

My Very Own Library Virtual Read Aloud 5th to 8th Grade Process Writing Unit of Study

My Very Own Library and UChicago Admissions are partnering to jump start college access and attainment by introducing a writing unit on the unique style of college personal statements.

These tools were created to support families, parents, classroom teachers, schools and districts. The virtual read aloud library will highlight authors, readers and texts from various publishers and partners.

The University of Chicago My Very Own Library Program Process Writing Remote Learning Support Resources 5th through 8th Grade	
Using the Video as Text	<p>The excerpts in this series will vary by author, reader, and type of text. Many of the authors and readers made specific choices about which portion of the text they wanted to share. Prior to assigning the video, consider having students research the book, biography of the author/reader, or other works by the author. We also suggest adjusting these instructions so students can pause at specific points in the video to take notes or discuss.</p>
Day One (Planning and Deciding a Course of Action)	<p>Choose a video to watch or assign a video to your student to watch. Your student should watch the video in its entirety and re-watch it.</p> <p>What did you notice about the author? What did you notice about where they read their work? How did they describe themselves? Why did they write or decide to be a writer? What was their book, story, poem or article about? Did they ask any questions? What did they ask? Did they mention any other authors, art or stories? Did anything stand out from their work or reading? If so, what? If nothing stood out, why or why not? Was their music? Did it impact the video?</p> <p>These questions are designed for your student to fully engage with the video. If this were a written text, you might ask them to annotate or take notes. It could be engaging to just watch with your student and discuss.</p>
Day Two (Organizing and Thinking)	<p>Using the prompts on page 3, ask your student to choose the best prompt to use based on the content of the video.</p> <p>The adjusted and long form prompts are taken from the University of Chicago Admissions office from prior application years.</p> <p>Using any one of the following pre-writing techniques, ask your students to make a plan for how you would respond to the prompt. You can use a brainstorm, an outline, a mind map, a web, or a list. You can ask an additional question. Or, you can pose multiple answers to the question provided and determine which one you might want to write more about.</p> <p>Your response can be creative (poem, picture, song, etc), a short answer or an essay.</p>
Day Three (Drafting)	<p>How did you choose to respond and why? What did you choose to respond to and why?</p> <p>This question just supports your student in being able to discuss their motivation. Why we choose to write something is just as important as the writing itself.</p> <p>However your student decides to respond, they have to write or create something. This is the day to write or create. They could begin their own poem (Dr. Eve Ewing, in her video, encourages students to write about things and people that they know in their everyday life). They could write an introductory paragraph and a few body paragraphs. They could draft a full long paragraph.</p>

Day Four (Sharing, Reacting or more Writing)	<p>In writing, there is a “choose your own adventure” aspect to generating a draft and eventually finishing a draft. If your student is able to share a draft with another student, teacher, or family member, they should share the video they used, the rationale for their choice (video and prompt if appropriate), and the draft of what they wrote. The best way for students to get feedback is also to have them share what they struggled with or were unsure about in the writing they share.</p> <p>Your student could also finish their writing on this day. The writing process takes time. Some people use post-it notes, write in long hand, compose directly on the computer, or need music or sound to write. In building a community of writers, whether in your family or classroom, sharing work and giving feedback is an important step for everyone.</p>
Day Five (Final Draft)	<p>Writing a response of any kind is a snapshot of what your student was thinking at the time of the composition. Re-submitting work to a teacher, parent or peer to get feedback and to possibly revise and resubmit is what every professional writer does with an editor.</p> <p>While rereading your own work or someone else’s work, you can provide feedback on grammar, syntax, and sentence structure. You can ask questions about the writer’s intent or other strategies they utilized. You can also just make sure that it communicates the ideas that the writer wanted to get across to their audience.</p>

My Very Own Library 5th through 8th grade Prompts

1. In college, you choose a major. For this question, pick your own new major that doesn't exist anywhere. Describe your new intended major. Why are you interested in it and what courses or areas of focus within it might you want to explore?
2. Mash up a historical figure with a new time period, environment, location, or occupation, and tell us their story.
3. Choose a word, tell us what it means, and then explain why it cannot (or should not) be translated from its original language.
4. Create your own group of threes, and describe why and how they fit together.
5. Tell us about the relationship between you and your arch-nemesis (either real or imagined).
6. Write about an issue or a situation when you remained silent, and explain how silence may speak in ways that you did or did not intend.
7. Pick any present you have ever received and invent a past for it.
8. Everyone knows there are two types of people in the world. What are they?
9. How did you get caught? (Or not caught, as the case may be.)
10. Tell us the story of a street, path, road.
11. Describe a picture.
12. Share with us the letter you'd send to your favorite (thing).
13. Create your own spell, charm, jinx, or other means for magical mayhem. How is it enacted? Is there an incantation?
14. Does it involve a potion or other magical object? If so, what's in it or what is it? What does it do?

15. You'll obtain a blank, 8.5 x 11 piece of paper, and draw, write, sketch, shade, stencil, paint etc. Your submission, for the rest of your life, will always be the first thing anyone you meet for the first time will see. Show us your page. What's on it, and why?

Complete Original Prompts

1. Due to a series of clerical errors, there is exactly one typo (an extra letter, a removed letter, or an altered letter) in the name of every department at the University of Chicago. Oops! **Describe your new intended major. Why are you interested in it and what courses or areas of focus within it might you want to explore?** Potential options include Commuter Science, Bromance Languages and Literatures, Pundamentals: Issues and Texts, Ant History... a full list of unmodified majors ready for your editor's eye is available here.
— Inspired by Josh Kaufman, AB'18
2. Joan of Arkansas. Queen Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Babe Ruth Bader Ginsburg. **Mash up a historical figure with a new time period, environment, location, or occupation, and tell us their story.**
—Inspired by Drew Donaldson, AB'16
3. In French, there is no difference between "conscience" and "consciousness." In Japanese, there is a word that specifically refers to the splittable wooden chopsticks you get at restaurants. The German word "fremdschämen" encapsulates the feeling you get when you're embarrassed on behalf of someone else. All of these require explanation in order to properly communicate their meaning, and are, to varying degrees, untranslatable. **Choose a word, tell us what it means, and then explain why it cannot (or should not) be translated from its original language.**
—Inspired by Emily Driscoll, Class of 2018
4. Little pigs, French hens, a family of bears. Blind mice, musketeers, the Fates. Parts of an atom, laws of thought, a guideline for composition. Omne trium perfectum? **Create your own group of threes, and describe why and how they fit together.**
— Inspired by Zilin Cui, Class of 2018
5. "A man cannot be too careful in the choice of his enemies." —Oscar Wilde. Othello and Iago. Dorothy and the Wicked Witch. Autobots and Decepticons. History and art are full of heroes and their enemies. **Tell us about the relationship between you and your arch-nemesis (either real or imagined).**
— Inspired by Martin Krzywy, AB'16
6. Susan Sontag, AB'51, wrote that "[s]ilence remains, inescapably, a form of speech." **Write about an issue or a situation when you remained silent, and explain how silence may speak in ways that you did or did not intend.** The Aesthetics of Silence, 1967.
—Anonymous Suggestion
7. "...I [was] eager to escape backward again, to be off to invent a past for the present." —The Rose Rabbi by Daniel Stern

Present: pres·ent
Something that is offered, presented, or given as a gift.
Let's stick with this definition. Unusual presents, accidental presents, metaphorical presents, re-gifted presents, etc.—**pick any present you have ever received and invent a past for it.**
—Inspired by Jennifer Qin, AB'16

8. Dog and Cat. Coffee and Tea. Great Gatsby and Catcher in the Rye. **Everyone knows there are two types of people in the world. What are they?**

—Inspired by an anonymous alumna, AB'06

9. **How did you get caught? (Or not caught, as the case may be.)**

—Inspired by Kelly Kennedy, AB'10

10. Chicago author Nelson Algren said, "A writer does well if in his whole life he can tell the story of one street." Chicagoans, but not just Chicagoans, have always found something instructive, and pleasing, and profound in the stories of their block, of Main Street, of Highway 61, of a farm lane, of the Celestial Highway. **Tell us the story of a street, path, road**—real or imagined or metaphorical.

—Anonymous Suggestion

11. UChicago professor W. J. T. Mitchell entitled his 2005 book What Do Pictures Want? **Describe a picture**, and explore what it wants.

—Inspired by Anna Andel

12. In 2015, the city of Melbourne, Australia created a "tree-mail" service, in which all of the trees in the city received an email address so that residents could report any tree-related issues. As an unexpected result, people began to email their favorite trees sweet and occasionally humorous letters. Imagine this has been expanded to any object (tree or otherwise) in the world, and **share with us the letter you'd send to your favorite (thing)**.

-Inspired by Hannah Lu, Class of 2020

13. Lost your keys? Alohomora. Noisy roommate? Quietus. Feel the need to shatter windows for some reason? Finestra. **Create your own spell, charm, jinx, or other means for magical mayhem. How is it enacted? Is there an incantation? Does it involve a potion or other magical object? If so, what's in it or what is it? What does it do?**

-Inspired by Emma Sorkin, Class of 2021

14. Imagine you've struck a deal with the Dean of Admissions himself, Dean Nondorf. It goes as follows: you're guaranteed admission to the University of Chicago regardless of any circumstances that arise. This bond is grounded on the condition that **you'll obtain a blank, 8.5 x 11 piece of paper, and draw, write, sketch, shade, stencil, paint etc.**, anything and everything you want on it; your only limitations will be the boundaries of both sides on the single page. Now the catch... **your submission, for the rest of your life, will always be the first thing anyone you meet for the first time will see.** Whether it's at a job interview, a blind date, arrival at your first Humanities class, before you even say, "hey," they'll already have seen your page, and formulated that first impression. **Show us your page. What's on it, and why?** If your piece is largely or exclusively visual, please make sure to share a creator's accompanying statement of at least 300 words, which we will happily allow to be on its own, separate page.

PS: This is a creative thought experiment, and selecting this essay prompt does not guarantee your admission to UChicago.

-Inspired by Amandeep Singh Ahluwalia, Class of 2022

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