



WRiTE BRAiN JOURNAL JAM

Ask your Program Director to provide each student with a lined notebook and pencil. Many companies will donate notebooks to organizations that need them.

- One of the best things about daily journal writing is that it can take so many forms.
- Journal writing in out-of-school-time hours can be a fun and meaningful, skill-building activity that is “uncorrected”, helping students to feel brave and worry free.
- A daily writing prompt is an excellent tool to get kids of all ages putting pencils to pages!
- Since it's not always easy to think of something specific to write about everyday, it's not a bad idea to make a Journal Jar and fill it with ideas.

A FEW SUGGESTIONS & iNspired iDEAS

- Keep each journal writing experience to 3-5 minutes, but tag an additional 2 minutes on if kids are still writing.
- Remind them to not overthink it: simply putting pencil to paper should get them going!
- Cut the writing prompts on the attached page into strips you can fold up and put in a giant jar (or box). **MAKE A JOURNAL JAR FULL OF INSPIRED JOURNAL STARTERS!**
- Each day, ask a different person to reach into the Journal Jar and choose a different journal prompt each day. Pass the Journal Jar around the room so that each student can add their own prompt.
- Hand out small, brightly colored index cards to each participant. Have each student create one original journal prompt to put in the jar... these prompts should be appropriate and not offensive or off-color. Encourage the prompts to be fun, meaningful, etc. Tell your kids that the class will be using the new prompts next month!
- Ask for volunteers to share an entry if they are inspired to do so.
- Ask, “Who would like to share?”
- Ask, “Who has questions about this journal entry?”
- Tell your kids to try and write one of the entries using 20 words or less.

DO YOUR OWN JOURNAL ENTRY EVERY DAY USING THE SAME DAILY PROMPT AS YOUR AFTER-SCHOOL KIDS AND ALWAYS VOLUNTEER TO SHARE YOURS ALOUD!



Here's to fun, inspirational, & GRADE-FREE journaling!

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DAILY JOURNAL WRITING PROMPTS

One prompt per day, 3-5 minutes of focused fun writing, and VOILA! Your kids are journaling maniacs! Tell them they will look back at this journal for the rest of their lives.

- Describe in rich detail a nice dream you had.
- Describe in rich detail a nightmare you had.
- What would you pack in your suitcase if you left your home and could not go back again? If you had only one month to live, what would you do?
- What would be your ideal job when you grow up? Explain.
- Share your definition of success?
- Write about the best day of your life.
- Write about the worst day of your life.
- Finish this sentence: If I could change one thing about myself... (if you can't think of anything, you might want to consider writing about how you came to be perfect!)
- Finish this sentence: If I ever have children, I will never...
- Write a note to a friend, encouraging them to give up drugs.
- Finish this sentence: Five years from now, I will be...
- Write about a day you'd like to forget.
- Invent and describe a new food.
- Who is a hero of yours and why?
- Write about a time in your life when you struggled with a choice and made the right one.
- Three goals I have set for myself are...
- What would you do if 300 mice crawled out of their cages in a pet shop where you worked?
- What would you do if the dinner served to you in a restaurant came with a cockroach in it?
- Write about something you wanted to do last weekend, but didn't.
- Write a brand new law that would go into effect in your neighborhood.
- Write a thank you note to an imaginary friend who gave you onion and garlic-flavored chewing gum.
- What television show would you want to be in and why?
- Design some gadget, robot, tool, machine, building, or other creation that might enrich the future. What does it look like? What does it do? How does it function? In what ways might it benefit people?
- If you had \$1000 how would you spend it?
If you had \$10,000 how would you spend it?
If you had \$100,000 how would you spend it?



WRiTE BRAiN BOOKS | Story Swap

Your story, where you come from and who you are, matters. Sharing your story creates connection and community. Personal connection creates more opportunity for empathy. Empathy creates opportunity for improved social interaction and creativity. Creativity provides opportunity for finding your voice.

Young people who 'find' and 'use' their voice have a stronger sense of self-identity and the potential for a more holistic experience navigating school, social norms and life in a professional world are possible. Some kids feel shame around their story.

If we can support kids of all ages to own, embrace and tell their story, we can sit back and watch the self-esteem in the young people we serve every day rise sky-high!

(The research says it!)

STORY SWAPPERS UNiTE!

1. Have students pair up and designate a **Partner A** and **Partner B**
2. Use a timer and set it for 2 minutes
3. Ask **Partner A** to share their personal story with **Partner B**. They can talk about anything they want, but encourage them to "keep it real".

If they need a topic, suggest one of these:

- What you are passionate about
- A unique quality about yourself
- Who are your role models and why
- How you contribute to your community
- Your future goals
- Share about your closest friend
- Share about someone you love who passed on
- Where you were born and where you live now
- Something you're proud of
- Something you're really good at
- Most defining moment of your life
- Something you want to learn how to do
- A favorite memory and why it's a favorite
- Family background and current family experience
- Favorite book or movie
- How you would improve the world if you were President
- What you love about your older or younger sibling



4. When the time is up, Partner B should ask questions of Partner A based on what they heard. (Give participants 2 - 3 more minutes)
 - a. These questions can provide insight to their original story as well as an opportunity for a deeper reflection into **Partner A's** life.
 - b. These questions will create a real life connection providing opportunity for shared experiences between partners.
 - c. These conversations can build character, help students find commonalities and help them learn to appreciate each other's differences.
 - d. There is additional opportunity for students to become less judgmental and less critical of each other providing a safer and more vibrant learning environment.
 - e. Ask **Partner B** to think carefully and critically about what else they want to learn about **Partner A**.
5. After the questions and debrief, ask a **volunteer** to retell their story aloud in front of the class. This will be the second time they speak their story; now they are showing bravery and confidence by sharing their story in front of a group.
6. Repeat the activity asking **Partner B** to be the storyteller.

Remind the kids: "What is shared in the **STORY SWAP** stays in the **STORY SWAP!**" Only those who want to share will do so. "Who wants to volunteer to share about their Story Swap experience?"

POST STORY SWAP Q & A

- What new information did you find out?
- What did you learn from this exercise?
- Did anything you shared surprise you?
- Did anything you learned surprise you?
- Did you feel your partner shared personal info with you that was meaningful?

This is the beginning of authentic story telling from the heart and minds of your powerful students who have experiences worth sharing.



WRITE BRAIN RAP SHEET

RAPPING taps into our need for self-expression. It is a form of storytelling, like spoken word or poetry, put to a rhythmic beat so that it is heard beyond the ears and felt beyond the body. Music activates parts of the brain and inspires young minds in a wholly different way than literature or visual art. Rap songs rhyme. Rhyming is an excellent tool in any writing experience as it triggers ideas and lays a track for sentences.

Rapping essentially involves the speaking or chanting of rhyming lyrics, often set to a beat. The rhyming created by rappers is considered by many to be one of the most sophisticated styles of poetry.

DAY ONE

(45 MINUTES - 1 HOUR)

- Ask your students, "Has anyone ever heard a rap song?" When the laughing dies down, ask them, "Has anyone ever written a rap song?"
- If anyone has, ask if he or she remembers it enough to share even a few seconds or sentences of it with the group.
- Then tell your kids about the WRITE-A-RAP contest you're having over the next three days! The winning rap groups (1st place, 2nd place & 3rd place) will each receive a special prize. Perhaps your program can get a few iTunes gift cards or a book about the history of rap music?
- Have each student write his or her name on a small piece of paper and put all of the names in a box, bowl or hat.
- Form small groups by pulling names out of a hat so that there are three rappers per group. Two or more rappers make a group!
- Tell the groups that they can choose any topic or issue they wish to rap about as long

they remain respectful and create a rap that won't get their group in trouble. :-)

- Tell the groups to each find an area of the room and to get together to decide what they want to rap about.
- GIVE THEM 15 MINUTES TO SETTLE ON THE THEME AND FOCAL POINTS OF THEIR RAP.
- You might also prompt them with:
 - "If I handed you a microphone and told you that a million people you've never met will hear whatever you speak into it, what would you want to tell them?"
- Once students have decided what they want their rap to be about, tell each group to make a list of words or phrases that come to mind when they think about their chosen topic or story. Tell them to write as many words as they can. Remind them not to over think but to write freely what comes to mind!
- GIVE THEM 20 MINUTES TO CREATE THE FIRST PART OF THEIR WORD LISTS.

EXAMPLE:

Our rap is about each of our siblings:

Older sister named Lisa
Eats pizza for breakfast
Collects cartoon underwear
Won't drink water
Has curly hair
Little brother just turned five
Plays soccer
Funny face
Raised in Phoenix
Twin has rock collection
Brother... AND SO ON



DAY TWO

(45 MINUTES - 1 HOUR)

**Internet access will be required to download karaoke song tracks OR students can make up their own beats and create musical sounds on their own. **

Have each group choose a rap/hip-hop song they like and to pull it up on the Internet on YouTube (TELL THEM: "Keep in mind that the rhythm of your rap song doesn't have to perfectly match the original song. Just do your thing, and go with the beat as you hear it!")

Below are some songs you can easily find karaoke tracks for online.

Black Eyed Peas: Boom Boom Pow
Fergie: London Bridge
Gwen Stephanie: Hollaback Girl
Sugar Hill Gang: Rapper's Delight
Tone Loc: Wild Thing
Young MC: Bust A Move
Vanilla Ice: Ice Ice Baby
Will Smith: Jiggy Wit It
MC Hammer: U Can't Touch this
Naughty By Nature: OPP
Run DMC/Aerosmith: Walk This Way
Salt N' Pepa: Push it
Salt N' Pepa: Shoop
Tone Loc: Funky Cold Medina
Silento: Watch Me
iHeart Memphis: Hit the Quan
Drake: Hotline Bling

Have each group complete their word lists for the next 20 minutes.

NOW IT IS TIME FOR GROUPS TO "RAP IT UP" AND WRITE IT DOWN!

Have them return to the list of words and phrases created, and circle the words they

think are most important to the meaning or message of the rap.

EXAMPLE:

Sister named Lisa
Eats pizza
Cartoon underwear
Curly hair
Little brother just turned five
Phoenix

Now, each group will create a list of words that rhyme with the key words they circled, or the last word of each short sentence or phrase they wrote. (rhymezone.com is an excellent website for rhyming! Some words may not rhyme exactly, but can sound very similar.)

Phoenix:	Kleenex
	see next
	v-necks

TIME FOR THEM TO START WRITING RAP SEGMENTS!

SAMPLE RAP SEGMENT WRITTEN FROM LIST ABOVE:

"My sister's name is Lisa
and she has curly hair.
In the morning she eats pizza
in her cartoon underwear.
She grew up in Pheonix,
When she cries she uses Kleenex...



DAY THREE

(45 MINUTES - 1 HOUR)

- All groups complete the writing of their rap songs for 15 minutes at the start of this session.
 - Ask for a volunteer group to kick off the contest by sharing, “spitting” rockin’ their rap!
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A BRIEF HISTORY OF RAP

Rap is more than a musical genre. It has had a deep impact on language, art, and literature world for decades.

Rap and hip-hop music, as we know it today, actually began thousands of years ago in Africa with the “Griots,” who were village storytellers. They played a simple handmade instrument while they told stories of family and village events. The Griot “rap” was, and still is, a major form of communication in parts of Africa. This “talking” while music is playing is rap music in its most rudimentary form.

In addition to the Griot tradition, rap is rooted in the early African-American experience, which began, sadly, with slavery. While slaves were working in the fields, they would often sing. Parts of the songs they sang were “call and answer” selections. One leader would call out part of the song and his or her fellow slaves would answer with the next line.

Call and answer is a way of connecting with a group of people, establishing a sense of community, and a way of experiencing one’s agency in his or her world, (e.g., when I call out, people answer).

This call and response trend continued and prevailed in religious services in churches even after slavery ended. Often, the minister would make the “call” and the congregation was responsible for the “response.” This call and answer trend can be found in early rap music all the way up to current rap music. The DJ would call out “Can I get a Woo Woo?” and the response would of course come back as “Woo Woo” from the people listening.

More than a century before rap exploded onto the American music scene, West African musicians were telling stories rhythmically, with just the beat of a drum for accompaniment. Meanwhile, folk artists from the Caribbean Islands were also telling stories in rhyme. These singing poets from Africa and the Caribbean lay the foundation for modern-day American rap music.

