**Writing Prompts for the Week of May 30, 2017**

**Write daily using or not using the prompts provided. A prompt is merely a springboard—an igniter. I’ve also included a few contests for edited and polished responses.**

Just in case you missed it yesterday . . .

May 30 Prompt—follow the link or go to *Writer’s Digest.*

# [**Saving Your (Fill in the Blank) From Committing Suicide**](http://www.writersdigest.com/prompts/saving-fill-blank-committing-suicide)

One of the items in your house has decided to commit suicide, but you will not let it happen on your watch. Write the scene where you catch the item on the verge of taking its life and your attempt to talk the item out of it.

1. May 31 Prompt



Write a short story, of 700 words or fewer, based on this prompt: **A man is surprised to find himself feeling both pleased and liberated by the news that he will soon die.**

You can be funny, poignant, witty, etc.; it is, after all, *your* story..

Follow the link to submit <http://www.writersdigest.com/uncategorized/story-83-submit-now>

B. Last Issue’s “Your Story” Prompt was “The Bay Window Affair.”

**Why do you think the editors chose this story over the other 319 stories submitted? Read and critique**. Think about the point of view, character development, and how many details are provided. What is this author’s attitude about human nature?

**“The Bay Window Affair”**

by Cassandra Goolsby

Mama keeps saying dogs can’t talk to humans, but only because she can’t hear Peggy talking to me.

I know my dog’s barks. They change depending on what she’s trying to say. The one she sounds right now means Skip’s home.

I look up from my newest crayon masterpiece to tell Vanessa I want to run outside to greet my brother. She’s not paying attention, though, with her eyes out of focus and a crayon dangling precariously from her fingers. Daydreaming, I guess.  That’s one of the reasons I let Mama, Daddy, and Skip keep her around to babysit me. She lets her mind wander and says no one is ever too old for pretend or for animated movies. There’s no list of dos and don’ts. She doesn’t get caught up in adulting like everyone else. My babysitter remembers how to kid. That’s why I love her so much.

Vanessa tells me Peggy does talk in a way I understand. So I get up to find my Peggy without bothering to rouse Vanessa from her musings. I know she won’t worry where I’ve gone, like Mama would.

Peggy waits patiently for me on the window seat in the dining room. Her gaze is fixed intently on something, so instead of darting out the door to see Skip, I pull myself up next to her. Skip speaks to a blonde girl standing outside his flashy red convertible. She tosses her hair and reapplies lipstick that matches Skip’s car. I’ve never seen her before, but she looks to me like one of those snotty cheerleaders in movies. I never liked those girls.

I drape my arm around Peggy’s neck. She doesn’t pay any attention, since she’s so busy keeping an eye on Skip. He and the cheerleader girl move closer together. She’s pretty, I guess, but falsely so. Her eyes are painted almost black, her hair bounces with artificial curls, and her clothes consist of less material than a bath towel. Mama says if I ever dress like that she’ll lock me up in my room for a week. And she should, those clothes are so ugly.

Vanessa is prettier. She may not be blonde or dolled up, but she smiles a lot, and that’s way more beautiful than loads of makeup.

The two stare into each other’s eyes, then lift their lips together.

“You’d better not watch this.” I cover Peggy’s eyes with my hand, not bothering to look away myself.

It’s kinda interesting at first, but then they get to where they might eat the other’s face off. I decide it’s not worth watching and start picking at a hole Peggy ate in the coarse green window seat cushion. Part of me wants to finish my newest refrigerator crayon mural, but I can’t leave Peggy to bear my brother’s grossness alone.

I thought about kissing a boy once, after Mama and Daddy said to save lip-kissing for marriage. It took me ten minutes to corner Aiden Forestier under the playground at recess. But then my vivid six-year-old imagination started going, and wet, slimy, and pointless were the only ways I could picture describing a kiss. Aiden ran off to play ninjas before he got wind of what I really wanted to do anyway. I’m seven now, and know better than to be kissing boys for no reason.

Skip shouldn’t be making lips with some strange cheerleader girl at eighteen, especially one he isn’t dating. He ought to have more sense than that, like I do. I made a note to give him a talking to when he came inside.

Peggy’s fur comforts me from the disturbing scene outside. I lace my fingers through her curls, whispering, “I’m never gonna go off and do that stuff with some boy. I have you, Peggy. Dogs are way better than boys anyway. I don’t need to love one of them with you around.”

She nuzzles my hazelnut hair, assuring me of my position.

“Ginny!” Vanessa calls from the kitchen.

“I’m in the window seat with Peggy!” I yell back. “Don’t come in here.”

She will, of course. And she’s gonna hate what she sees.

She’s Skip’s girlfriend, after all.

Creative Writing June 1, 2017 Add to your writing journal

Writing Prompt: Self-Awareness of Asteroids

*Cameron approached me with a prompt—pretend that a self-aware asteroid was racing through space on a collision course with earth and didn’t know how to stop. Write that scene, monologue, poem, etc.*

*Here’s the problem, creative writing philosophers: What is self-awareness?*

Assignment:

1. Choose a character. Any character. One you have written. A person you’ve met. A movie star or member of a band. The object from Tuesday’s prompt. An asteroid.
2. What is the character’s name?
3. Brief description (physical size, age, recognizable details; clothing or belongings; ordinary setting)
4. Answer the following questions from the character’s point of view.

**The Questions...**

1. When I am put under pressure, I tend to feel… because I tell myself...
2. I would tell a white lie if...
3. My hardest decisions concern...
4. When someone criticizes me at work, I often feel… because I tell myself...
5. I am not a good listener when...
6. I feel the most motivated when...
7. I avoid challenges when...
8. I’m open about myself to others if...
9. When I am put in charge, I...
10. My greatest dissatisfactions center around...
11. I’m stubborn when...
12. Changing my [behavior](http://www.selfgrowth.com/behavior_modification.html) requires...
13. I could be understood better...
14. I create the best results in my life when...
15. If I knew I could not fail, I would...
16. The amount of work I do is influenced by...
17. I show significant courage when...
18. I missed a significant opportunity in my life when...
19. I feel most joy in my life when...
20. I get in my own way when...
21. I easily rise to the occasion when...
22. I am insensitive to others when...
23. I have a difficult time being emotionally present when...
24. The kind of support I need more in my life is...
25. One of the most important things I learned from my parents...
26. If someone mistreats me...
27. If I didn’t need to earn money...
28. If I had no fear...
29. I tend to sabotage myself when...
30. I release stress by...
31. I enjoy myself best...
32. I do the following to look after myself on a regular basis...
33. My weak points are...
34. My strong points are...
35. I learn best by...
36. What have I given up on in life?...
37. I was the happiest in my life when...
38. I was the unhappiest in my life when...
39. If I could do anything in the world, it would be...
40. I want the rest of my life to be about...
41. Poe was a master of self-awareness. How does Poe establish an altered awareness for this first person narrator? Look at the techniques he uses and then write about your character.

True! --nervous --very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses --not destroyed --not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad? Hearken! and observe how healthily --how calmly I can tell you the whole story.

It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night. Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! yes, it was this! He had the eye of a vulture --a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees --very gradually --I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever.

Now this is the point. You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen me. You should have seen how wisely I proceeded --with what caution --with what foresight --with what dissimulation I went to work! I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him. And every night, about midnight, I turned the latch of his door and opened it --oh so gently! And then, when I had made an opening sufficient for my head, I put in a dark lantern, all closed, closed, that no light shone out, and then I thrust in my head. Oh, you would have laughed to see how cunningly I thrust it in! I moved it slowly --very, very slowly, so that I might not disturb the old man's sleep. It took me an hour to place my whole head within the opening so far that I could see him as he lay upon his bed. Ha! would a madman have been so wise as this, And then, when my head was well in the room, I undid the lantern cautiously-oh, so cautiously --cautiously (for the hinges creaked) --I undid it just so much that a single thin ray fell upon the vulture eye. And this I did for seven long nights --every night just at midnight --but I found the eye always closed; and so it was impossible to do the work; for it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye. And every morning, when the day broke, I went boldly into the chamber, and spoke courageously to him, calling him by name in a hearty tone, and inquiring how he has passed the night. So you see he would have been a very profound old man, indeed, to suspect that every night, just at twelve, I looked in upon him while he slept.

Upon the eighth night I was more than usually cautious in opening the door. A watch's minute hand moves more quickly than did mine. Never before that night had I felt the extent of my own powers --of my sagacity. I could scarcely contain my feelings of triumph. To think that there I was, opening the door, little by little, and he not even to dream of my secret deeds or thoughts. I fairly chuckled at the idea; and perhaps he heard me; for he moved on the bed suddenly, as if startled. Now you may think that I drew back --but no. His room was as black as pitch with the thick darkness, (for the shutters were close fastened, through fear of robbers,) and so I knew that he could not see the opening of the door, and I kept pushing it on steadily, steadily. I had my head in, and was about to open the lantern, when my thumb slipped upon the tin fastening, and the old man sprang up in bed, crying out --"Who's there?" I kept quite still and said nothing. For a whole hour I did not move a muscle, and in the meantime I did not hear him lie down. He was still sitting up in the bed listening; --just as I have done, night after night, hearkening to the death watches in the wall.

Presently I heard a slight groan, and I knew it was the groan of mortal terror. It was not a groan of pain or of grief --oh, no! --it was the low stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul when overcharged with awe. I knew the sound well. Many a night, just at midnight, when all the world slept, it has welled up from my own bosom, deepening, with its dreadful echo, the terrors that distracted me. I say I knew it well. I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him, although I chuckled at heart. I knew that he had been lying awake ever since the first slight noise, when he had turned in the bed. His fears had been ever since growing upon him. He had been trying to fancy them causeless, but could not. He had been saying to himself --"It is nothing but the wind in the chimney --it is only a mouse crossing the floor," or "It is merely a cricket which has made a single chirp." Yes, he had been trying to comfort himself with these suppositions: but he had found all in vain. All in vain; because Death, in approaching him had stalked with his black shadow before him, and enveloped the victim. And it was the mournful influence of the unperceived shadow that caused him to feel --although he neither saw nor heard --to feel the presence of my head within the room.

When I had waited a long time, very patiently, without hearing him lie down, I resolved to open a little --a very, very little crevice in the lantern. So I opened it --you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily --until, at length a simple dim ray, like the thread of the spider, shot from out the crevice and fell full upon the vulture eye. It was open --wide, wide open --and I grew furious as I gazed upon it. I saw it with perfect distinctness --all a dull blue, with a hideous veil over it that chilled the very marrow in my bones; but I could see nothing else of the old man's face or person: for I had directed the ray as if by instinct, precisely upon the damned spot. And have I not told you that what you mistake for madness is but over-acuteness of the sense? --now, I say, there came to my ears a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I knew that sound well, too. It was the beating of the old man's heart. It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage.

But even yet I refrained and kept still. I scarcely breathed. I held the lantern motionless. I tried how steadily I could maintain the ray upon the eve. Meantime the hellish tattoo of the heart increased. It grew quicker and quicker, and louder and louder every instant. The old man's terror must have been extreme! It grew louder, I say, louder every moment! --do you mark me well I have told you that I am nervous: so I am. And now at the dead hour of the night, amid the dreadful silence of that old house, so strange a noise as this excited me to uncontrollable terror. Yet, for some minutes longer I refrained and stood still. But the beating grew louder, louder! I thought the heart must burst. And now a new anxiety seized me --the sound would be heard by a neighbour! The old man's hour had come! With a loud yell, I threw open the lantern and leaped into the room. He shrieked once --once only. In an instant I dragged him to the floor, and pulled the heavy bed over him. I then smiled gaily, to find the deed so far done. But, for many minutes, the heart beat on with a muffled sound. This, however, did not vex me; it would not be heard through the wall. At length it ceased. The old man was dead. I removed the bed and examined the corpse. Yes, he was stone, stone dead. I placed my hand upon the heart and held it there many minutes. There was no pulsation. He was stone dead. His eye would trouble me no more.