prompts.

These prompts introduce students to vivid characters. Some characters' personalities are evident through their actions and some through their words. Students will recognize the potential of creating interesting characters in a few sentences. Encourage students to continue to explore ways in which they can develop engaging characters.

Possible Genre: Humor

“The computer ate my homework.” I repeated for the third time.

Mrs. Smeckleheimer eyed me suspiciously. “So creative with the excuses. Everyone knows that’s impossible.”

I sighed. I knew she’d never believe me.

This prompt introduces students to a love-to-hate character, a teacher who doesn’t believe her students. As students are writing, they can continue to develop this character through descriptive writing and use of dialogue. They might find the following questions helpful to guide their thinking: What would happen if your teacher just didn’t believe a word you said...even when you were telling the truth? How can you create a character we would all love to hate using dialogue and description?

Possible Genre: Humor

Sheldon tapped mercilessly at the keys of his computer. He adjusted his glasses and squinted his eyes. He knew he was the smartest kid in all of Smithville county, but now he had been challenged to prove it.

In this prompt, descriptive writing is used to create an interesting character. Through the actions and appearance described, the reader is able to come to a conclusion about the type of character he is. As students are writing, they can continue to further develop this character by introducing a problem and other characters.

Possible Genre: Suspense

Kaleb turned the dial once more to the left. He felt the lock click as it snapped open. His eyes searched the room to see if anyone had noticed.

In this prompt, a main character is introduced and students have the opportunity to develop him further by including descriptive writing and dialogue. Using the

third-person perspective, students can take a broader point of view. They can introduce other characters; they can create a problem and a solution. As students are writing, the following questions might help shape their thinking: Why is Kaleb opening a lock? What is the lock protecting? Does he have the right to open the lock or is he breaking into something that doesn't belong to him?

Possible Genre: Humor

I knew it was going to be the worst day of my life. Here was my first clue: I had no idea that my pants had a hole in them until Sheila McGinnis started to giggle.

This prompt, in the first person, provides students the opportunity to create a character facing a tremendously embarrassing situation. This perspective allows the writer to include insight into the thoughts, as well as the words and actions, of the character.

Possible Genres: Fantasy, Adventure, Humor

Damien splashed through the thick mud. The swamp smelled like stagnant water. Reaching down quickly he snatched a speckled frog from the dense reeds.
“No, don't lick it!” shouted Maria.
“I have to, that's how the magic works,” replied Damien.

In this prompt two interesting characters are introduced. The initial dialogue begins to create an impression of both characters. Students have an opportunity to develop them further using descriptive writing, developing a plot, and continuing their dialogue.

Possible Genre: Humor, Adventure

“Everyone buckled in?” Mom asked for what seemed like the hundredth time.
“Yeah, ready for the time of my life,” my older brother Brian responded sarcastically. “Ain't that right, Squirt?” He looked at me with evil eyes. He licked his palm and ruffled my hair. “Ain't that right?” he repeated.

In this prompt, students are introduced to another love-to-hate character. They can further develop this character through his actions and dialogue.

Possible Genres: Humor, Adventure

Simon waddled down the hall. He clutched his binder in his arms and smiled, revealing evidence of his lunch that had been trapped in his braces. With a sudden lurch forward, Simon tripped on his left shoelace and sprawled headlong onto the floor of the crowded hallway.

In this prompt, the main character Simon is developed through his appearance and his actions. Students can work to further develop the character through the creation of a problem for him to overcome, as well as his interactions with others (dialogue and actions).

Possible Genres: Adventure,
Suspense

The storm had raged all night, and now the warnings were severe.
“Come on,” urged Jake. “The river’s never been this high before. We’ve gotta check it out. What are you, chicken?”

This prompt introduces a problem and an interesting character. Through Jake’s dialogue, readers gain some insight into his character. As students are writing, the following questions might help guide their thinking: Why does Jake want to go to the river? Who might go with him? What problem might occur at the river? What lessons might be learned?

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