

Editors' Note

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We are excited to introduce readers to the articles featured in *Prompt* issue 9.1, which showcases writing assignments in diverse disciplinary contexts, including environmental communication, technical editing, health science, and three distinct first-year writing courses: one that focuses on online writing instruction, a second that incorporates Writing about Writing pedagogies, and a third that examines meme rhetorics.

In the essay, “Archival Research for Community- and Skill-Building in the Online Writing Classroom,” Alex Evans develops a low-stakes assignment in his co-requisite course for developing writers that examines the archives of a local African American newspaper as an alternative to traditional researched writing. First engaging readings and media to introduce archival investigation, students then dive into this digitized newspaper archive to find a single article that captures their interest, share a summary of the article with their fellow classmates, and finally reflect on their learning in discussion board posts. Taught in the context of a predominately white Southern community college, we are impressed with the ways that Evans’ prompt works to engage the historically underserved students that frequently enroll in the course, as well as how the author seeks to build community in what can often be an uncomfortable and isolating space—that is, an online first-year writing classroom.

Ryan Eichberger’s piece, “Pixelated Life: Fostering Environmental Enchantment Through the Design of Children’s Media,” describes his effort to help students reconnect with a spirit of enchantment, especially with nature, in the face of a modern life that his students find increasingly overwhelming. From the perspective that “writing teachers are habitual guides toward attentiveness [by encouraging] process and recursion, rethinking and reimagining, noticing and listening,” Eichberger developed an assignment asking students to create a play-based environmental game or activity for children. Spanning seven weeks, the assignment engages students in deliberately focusing their attention, analyzing audiences, developing relevant technoliteracies, applying document design, and, finally, trying out one another’s activities. As Eichberger argues for the value of reconnecting students with nature, we appreciate that he coaches students through a more deliberate engagement with, rather than rejection of, technology. Through this approach, Eichberger invites students to engage strategically with technologies as a way to process and communicate their relationships with nature.

In “Editing AI-Generated Text for Accuracy and Completeness,” Jen Talbot highlights how she asked students in her upper-division undergraduate editing course to engage in a comprehensive editing exercise of writing generated by ChatGPT. First taught on the heels of this evolving technology’s release, her assignment asks students to gauge factual accuracy, rhetorical effectiveness, and attunement to user needs in AI-generated prose. We believe the prompt could serve as a smart introduction to generative AI in a range of courses across the disciplines and is particularly pertinent to technical fields where writing will increasingly be influenced by algorithm-driven technologies. We also appreciate Talbot’s IRB study of student responses to the assignment, which contains valuable insights on how faculty might develop related prompts. As

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the author argues, although larger philosophical questions regarding AI will no doubt continue to evolve, it is crucial that faculty across the disciplines help students navigate the ethical dimensions of creating technology-generated writing.

Olivia Imirie’s “Defining Writing Lingo: Using Interviews to Investigate Language about Writing and the Writing Process” describes her Writing about Writing-based assignment, which asks students to interview three people they consider to be good writers in order to develop and argue for a more nuanced understanding of key terminology for writing. Through this assignment, which also engages students in qualitative coding, students come to understand the complex ways that concepts like “revision” or “research” are embodied and enacted differently by writers across a variety of contexts. We are compelled by Imirie’s description of this assignment as an opportunity for students to move beyond confident initial definitions of terminology towards more contextually nuanced understandings of writing as activity and artifact. Although Imirie situates the prompt in a first-year writing course, we find the assignment valuable to upper-division courses in writing studies and perhaps particularly courses that prepare graduate assistants to teach undergraduate writing.

Travis Maynard’s contribution to this issue, “*Feels Good Man: Memes as a Framework for Teaching Circulation, Remix, and Writing Transfer*,” explains a prompt that asks students to trace the evolution of a cultural meme. Drawing on evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins’ notion of meme and on other forms of circulation analysis, Maynard’s Meme Research Infographic assignment invites students to rhetorically analyze multiple generations of a meme, develop an infographic to present their learning to peers, and reflect on their rhetorical and technological engagement with the assignment, including their use of AI at various stages of the project. Along the way, the documentary *Feels Good Man* (Jones, 2020), which explores ten generations of Pepe the Frog, serves as an illustration of cultural circulation and remix. We appreciate Maynard’s effort to locate this assignment within disciplinary conversations about writing transfer, and we are excited about the ways this kind of exploration of meaning-making might be applied beyond the first-year composition classroom.

“Does Metacognition Matter?: Prompting Students to Think about How They Think,” by Morgan Luck, Erika R. Francis, Stephanie Bernard, and Anne Schempp, describes the authors’ efforts, across five cohorts of students in a masters-level physician assistant program, to develop students’ metacognitive awareness of patient-oriented decision making. In the brief Metacognitive Analysis assignment, students investigate patient teaching cases in small group learning sessions and are asked to identify examples of *analytic* and *intuitive* decision-making during a case study. As part of scaffolded writing experiences throughout the program, the authors see this writing-to-learn activity contributing to practitioner self-awareness and evidence-based practice within a broader problem-based learning environment. We appreciate the authors’ acknowledgement of the way this assignment engages some students in the complexity of intuitive interpretation within the context of health science, and we could see this kind of task applying across a range of other scientific fields as well as the social and behavioral sciences.

We hope you find value in these contributions and thank the authors for sharing their innovative writing prompts. As we move toward special issue 9.2, guest edited by Ethan Youngerman, we look forward to showcasing innovative assignments from a single writing program, the Expository Writing Program at New York University, which prides itself on developing courses inflected with content from across the disciplines. Stay tuned!

References

Jones, A. (Director). (2020). *Feels good man* [Film]. Ready Fictions & Wavelength. <https://www.feelsgoodmanfilm.com/>