

2023 Themed Writing Prompt: Revision as Life: Ourselves, Worlds, and Perceptions

One of the luxuries afforded to the writer is the ability, the opportunity, to revisit and revise our initial thoughts and words to better reflect our meaning and our end goal, our message or our truth. Consider not only the edits and revisions you are learning to make in your writing, but in your life as well. In a safe classroom space, messiness and first drafts are encouraged and expected. In our own lives, where do we have space to be messy? To what degree do we feel we are allowed to make mistakes, learn from them, and revise ourselves and our behaviors and responses? In your own life, who or what has granted you a safe “space to be messy,” and how has it helped you to grow as a person? What does such a space look like and feel like? What “life revisions” have you made that could only have been achieved through mistakes? Looking forward, how could you help others to feel safe in working through life’s “messiness?”

This year, promising young writers, we invite you to consider the concept of revision. This concept can apply to our writing, our selves, our world, and our perceptions. You may consider how you have grown from re-seeing or reimagining elements of your life or your own world. You might find revision affords the opportunity for remaking or transforming. Through revision, we can also change our perceptions of the truths and falsehoods around us. How can we embrace the concept of revision for ourselves as writers, humans, or for that of the world around us? How does reflection and introspection inspire a remaking or redoing? How do we find the courage and will for revision?

Possible questions that you might explore are provided below. You are not expected to respond to all (or any) of these questions. Rather, these questions may inspire you and your writing.

Reflection, Introspection, and Agency (Our Selves): Revision can be reckoning with who we once were, but also remaining invested in who we are yet to become by looking deep within ourselves. When we look within, we can choose to focus on the parts of ourselves we wish to develop, and our motivation can give us the agency to take steps towards change or progress. What area in your life would you like to develop, as you grow? Which parts of yourself can you imagine developing from the person you have always been? How can we stay true to ourselves and imagine our future and our role in the world around us?

Remaking and Transforming (Our World): We each have the opportunity to revise our own lives. In order to grow, we often undergo the difficult process of transformation by reimagining our path through the world. Perhaps we seek new friendships when others limit our growth, perhaps we change direction when we find ourselves heading down a path that makes us uncomfortable, and perhaps we have the desire to reflect and revise the very aspects of our lives that make up a part of who we are. How do you recognize and embrace revisions that take you or the world around you in a new direction? How do people find courage to follow new paths to make something new? How does remaking afford opportunities to tell our stories and influence our perceptions of ourselves, our worlds, our truths, our stories?

Revising Viewpoints (Our Perceptions): Revision is never an excuse for non-accountability but framed in pursuit of repair. We make mistakes. We learn lessons. How do we hold on to the impact of our words and actions, while striving towards repair? How do we resee or reframe our views or perceptions? Revision can attempt to erase the truth or be a refusal. How can we be truth seekers and yet also resee or reframe. Revision can be easily misconstrued for the much harder and honorable work of repair and reconciliation. Either in our own lives or more broadly speaking, how must revision be accountable to its pasts, which is never simply past?

Teachers, we invite you to incorporate the Promising Young Writers' theme and writing prompt into your curriculum. In fact, we hope that the themed prompt is a topic that you will encourage **all** of your students to address in reading, writing, and discussion activities, as well as beyond the classroom. You may also find the literature and teaching resources presented on the NCTE Web site useful, as well as attending the ALAN (Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of the National Council of Teachers of English) held in conjunction with NCTE's Annual convention each year.

Also, if your state has adopted the Common Core State Standards, it may be helpful to note that nominees for the Promising Young Writers program may choose to write their Theme entry in any genre, including nonfiction writing in History/Social Studies, and Science & Technical Subjects.

While we believe that the Promising Young Writers program may be seamlessly interwoven with your existing literacy curriculum, we urge you also to explicitly welcome any writing that students may have created outside of your class or even your school.

You may produce any genre, or kind, of writing (e.g., personal essay, graphic novel, news article, love letter, eulogy, oral history, photo essay, scientific report, letter to a politician, local petition, speech). If you find it helpful to state your intended audience at the beginning of your entry, you are welcome to do so.