

**Gorman Learning Center Writing Program**  
**Grade 8**

Each prompt has a code. For example, the first narrative prompt code is N8A. Please record the proper code on your essay to identify the chosen prompt when submitting it to the Writing Program. The top corner of the paper should include the following information:

Student Name  
Teacher (IST) Name  
Date  
Grade Level  
Prompt Code

We recommend that submissions be typed, double-spaced, in 12-point Times New Roman font.

**Self-assessment** (1 total)

*The self-assessment prompt should be done at the beginning of the school year.*

**S8A:** *Write a reflection on your writing process and your writing strengths and weaknesses.*

Consider the Portfolio that you completed in the spring. Carefully read over the Evaluator Narrative that you received back from the Writing Program. Keeping the evaluator's letter in mind, write a reflection on your writing. Describe your writing process—the steps you go through from start to finish—to transform ideas into a polished final draft. Then, describe your strengths as a writer and explain how those strengths help you to write effectively. Also describe your weaknesses as a writer, and explain what you think you can do to improve them. (Remember, writing is more than just spelling and grammar; try to think about the global aspects of writing, such as the use of specific details to help develop your ideas, paragraphing and organization, awareness of your audience, or construction of strong introductions and conclusions.) How do you hope to grow as a writer? What do you hope to accomplish in your writing this year? What steps will you take to become a better writer?

**Narrative** (2 total)

**N8A:** *Write a story from the point of view of a character of the opposite gender from yourself.*

Create a character who is of the opposite gender from yourself. Imagine that his or her best friend has stopped talking to him or her. Write a story using the character's first-person point of view and describe what happens. Include good details and a range of narrative strategies, such as dialogue, action, physical description, background description, and character development.

**N8B:** *Write a suspense story.*

Write a story in the third-person point of view in which a mysterious person moves into a nice, quiet neighborhood. Create suspense and intrigue as you develop the story and the characters that populate the neighborhood. As you write the story, choose your details carefully and employ a wide range of narrative and descriptive strategies, such as relevant dialogue, specific actions, physical description, background description, and comparison or contrast of characters.

### **Expository** (4 total)

**E8A:** *Write a description of an environment without using one of the five senses.*

Choose either the sense of sight or hearing and spend one hour imagining yourself without that sense. (If you choose sight, try wearing a blindfold for that hour; if you choose hearing, try wearing earplugs.) At the end of this experiment, write a composition in which you describe your environment using all senses but the one you chose. Write about exploring and examining your surroundings and the people you encountered during your experiment. Include reflections on what you learned during the hour in addition to descriptions of how your world was changed.

**E8B:** *Write about your favorite kind of art and a particular work of art.*

Choose your favorite art period or style (such as Italian Renaissance, Cubism, Art Deco, or Pop Art), and choose a work of art which represents that period or style. Write a composition in which you describe in detail the piece you have chosen. Explain why you chose this piece and why it represents the period or style. You may compare and contrast the period or style you have chosen with another period or style. Also, be sure to share your personal insights into the overall effect of the piece, as well as the effects of particular elements of the piece (such as its use of color, its size, or its texture). If you do research to find information about the piece or the period, be sure to include citations and a bibliography. For information on documentation format, see the Documentation Format link on Gorman's webpage.

**E8C:** *Write an essay in which you respond to a quote from a philosopher.*

Choose a philosopher from any period of history (such as Aristotle, Locke, or Spinoza), and find a quotation from that philosopher that interests you. Try to find a quotation that makes you think in a different way—one that makes you “see the world with new eyes.” Then, respond to that quotation in an essay. Some things to consider: what do you think the quotation means? Can you think of any real-life examples that illustrate that quotation? Do you agree with the quotation? Do you disagree with it? Go into detail and explore the thought behind the quotation. (Be sure to indicate what quotation you are responding to in your essay, and give the quotation in full!)

**Research Paper Option:** For an extra challenge, write a research paper comparing two philosophers. A few examples of philosophers who would be good to compare are Aristotle & Plato, Confucius & Lao Tzu, or Locke & Hobbes. You will need to research both philosophers' viewpoints and read work that they have written so that you can compare them.

**E8D:** *Write a process paper.*

Write a paper that describes in detail how to do something. For example, you might write about how to make your favorite recipe, how to prepare for a backpacking trip, how to build a web page, or how to change the oil in a car. (Choose something that you know how to do very well!) Be sure to go into detail and describe, in order, every step involved in completing the process you choose. Your reader should be able to clearly follow your directions and complete the process you describe after reading your paper.

### **Response to Literature** (2 total)

*For suggestions of books to read and ideas for responding to literature, be sure to check out the new “Best Book Choices for Sixth to Eighth Grade” and “Reader’s Guide to Author’s Techniques” on the Gorman Writing Program website!*

**L8A:** *Write an analysis of the use of imagery or symbolism in a piece of literature.*

Choose a piece of literature (a novel, story, poem, or play) in which the author’s use of imagery or symbolism is crucial to the way you experience the work. Then, write an essay in which you analyze how the imagery and/or symbolism affect you as a reader. For example, perhaps there is an important object or image that recurs in the work of literature—how does its recurring relate to the meaning? Or, perhaps the language the author uses to describe one object or image is much different than the language he or she uses to describe another object or image—what effect does this change in language have on the way you experience these descriptions as a reader? Remember to give a *brief* summary of the work of literature, but focus your essay on your analysis of the imagery or symbolism in the piece of literature.

**L8B:** *Write a response to literature in which you compare and contrast the use of an author’s technique in two different pieces of literature.*

Choose two works of literature, and pick an author’s technique that is important to both works. (Remember, for ideas about author’s techniques, see the new “Reader’s Guide to Author’s Techniques” on the Gorman Writing Program website.) Then, write an essay in which you compare and contrast the ways the two different authors use the technique you chose. For example, you may write about how foreshadowing is used in two different suspense stories. Use specific textual examples from both works to illustrate how the technique is used in each of the pieces. Which author do you think does a better job using the chosen technique? Why? Remember to give *brief* summaries of the two works of literature, but focus your essay on your analysis of the authors’ use of the technique.

### **Persuasive Writing** (2 total)

**P8A:** *Write a persuasive essay from the opposite point of view.*

Have you heard the phrase “standing in another person’s shoes?” That is what you are going to do in this paper. Choose an issue that you have an opinion on or feel strongly about. Then, research that issue and consider the argument from the other side: that is, the side you do *not* agree with. Next, write a persuasive essay from that side of the issue. What evidence, examples, and reasoning support the opposite point of view? Be sure to

distinguish between facts and opinions, and use facts to support the point of view from which you are writing. (A large part of writing persuasively is considering the various sides of an issue. This prompt will help you to gain the experience of doing so.)

**P8B:** *Write a Letter to the Editor or an opinion article on home school education.*

Write a letter to the editor or a news article in which you either defend or oppose home school education. Clearly state your position in a thesis statement. Explain either the advantages or disadvantages of home school education. Provide detailed evidence and examples to support your arguments, differentiating between fact and opinion. Answer reader's concerns and opposing arguments with good, logical reasons, as well as emotional appeals. You may use specific examples from your own experience, but remember to make distinctions between facts and opinions.

### **Research Writing** (2 total)

We encourage you to begin your research essay by writing an annotated bibliography (see prompt R7A) to help you to formulate and organize your research.

**R8A:** *Write a research essay in which you analyze a specific aspect of American democracy.*

Choose a particular concept or principle of American democracy. Write a research essay in which you analyze how that concept or principle created or contributed to the development of political institutions and ideas in later years. (For example, you might write about the importance of the "checks and balances" system between the three branches of the U.S. government.)

Be sure to include citations and a bibliography. For information on documentation format, see the Documentation Format link on Gorman's webpage.

**R8B:** *Write a research essay on an environmental issue.*

Choose an environmental issue to research and write an essay in which you explain the issue. Be sure to clearly state the issue that you are writing about in a thesis statement, and explore the details of the issue in your essay. (For example, you may write about alternative energy sources such as solar or wind power, gas consumption and hybrid technology in cars, organic versus conventional farming, global warming and its causes and possible effects, or a particular species of animal that is threatened by habitat destruction.) Consider concluding your research essay with a "call to action," in which you offer some ideas of what can be done about the issue.

Be sure to include citations and a bibliography. For information on documentation format, see the Documentation Format link on Gorman's webpage.

### **Revision** (1 total)

**V8A:** *Revise an essay you have already submitted for evaluation to make it as strong as possible.*

Choose an essay that you have already submitted to the Writing Program. Consider the evaluator's comments and feedback. Then, re-read your essay, thinking about what you could change and revise to make the essay stronger. Remember, revising an essay does

not only mean “fixing” the mistakes. Think about other things you could do to make the essay better, as well. For example, perhaps the essay needs to be organized into paragraphs, perhaps it is missing an introduction, or perhaps it needs more descriptive details. Each essay will be different. You should respond to the evaluator’s comments, but also make choices based on changes *you* want to make.

After revising the essay, write a “reflection” of at least two paragraphs about what you changed, explaining why you revised as you did. Include your reflection (on a separate piece of paper) with the revision when submitting it to the Writing Program. ***Also, when submitting your revision to the Writing Program, be sure to include a copy of the original essay along with the evaluator’s comment and suggestions and rubric, so that we can see what you changed. Revisions submitted without a copy of the original essay and evaluation will be returned unevaluated.***

**Portfolio** (to be submitted in May):

In May, you will submit a Portfolio of your writing. For information on what the Portfolio entails, check out the Portfolio link on Gorman’s webpage.