

Text-Based Writing Prompts

Based upon *Smack Dab in the Middle of Maybe*

Below are some creative writing prompts created using *Smack Dab in the Middle of Maybe* as a reference. You also can use this technique with any other book that your students are studying. Page references below are to the hardback printing of *Smack Dab in the Middle of Maybe* (*Random House Children's Books/Yearling Adventure*).

1. Think of the type of short story you would like to write. Is it a mystery? An adventure or science fiction story? A fantasy?
2. Next, think of who the main character of your story will be. This is the character who will be the focus of the story, the one who will face challenges, and the one who will grow or change in some way by the end.
3. Choose a name for your main character. "Names carry a power," Cricket's dad told her (page 7). Make a list of 10 different potential names for your main character. What image does each name bring to mind? Write those down in the chart below.

Main Character potential name	Images that the name suggests:
1)	
2)	
3)	
4)	
5)	
6)	
7)	
8)	
9)	
10)	

4. Pick your favorite name and circle it. One of the techniques that writers use to make their characters three-dimensional is to give each character quirks and personal details that are not what readers would expect. Can you think of at least three quirks or personal details for your character that might surprise readers?
5. Now that you know your main character better, write a paragraph in your character's voice. Begin with: "They call me _____, but..."
6. On the last paragraph of page 28, Cricket reveals her goals. Make a list of what your main character wants. To keep the reader's attention, you will want to include things in your story that stand between your character and their goals. Use the chart below to make a list of what your main character wants, what stands in the way of achieving those goals, and what strategies the character can use to try to overcome their obstacles.

Goal	What stands in the way of that character achieving this goal (the obstacles)?	What strategies can the character use to try to overcome each obstacle?

7. Using the information in the chart above, write a paragraph in your character's voice. Begin with: "All I wanted was _____, but..."
8. On page 18, Cricket says "We were on the other side now." Think about your character's goals. What sort of line does your character have to cross in order to reach one or more of those goals? Write a paragraph describing how your character crosses that line. Begin your paragraph with: "The thing that scared me about _____ was _____."

9. In the last two lines on page 67, the author used repetition to emphasize what is important to Cricket in that scene. Choose a noun and write it down. Then write a paragraph in which the first two lines begin with that noun.

10. Page 139 includes a news article about Cricket. Write a newspaper article about your main character that begins with: “Questions still remain about _____”

11. On the bottom of page 165, the author describes an activity that Cricket enjoys so much that she loses track of everything around her. What does your main character like to do so much that the character loses track of time? Now write a scene in which the character is doing that activity. Begin your scene with “I couldn’t stop _____.”

12. Supporting characters are the other characters in the story. They may help the main character, or they may try to stop the main character from getting what they want. In *Smack Dab in the Middle of Maybe*, Miss V is a strong supporting character who helps Cricket reach some of her goals. Think of two or three supporting characters you could use in a story and write them down in the chart below.

Character name:	Relationship to the Main Character (friend, family member, mentor, enemy, etc.)	What are this character’s personality traits?	What are the goals of this character (what does this character want)?
1)			
2)			
3)			

13. Cricket has a distinctive way of speaking. Each character in a story should speak in a different voice. Use the chart below to record the speech patterns of at least three characters in your story.

Character name:	Does the character speak fast or slow?	List a few of your character's favorite words or phrases:	List below other details about your character's speech pattern (accent, poor grammar, etc.):
1)			
2)			
3)			
4)			

14. Using your chart above, write a scene in which two or more characters speak to one another. Begin your scene with: “‘You’re not even listening to me,’ _____ said. ‘What I meant is that _____.’”

15. In the last paragraph of page 101, the author used consonance and assonance to help establish a mood. Pick your favorite paragraph that you’ve written so far. Think of the mood you’d like to create. Now revise your paragraph, adding consonance and assonance to establish that mood.

16. Setting is the time and place where a story occurs. Decide on the setting for your story. Write a paragraph describing that setting. Use at least 3 of the 5 senses (seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling) to describe it.

17. Write a short story about your main character. Does your character reach their goals? How does your character change by the end of the story?

Common Core Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.3-9.3

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.4-9.4

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.5-9.5

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.10-9.10