WRITE START Challenge:  
20 Writing Sparks to Start 2020 Write

Welcome to the Write Start Challenge! Join us as we write for 20 minutes each school day during the month of January to start 2020 write.

This guide contains a challenge calendar, links to all 20 Sparks organized into 4 weekly themes (reflection, magic-making, connection, and creativity), and suggested modifications to make prompts appropriate for all grades.

Get started using the provided calendar, or follow #WriteStartChallenge to see our featured Spark each day, beginning January 6, 2020.

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Name: ____________________  Teacher: ____________________

This calendar is for students to keep track of their progress throughout the month. Add a star, a sticker, or a favorite quote for each Spark they complete. Fill out the whole calendar to conquer the Write Start Challenge!

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WEEK 1: REFLECTION
Go beyond new year resolutions. This first week of Sparks is designed to center students in self-reflection as they begin a new year of learning. From imagining what their future self might be like, to painting a picture of their front door, week 1 of #WriteStartChallenge prompts students to know themselves through writing.

JANUARY 6TH - LETTERS, UNDELIVERED
Put a self-reflective lens on this unique Spark by having students write a letter to their future selves. What do students want to accomplish in the next year? Where do they think they’ll be? What will be different? What will be the same?

JANUARY 7TH - MEMORIES WITH MEANING
Is writer’s block the illness that’s infecting your class this winter? This activity will supply your students with writing ideas from their own memories! Younger students can do this activity as a class, calling out answers to compile a class list of memory-inspired topics.

JANUARY 8TH - STUDENT BIOGRAPHERS
One of the best ways to learn about yourself is to learn from others! This activity flips the script from the rest of the week as students create portraits of their classmates. Other options for required questions could be “What’s one thing you learned last year?” or “What was your favorite memory from last year?”.

JANUARY 9TH - YOUR FRONT DOOR
Whether it’s the door to your house, your place of worship, or your school, everyone has a place they call home. This activity brings these personal spaces to life, as students reveal what home means to them through the depiction of these specific spaces.

JANUARY 10TH - MEMORY LINE
Students plot impactful moments from the past year on a timeline, creating an approachable list of memories worth writing about. For an optional extension, students can write a poem inspired by their chosen memory.
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WEEK 2: CREATIVITY
This week gets students thinking outside of the box. Students will take familiar subjects, such as nursery rhymes or pop songs, and put their own spin on it.

JANUARY 13TH - THE ILLUSTRATED WORD
Adaptable for students of all ages, this activity challenges students to get creative with how they define words. You can also use this prompt as an opportunity to revisit classroom norms (or make new ones for a new class) by picking words associated with classroom values to illustrate.

JANUARY 14TH - ONE GOOD LINE DESERVES ANOTHER
Help students see that inspiration is everywhere! Students will borrow one line from a book to inspire their own stories. For older students, try variations like re-writing lines from a new point of view. For younger students, use a shared inspiration to guide the class as a whole.

JANUARY 15TH - CREATIVE RECIPES
This prompt encourages students to get creative by introducing a new genre of writing to students: recipes! To make this activity more challenging, have students leave the title off their recipe and see if other students can guess what they cooked up!

JANUARY 16TH - ALTERNATIVE UNIVERSE NURSERY RHYMES
This prompt challenges students to think out of this world and rewrite familiar stories with a little twist. Transform “Mary had a little lamb” to “Mary had a little alien,” and let your students’ imaginations soar!

JANUARY 17TH - CHEESY POP SONG POETRY
This spark is the perfect Friday activity; pump up some tunes and help your students investigate all the questions pop songs beg us to ask. What does it mean to be “so 2000 and late?” Does Carly Rae Jepsen really want you to call her? Maybe?
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WEEK 3: CONNECTION
In honor of MLK Day, this week students put their social-emotional skills into action. From reflecting on what cause(s) they’re passionate about to thinking about how we can see the best in everyone we meet, this week challenges writers to deepen their connections to both themselves and their community.

JANUARY 20TH - WHAT’S YOUR CAUSE?
This Spark calls students to action, reminding them that while there is still much work to be done, their voices can make a difference. For added engagement, have students with similar causes pair up and discuss one another’s solutions.

JANUARY 21ST - KINDNESS COUNTS
By writing about what kindness means, what it looks like, and how it makes us feel, students develop a deeper understanding of why social-emotional learning matters. Adapt this activity for older students by picking more advanced, abstract words such as empathy, justice, and inclusion.

JANUARY 22ND - FRIENDS HELP FRIENDS, ALWAYS
In this Spark, students explore the origins of friendship and practice taking others’ perspectives. For a more advanced classroom, challenge students to analyze two images. Ask students about the similarities and differences between the images. What makes for a strong friendship? Is it the same for everyone?

JANUARY 23RD - WRITE WITH PRIDE DAY 1 - LABELS
This Spark has been broken into two days. The first day focuses on labels. After watching the video, younger students can explore the following questions: What communities are you a part of? How do your communities make you feel? Write about a time that you felt respected; how did it feel?

JANUARY 24TH - WRITE WITH PRIDE DAY 2 - PORTRAIT POEMS
Students explore their identities with pride as they create “Portrait Poems.” Students can use one of the templates for “Portrait Poems” linked within the Spark, or chose a prompt from the bonus activity section.
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WEEK 4: MAGIC-MAKING
For the final week of #WriteStartChallenge, we’re bringing back the magic of writing. In these fantastical Sparks, students explore monsters, superheroes, miracle elixirs, and more!

JANUARY 27TH - INVENT A MIRACLE ELIXIR
With a swipe of a magic wand (a pencil), students will create magical solutions to real world problems. For more advanced classes, write an origin story for the elixir. How was the elixir discovered? Is anyone opposed to the elixir? Why?

JANUARY 28TH - MAGIC 8 BALL: CHARACTER DESIRES
Finally, a use for the Magic 8 ball that’s been sitting on your shelf since 1971! Let the Magic 8 Ball guide the outlook of students’ plots, and discover what fate awaits the main character. Will they achieve their goals? … Ask again later.

JANUARY 29TH - SUPERHERO TRAITS
Keep the imagination flowing with this superhero brainstorm activity! For more advanced classes, only spend the first five minutes on the superhero worksheet, then transition to how you see these powers in the real world. Who is a real-world superhero your students admire?

JANUARY 30TH - MYTH-MAKING
In this Spark, students use a bit of magic to explain the more confounding parts of the mystical world we live in. Depending on how familiar your class is with the concept of myths, this activity is very flexible. Spend time reviewing myths for beginners, or skip the review altogether and go straight to writing!

JANUARY 31ST - MONSTER SCATTERGORIES
Combine many of the skills your students have developed throughout the month. Students use their creativity to develop a list of traits about monsters, then practice empathy as they brainstorm positive qualities about the same monsters.

Warm Yeti Hugs for everyone!
Thank you for participating in the WRITE START Challenge!

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