



TEEN TOPICS FOR INSPIRATION

TOPICS OF INTEREST

Music | Space | Dating | Trouble/Crime | Working Family
Friends | Bullying | Friendship | Art | Grief/Loss | LGBTQIA
Nature | Travel | School Moving | Starting Fresh | Religion
Comedy | Cooking/Food | Goosebumps | Skateboarding
Adventure | Magic | History | Biography | Hardship | Cars
New Experiences | Gaming | Nature | Food | Tech

POPULAR THEMES

Coming of Age

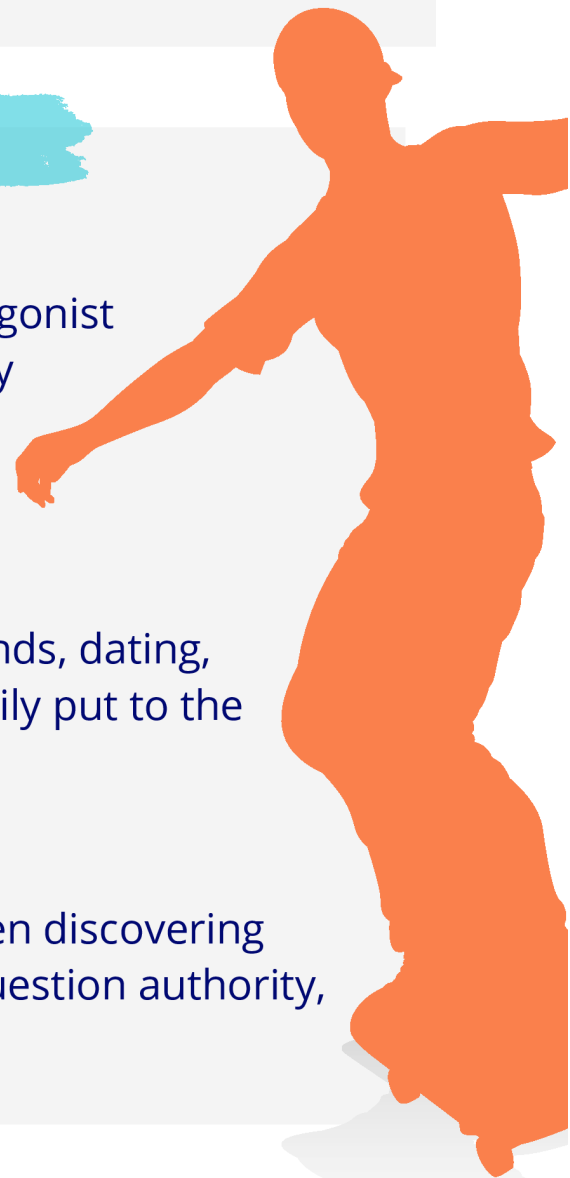
Focuses on the transition of a young protagonist from childhood to adulthood, in which they often face issues or challenges associated with the transition.

Building Relationships

The teen years are full of change: new friends, dating, existing relationships with friends and family put to the test.

Self-Discovery

It's often a bumpy road that's traveled when discovering who we are and who we want to be. We question authority, the beliefs we've been taught, etc.



Dealing with Loss

Watching a main character experience loss can help teen readers cope with their own hardships, if only to feel that they are not alone. This loss is not limited to death. Loss can be the result of having absentee parents or dealing with emotional distance. Stories that end with the main character growing from the ashes inspire hope in teen readers.

Young Love

Romantic relationships can be a huge obsession for teens. It's a time of many important firsts: first love, first kiss, first heartbreak, rejection and acceptance. While dealing with these firsts, the protagonist learns many lessons about love and about themselves.

Hardship/Tough Topics

Inevitably and unfortunately, life is full of unexpected hardships and books should reflect that. These topics include suicide, racism, teenage pregnancy, family problems, bullying, and more. In these stories, the main characters explore the darker elements of themselves and of society, and learn to cope with the difficulties they experience.





Theme: Firsts

- “Firsts” are a major aspect of teen life: first kiss, first date, first car, first job, first relationships. The high emotional quality of firsts also sets high stakes and high emotion, making for a deeper connection between the character and your reader.

Theme: Teenager + Parent Relationships

- Write a story in which a teen discovers something about his/her parent(s). This could be a secret from their past, a health issue, an upcoming change (divorce, relocation, major career change), etc. Don't be afraid to play with different genres, for example: the parents' major secret could be that they are paranormal creatures.

Theme: Life-Changing Moments

- Write about plans going awry: not getting into your character's college, losing a job, getting lost in an airport and missing a flight, etc. How does your character respond to these challenges?
- Write about moving to a new place and starting a new school/job. What are the challenges? How does your character face them?
- Write about a character who is researching another culture for his/her school project. What does he/she learn? What did he/she know previously? How did his/her view change and develop?

Theme: Discovering Purpose

- Write about a lightbulb experience in which your teenaged main character realizes what he/she wants to do for the rest of their life.

Theme: Acceptance

- Write a story about a coming-of-age ritual gone wrong and a character having to learn to accept who they are/aren't meant to be.
- Write about a character's eyes being opened to flaws in something he/she believed to be flawless: a parent, teacher, a system (school, healthcare,) etc. Does he/she work to change that flaw, or accept it?

Theme: Choice

- A teenager who has to choose between two very different schools.
- It's difficult to choose between doing what is right and doing what is easy. Write about a teenager experiencing a tough choice. Ex.) Do they stand up to bullying on behalf of a classmate and risk becoming the victim themselves?



WRITING IDEAS & PROMPTS

TIPS AND INSPIRATION

Know your character.

Your audience does not necessarily need to know every aspect of your character, but knowing them yourself will help you add texture and dimension to your writing. It can also help to identify character wants and what obstacles stand in the way of those wants, thereby defining the conflict of your story. Consider the following.

Who is my character?

- **Traits:** This is your character's unique mixture of positive, negative, and neutral traits, habits, likes, dislikes, talents, hobbies, quirks, and mannerisms.
- **Values:** Your character's individual point of view, beliefs, attitudes, values, and passions.
- **Flaws:** Your character's negative traits, fears, resentments, emotional issues, etc. (These are important not only because they are distinctly human, but because they provide a basis for readers to sympathize/empathize with your character, which builds understanding and relatability.)

WRITING EXERCISES

- Write about a teen volunteer who discovers something about themselves with the help of an unexpected mentor.
- Imagine that a character did the old spin the globe and see where to take your next vacation trip. Write a story or scene describing where they went and how their trip panned out.
- Write a scene or story that includes a character either taking a dare or revealing a secret about themselves.
- Visit a park, coffee shop, or another public place that is buzzing with activity. Take note of what you hear the people around you say. Begin an original scene or story that includes something you overheard.
- A person from your character's future gets into contact with them: Who is contacting your character? How do they contact your protagonist? What knowledge do they choose to impart — and does your character believe that person? How do they handle the information they're given?
- The first date: Take your character on a first date with someone — it can be either a good or bad date. How did they meet? What do they talk about? Do they ever meet again? Adjust to your own genre preferences.



CRAFTING EFFECTIVE DIALOGUE



Directions: Asking yourself key questions about your characters, plot, and setting can help to gather rich materials for developing interesting and authentic dialogue in your writing.

Use the following prompts to explore your story concept in detail and keep your answers on hand for tracking the purpose of your dialogue and what tasks it needs to achieve in your writing.

CHARACTER

Who is speaking?

What is their age, gender, social background, education level, geographical area?

Do they have any catchphrases? Are they introverted? Extroverted?

What is the character's current emotional situation?

Who are they speaking to? What relationship do they have to them?

- Write down as many details as you can about what makes your character tick. This will help you to create dialogue that readers will automatically know belongs to them.

PLOT

What happened to cause the character to say such a line?

Who did he/she say it to?

Does this other character oppose the first character for some reason?

What is the reason?

What are the objectives of the characters in the scene?

SETTING

Where is the dialogue taking place?

What are the smells?

What are the sounds?

What does the character see around him/her?

Why is he/she in this place at this time?

What does the setting tell us about the background of the character?