

Teen Writing Club

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We can do this: WE ARE LIBRARIANS!

- We've all read lots of books.
- We know when a story works or not.
- We know how to research, steal from websites, or invite guests who write.
- We allow the teens to make suggestions, critique, and lead.
- As leaders, *we don't need to know everything.*
- What we **do** need to do is set the tone for a positive and supportive experience for everyone.

Getting a Teen Writing Club started

- Tie in to Nanowrimo: Offer Nanowrimo writing times with some chance for them to talk about their writing.
- Tie in to fan fiction. Start by offering a single program or a short series on this topic.
- Talk to teens you already know who like to write.
- Plug in to existing groups at the schools. Find out if your schools sponsor Power of the Pen.
- Contact homeschooling groups in your community.

A possible model for your meetings (1.5-2 hours long)

- Chatting while everyone assembles, and writing down everyone's name
- Introductions around the table if anyone is new--name, grade, and the kind of things they like to write
- A short craft talk or an exercise
- 20 minutes of silent writing
- Share writing, followed by gentle clapping. Reading optional.
- Offer kind and constructive critique

More about writing time

- I ask how long they want—20 minutes? 25 minutes? I set the timer on my phone and give them a couple of minutes to settle down. They usually need a reminder or two that this is quiet time.
- I always write during this time, too.

More about critiquing

- When teens are ready to read their work, I ask the group to give them their attention. I only expect quiet. Sometimes they are quietly typing or writing while someone reads, but often they still have a relevant comment to offer.
- Remember that reading their work makes most writers feel a whole variety of feelings: vulnerable, a longing to be heard, wondering if they have something worthwhile to offer, worried it's no good.
- Suggestions:
 - Traditional critique style is to have the writer listen to everyone, and then speak at the end if they desire.
 - Compliment sandwich: what you like, what can be improved, what you like.
 - Keep it impersonal—it is about the writing, not the person.
 - Offer suggestions for clarification, emotions felt, craft things done well, etc.
 - Don't take away their creative vision.
- See also this web article about critique: <https://www.thebalance.com/tips-for-an-effective-creative-writing-critique>

I write to
give myself
strength.
I write to be
the characters
that I am not.
I write to
explore all
the things
I'm afraid of.

— Joss Whedon

*Compliment
Sandwich*

Some ideas for writing discussions and exercises

-Talk about color word choices using this:

<http://ingridsundberg.com/2014/02/04/the-color-the-saurus/>
The Color Thesaurus

-Discuss how to write a fight scene in 11 steps:

<http://www.betternovelproject.com/blog/fight-scene/>
Better Novel Project

-Talk about plot with this great comic:

<http://www.incidentalcomics.com/2013/07/the-story-coaster.html?m=1>
Incidental Comics

-Use a few of these links here to talk about getting facts and descriptions correct:

<http://cmskiera.blogspot.com/2013/12/more-writing-cheat-sheets>,
C.M. Skiera's Blog

-Discuss how to create a great villain:

<http://www.betternovelproject.com/blog/remarkable-villain/>
Better Novel Project

-Listen to a podcast and discuss: (please review content before presenting to your group)

Recommended link from below: Writing Excuses--15 minute podcasts to get writers writing

<http://thewritelife.com/15-writing-podcasts/>

-Talk about favorite horror books and movies. Do some of these writing prompts:

<http://www.yahighway.com/search/label/%23scaryAH>

-Talk about the elements of World Building:

<http://yamuses.blogspot.com/2011/12/world-building-checklist.html>

-Discuss novels that have influenced the teens' writing:

<http://www.natashalester.com.au/2014/11/25/reading-helps-become-better-writer-10-things-i-learned-novels>

-Read one of these short stories together and talk about it.

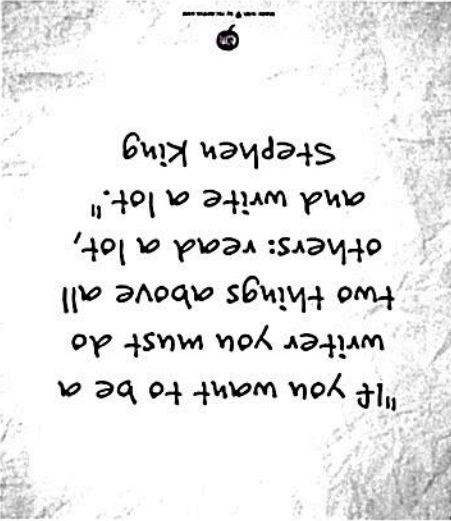
<https://letterpile.com/writing/Very-Short-Stories-For-High-School>

-Play some poetry games:

<https://laurarandazzo.com/2015/12/26/five-ready-to-use-poetry-stations/>

-Learn the basics of writing a poem:

<http://www.powerpoetry.org/resource/how-to-create-poem>



Resources

Fiction sources for discussion topics and ready-to-go handouts

Go Teen Writers

<http://goteenwriters.blogspot.com/>

Writing Forward

<http://www.writingforward.com/>

Writer's Digest

<http://www.writersdigest.com/>

Helping Writers Become Authors—K.M. Weiland

<https://www.helpingwritersbecomeauthors.com/>

Great fiction workbooks to steal from for middle and high school writers

<http://ywp.nanowrimo.org/workbooks>

Nanowrimo resource links

<http://www.livebinders.com/play/play?id=969242>

Poetry resources for topics and ready-to-go handouts

Pongo Teen Writing: A poetry writing program specifically for distressed/disadvantaged teens, useful for all teens

<http://www.pongoteenwriting.org/>

Poets.org: Lesson plans for poetry exercises and discussions

<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/lesson-plans>

Great poetry exercises from an interesting blog

<https://booksandbowelmovements.com/2014/04/05/favorite-poetry-exercises-for-teenagers-and-those-who-are-still-teens-at-heart/>

Lots of poetry (slam and spoken word, too) resources

<http://www.powerpoetry.org/resources>

Writing prompts and other idea generators for fiction and poetry

Written prompts

<http://www.languageisavirus.com/>

<http://www.writingwords.com/writing-starters/>

Pictures to use as prompts

Random Image Generator

<http://writingexercises.co.uk/random-images.php>

Alexia Foundation: Photography That Inspires Change

<http://www.alexiafoundation.org/stories>

Fantasy pictures:

<http://www.boredpanda.com/fantasy-photography-russian-photographer-margarita-kareva/>

Sci-Fi and Fantasy Art Board on Pinterest

<https://www.pinterest.com/davidwurst/sci-fi-and-fantasy-art-photography/>

Picture and word prompt combined:

<http://www.yahighway.com/search/label/inspiration>

<https://visualwritingprompts.wordpress.com/>

My Pinterest writing board: <https://www.pinterest.com/dianelibrarian/writing-and-journaling-stuff/>

Tumblr:

The Writers' Helpers

Writing Prompts (John Green)

Books

Benke, Karen. *Rip the Page! Adventures in Creative Writing and Leap Write In! Adventures in Creative Writing*. Two great sources for highly imaginative prompts.*

Hanley, Victoria. *Seize the Story: A Handbook for Teens Who Like to Write*. Ideal for teens just starting to write fiction.*

Hardesty, Constance. *The Teen-Centered Writing Club: Bringing Teens and Words Together*. The best manual for getting a Teen Writing Club off the ground if you're feeling uncertain.*

Heffron, Jack. *The Writer's Idea Book*. Prompts based around themes.*

King, Stephen. *On Writing: A Memoir on the Craft*. The writer of great tales shares his wisdom.

Lamott, Anne. *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. A personal favorite about the work and the joy of writing.

Levine, Gail Carson. *Writing Magic: Creating Stories That Fly*. A good introduction to fiction, with exercises and prompts.

Majors, Kerri. *This Is Not A Writing Manual: Notes for the Young Writer in the Real World*. A writing memoir for young writers who want to use their talents in the real world.

Minot, Stephen. *Three Genres: The Writing of Poetry, Fiction, and Drama*. A basic introduction to each genre with writing samples and prompts.

*indicates that you can view a good portion of the book on Amazon.

