



WTP Writers' Room Prompts

(As of Nov 7, 2021)

10/10/2020

Program Manager: Quinn Xavier Hernandez

Prompt Leader: Quinn

Prompt:

To Start – For the next 5 minutes I want you to generate a list of objects and things that you have never seen on stage. Write as many objects as you can think of and don't judge yourself for whatever you write down. Keep writing. It's okay if you write down the same object more than once or if you later realize something you've written down has been used on stage.

Afterward – Now I want you to pick as many or as few of the items on your list as you'd like (but definitely pick at least 1). What patterns are you seeing? What excites you or bores you about the items you've picked? What stories are they telling? You can take notes. (Repeat this a few times)

Once you feel like you've got a handle on your objects or object, I want you to pick one and imbue it with some sort of dramatic importance. It could be environmental, it could be personal to a character, anything. Then I want you to start writing with that object and that dramatic importance in mind and see where it takes you.

11/14/2020

Prompt Leader: Quinn

Prompt:

To start – For the next 10 minutes, you are going to free-write about one of the following words:

Secrets
Memory
Gossip
Scandal
Friendship
Betrayal
Passion
Connection

Write about what those words evoke for you. Remember: always keep writing. The point of this exercise is to get out of your head and allow the words to flow. If you get stuck or lose your train of thought, just keep writing the same word that you're already on until the synapses fire again.

Afterward – Now I want you to look through what you just wrote. Find one or two phrases, sentences, words, etc. in there that jump out at you. I'll give you a minute to find them.

For the remainder of our time, I want you to start writing a scene or monologue in which those phrases you picked out were overheard by someone who was NOT supposed to hear them. You may have a phrase, sentence, word, etc. that seems innocuous. Trust me, it isn't. Lean into it. I promise you won't be disappointed.

12/12/2020

Prompt Leader: Nathan Jerpe

Bio: Nathan Jerpe is an emerging poet and playwright based in Atlanta, GA. He wrote and produced his first play when he was a student but was subsequently seduced into a career in science and engineering, although he has been clawing his way back towards letters ever since. He has been a lab instructor at Clemson University, an antenna designer, a software engineer, a technical writer, a stay-at-home parent, and a part-time Latin teacher. In 2010, he released the computer role playing game *Legerdemain* to a cult following and critical acclaim. In 2017 he took up writing plays again after a long hiatus, and has since become an ardent explorer of Romantic poetry, experimental fiction, and myth.

Prompt:

Select a character you want to know more about and write down their name. Take the next five minutes to write down all the large details you know about the character. Who their family are, how they view the world, what they couldn't go a day without, something they would wipe off the face of the earth if given the chance. Whatever big thing comes to mind.

Once you've got that list, take a look at it and then step into that character's shoes and answer the following prompt (either written or aloud with your microphone muted):

My name is "Character Name".

I am ____A____, ____B____, and ____C____.

Again, my name is "Character Name" but you can call me ____D____ and this is my story.

A, B, and C can come from your list, but if something comes from out the blue embrace it! D should be from your character's perspective — what do they want to be called?

Spend as much or as little time with the structure as you like, but make sure to do it a few times. Remember, don't judge what's going on the page. This is all about learning something new about your character. Then, when you're ready, start writing a scene/monologue where that character is the focal point/protagonist. If it feels appropriate to work in elements from your list or the structure, do so.

Share First Next Time: Toni Rivers, Emily McClain

1/9/2021

Prompt Leader: Paul Donnelly

Bio: Paul Donnelly is a playwright and WTP Board member. His travels as a "trailing spouse" have taken him from DC to Atlanta to Honolulu to Tallahassee. He is grateful to have had his full-length play, *Memorial Day*, included in the Unexpected Play Festival.

Prompt: The exercise requires beginning a scene with a sentence. Ten minutes in you have to pivot to another sentence whether it is a non-sequitor or not. The point is the disruption. Ten minutes later you pivot to another sentence and ten minutes after that you pivot to a fourth sentence.

The sentences are:

Can I have the letter back?

He can't get away with it.

How do I get there?

She cut her hair too short.

2/13/2021

Prompt Leader: Liz Dooley

Bio: Liz Dooley is an asexual- and female-identifying playwright-dramaturg-actor-editor hybrid based in Atlanta. Originally from the Philadelphia area, Liz graduated from the University of Pittsburgh in 2014 with a dual major BA in Theatre Arts and Psychology. She studied as a playwriting apprentice at Horizon Theatre during the 2014-2015 season, under Addae Moon.

Prompt:

1. For 3 minutes, make a list of clothing items. Anything from a basic t-shirt to a wedding dress to a scuba-diving wetsuit. Try to cover all the bases (top, bottom, shoes, etc.)
2. Pick out items on your list to make up an outfit. Spend the next 5 minutes describing how they got each of the things they're wearing right now. Did they receive that shirt as a gift? If so, who from? Did they buy those shoes themselves, and did they have to save up to do so or were they well within their/their family's budget? How long did it take them to find that dress?
4. Now write a scene that takes place on the day they got one of the items you wrote on. The scene can be about the item, but it can also have nothing to do with the item and just so happen to take place on the same day. What brought them here? What was their day like before they bought it? How was their Hanukkah going *before* they opened the box with those pants? How long were they in line for the concert they bought that t-shirt at?

3/13/2021

Prompt Leader: Quinn Xavier Hernandez

Prompt:

Think of a favorite song, movie, book, or picture. For the next 5 minutes I want you to generate a baseline for that favorite thing – describe it in every detail. How does it make you feel? What colors are associated with it? What are the main themes? What does it stir up for you?

Afterward – for the next five minutes I want you to picture this favorite thing as paradise. Describe your favorite thing through the lens of all things heavenly. What makes it paradise? You can pull from your previous list if needed.

Afterward – for the next five minutes you're going to repeat the process, but this time you're going to picture this favorite thing as hell. Describe your favorite thing through the lens of all things dreadful. What makes it hell? You can pull from your previous list if needed.

For the remainder of our time, I want you to start writing a scene or monologue in which either your paradise or hell informs the world and/or secondary characters and the other informs your protagonist.

4/10/2021

Prompt Leader: Liz Dooley

Prompt:

1. For the next five* minutes, consider the following sentence:

“I know she loves me; I have the _____ to prove it.”

Find as many ways as you can to fill in the blank.

2. Choose one of your newly-completed sentences. Consider that they each describe a different relationship (platonic, romantic, familial, etc.) For the next five minutes, write a brief paragraph about that relationship.

2b. Choose another of your completed sentences, and spend the next five minutes writing a brief paragraph describing that relationship.

3. Now choose one of these relationships, and write a scene in which it is changed, challenged, or strengthened.

5/8/2021

Prompt Leader: Quinn

Prompt:

Inspired by Tearrantance Chisholm. I want you to spend the next 5 minutes writing down what you perceive the rules of playwriting to be. These can be things one must do for them to be a play, things you absolutely cannot do if you want to make a play, things you maybe should do, or thing you maybe should not do. Whatever you perceive the rules to be, write them down in a list.

Now you've generated your list I want you to pick three of the rules that you think are the most important on your list and circle them. Then pick one item on your list that you think isn't important and put a star next to it. I'll give you a moment to do so.

For the rest of our time you are going to write a scene or a monologue that breaks one or all of the rules you circled, but has to follow the rule you starred. If you are having trouble, you can ignore the rule you have to follow, but I urge you to lean into it. You never know what you might discover.

6/5/2021

Prompt Leader: Quinn

Prompt: For the next 5 minutes, you are going to free-write about one of the following words:

Betrayal
Forgiveness
Pain
Joy
Caution
Spontaneity
Melancholy
Determination

Write about what those words evoke for you. Remember: always keep writing. The point of this exercise is to get out of your head and allow the words to flow. If you get stuck or lose your train of thought, just keep writing the same word that you're already on until the synapses fire again.

Now choose one of the other words on that list. For the next 5 minutes, you are going to free-write about that word. Again, write about what those words evoke for you. Remember: always keep writing.

Now I want you to write a name or title or personifying descriptor above each of your paragraphs. Those paragraph headers are now your characters and the details in those paragraphs indicative of their world view. For the rest of the time, I want you to write a scene in which they are in direct opposition to one another. Don't think too hard about it too hard. Just write and follow your characters.

7/10/2021

Prompt Leader: Quinn

Prompt: For the next three minutes, we're going to generate a list of animals. It can be any animal. It's okay if you end up listing the same animal more than once. Just keep writing and list as many animals as you can think of.

Now we're going to take a moment and pick two animals from the list. Label one of them Animal A and the other Animal B. I'll give you a moment to do so.

For the next three minutes, write whatever comes to mind about Animal A. This could be personality, connotations, physical characteristics, how they sound, how they move, what they like to eat, a funny anecdote you have about the animal, anything that that animal brings to mind.

Now, we're going to repeat the process for Animal B. Three minutes. Write whatever comes to mind about Animal B.

Now, choose one of your animals. That animal now informs your first character. They do not necessarily have to be the animal, but should be inspired by the qualities you wrote about that animal. The other animal now informs your second character. You have one minute to put your characters in a setting and define what their relationship is. I suggest using broad strokes.

Now, for the next hour write a scene between these two characters or a monologue from one directed at the other.

8/14/21

Prompt Leader: Quinn

Prompt: The exercise requires beginning a scene with a sentence. Ten minutes in you have to pivot to another sentence whether it is a non-sequitor or not. The point is the disruption. Ten minutes later you pivot to another sentence and ten minutes after that you pivot to a fourth sentence.

The sentences are:

All I want is a god damn cup of coffee.
They wanted something more... serious.
Do you know where I left my keys?
He skipped town and didn't look back.

9/11/21

Prompt Leader: Quinn

Prompt: For the next ten minutes we're going to write about joy. Things that are joyful, things that bring us joy, things that exist because of joy. Remember to keep writing and don't overthink it.

Now, go through and select one thing you wrote down. It could be an object, a thought, a feeling, anything that you wrote down. I will give you a minute to find your item/phrase/whatever it may be. What you selected is directly related to your protagonist's want or need. For the next 35 minutes, write a scene or monologue informed by that thing.

10/9/2021

Prompt Leader: Quinn

Prompt: First I want you to start by thinking about a dream you've had. This could be a recent dream, a recurring dream, a nightmare, etc. Once you've picked your dream, I want you to spend the next ten minutes writing about it in as much detail as you can possibly fit in. What do you see? What do you hear? What do you smell? What can you touch? Does your heart beat faster? Do you know you're dreaming? What feelings does it evoke?

Now take a breath. Hold it. And release. For the next 45 minutes, we're going to write a scene or a monologue in which the dream you described influences either the world of the piece or your protagonist. This can be as literal or abstract as you like.