

Sample Writing Topics

Choose a topic from the list below. Remember to choose the topic you know the most about. Try to make your writing piece about 2 pages in length, handwritten.

Imaginative

1. Imagine that the time is late at night; you (or a character in your story) are at home or in a familiar place when the telephone rings. Create a story that includes this scene.
2. Imagine that you are caring for younger children for an evening. Make up a story to tell them to entertain them. Invent your own story rather than using one you have heard before.
3. Authors look to many sources for ideas. Use one of the following ideas and MAKE UP A STORY: (a) "Coals and Embers" or (b) "Injustice."

How to Write an Imaginative Story

Story writing begins with a question: "What can I create out of this image, memory, or feeling?" The image of a rickety, old tree house can grow into a story about the builders. The memory of a former classmate can evolve into a story about losing a friend. Build your story with several interesting characters, realistic dialogue, and believable action.

Focusing your efforts... With a starting point in mind (a strong memory, image, or feeling), organize your thoughts for writing. Use this basic formula for your planning: In most stories, there are: people (characters) in a place (setting) dealing with a problem (plot) that leads to a new understanding about life (theme). (From *Writers Inc: A student handbook for writing and learning*, by Peter Sebranek, Pg. 168)

Imaginative Writing: exhibits original, fictional, and creative experimentation. It:

- Uses original ideas.
- Uses creative language.
- Presents the view of the author or of the characters.

Grade 6: Imaginative (Example of a “High” paper)

Title: “The Deserted Barn”

Topic: Make up a story about one of the following “An Unexpected Gift” or “The Deserted Barn” or “The Broken Window.”

SCORES AND COMMENTARY (Phrases in bold are taken from the *Official Writing Scoring Guide*):

Ideas and Content: 5 The writing is **clear, focused, and interesting**. The writer makes **connections and shares insights** with the reader (“Of course I was going to tell my family about my exciting day.”) The writer has consistently used **supporting, relevant, carefully-selected details**, particularly in the section when the deserted barn is being described.

Organization: 5 This essay shows strong development of the beginning, middle and ending, plus a structure that **moves the reader through the text easily**. Details are placed to tie the beginning and ending together. (“I, Julie Zalen, was selfish...” at the beginning, and then, “...and put all the money in the charity barrels...” near the end.) Using the device of telling the story during the family dinner provides a framework that **enhances the central idea and its development**.

Voice: 6 There is an **exceptional sense of writing to be read**. The writer shows her ability to relate directly to the reader with situations that bring the story **to life**. The interaction between the sisters gives the story both **liveliness** and **honesty**, as the relationship rings true for the reader (““Hush,” I ordered her. “I’m telling this story.””)

Word Choice: 5 The writer employs a **broad range of words which have been carefully chosen and thoughtfully placed for impact**. Several evocative examples of figurative language stand out: “cobwebs hung like banners,” “as scared as a spider under a size 12 boot,” and “creaked like a witch’s cackle.” Strong verbs are consistently used to describe the dialogue, where the writer replaces the word “said” with words like “insisted,” “cried,” “protested,” “ordered,” and “reassured.” Although the word choice contains **vocabulary that is striking and varied** with well chosen words, it may not be quite original or powerful enough to earn a 6.

Sentence Fluency: 5 Sentences are **carefully crafted, with strong and varied structure**. (“ I just love mysteries. Creepy shadows, haunting noises, and ghostly smells are all my favorite; but most of all I love ghosts.”)

Conventions: 5 The writing is **characterized by strong control of conventions**. This paper demonstrates the writer’s control of dialogue and the punctuation that goes along with it as well as capitalization and spelling. A few errors (misspellings of decrepted, creeked, Dad not being capitalized in the dialogue, and some missing commas) are **so minor they do not impede readability**.

The Deserted Barn

"You won't believe what happened," I said one night during dinner.

"Did you finally catch a shot of your ghost?" my mom Lenny asked.

"No," I admitted, holding up the camera strapped around my neck. "But something way better happened."

"Well, tell us about it Julie," she said.

Of course I was going to tell my family about my exciting day. I wanted to tell the story not only because I had originally thought of going on ghost hunts with my little sister, Jessi, but also because I was older so I should get to tell them. Yes, I, Julie Zalen was selfish, but everyone is.

I just love mysteries. Creepy shadows, haunting noises, and ghostly smells are all my favorite; but most of all I love ghosts. Whenever I go on a ghost hunt trying to prove that there is a such thing, I always dress the same way. I wear a midnight black sweat shirt, a black shirt, black shoes, black mittens, black pants, black socks, and a black beanie to cover my sunflower blond hair. I wear black clothing so that I will blend in with the darkness.

"So," I said, all eyes on me and Jessi. "We started out on one of our usual ghost hunts when we came across an old beat-up deserted barn. Just the place where ghosts might lurk. When we looked inside, Jessi thought the barn might have been over 200 years old. The cracked roof leaked and cobwebs hung like banners everywhere. The rafters looked like a board of dust, so fragile that if you stepped on them they would fall apart. The place smelled like a graveyard."

"It was really scary," said Jessi, wide-eyed.

"Yea," I continued. "I was as scared as a spider under a size 12 boot, but it was awesome at the same time, but Jessi didn't want to go in. Eventually she came through, but you guys wouldn't believe it. The pitch black deserted barn had death written all over it. Every time you took a step, the whole barn creaked like a witches cackle. As we stepped inside a fuzzy a fuzzy mouse scurried across the floor and outside a barn owl screeched. When Jessi saw the mouse, she let out a big yelp."

"I did not!" Jessi insisted. "I just... well..."

"Screamed," I finished. "So as we slinked through the barn, I thought to myself, Gosh, this must be that old barn that hadn't been used in over 100 years that everybody rumored about."

"Good Heavens, no," cried my mom.

"You didn't go in there," protested dad.

"Of course we did, but it's okay. I read in a book once that it's supposed to be cursed and

anyone who goes in will never come out alive. You don't see us still in there, do you?" boasted Jessi.

"Well, no but..." said mom.

"It's okay mom, we're not hurt." Jessi reassured her. "Besides, the good parts coming up. After we..."

"Hush," I ordered her. "I'm telling this story. So, just as we turned around to leave, for a split second, I saw something white float around the corner and into a stall. We sprinted after it and I was just about to take a picture when... I couldn't."

"What did you see, Julie?" dad asked curiously.

"An angel," I told them. "An angel all dressed up in white. With a frightened face and hair as bright and as colorful as a sunset. She had small silky wings and a little halo twinkled above her head."

"No," she said. "Please don't. I will do something for each of you if you don't take my picture. I'll grant you one special wish."

"I wished for a big doll house, mommy," said Jessi, smiling.

"What did you wish for, Julie?" asked dad.

"Well," I said. "I wished for one million dollars and a wagon with boxes to put the money in. Then I wheeled it along with Jessi's doll house down to the community center and put all the money in the charity barrels to help the homeless."

"Wow," was all mom and dad could say.

"Later that night when I went to bed, mom came to say good-night. "You had an exciting day," she informed me. "Are you upset that you didn't find a ghost?"

"No way," I said, "and yea. I did have an exciting day though. And I'm going to remember it always."

After mom kissed me good-night and turned off the lamp, a vision of the angel, now with a smiling face filled my room. I blinked only for a brief moment and she was gone.