the writing process

1. cluster
   then
   fastwrite
   also
   see it, say it, draw it

2. peep the prompt
   organize
   focus and frame

3. hook the reader
   show-not-tell
   persuade with passion
   think legacy

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step one: diverge

1st: __________________________

2nd: __________________________

If stuck:

__________________________
__________________________
__________________________
Just like most things in life—people, animals, socks, chicken nuggets—essays come in all shapes, sizes, lengths, and types. When we know what type of essay we’re writing, we’re better able to set ourselves up for success in earning the grade we want.

Label the three most common types of essay prompts according to the examples below.

____________________

Your class took a trip to the Smithsonian American Art Museum to see The Art of Video Games exhibition. You learned about the 40-year history of video gaming systems, the art of storytelling in video games, and the future of video game technology. You are asked to write a presentation for the rest of the school about what you learned while on the trip.

____________________

You may have heard of IQ, which is a measure of someone’s general intelligence. You may also have heard of EI, which stands for emotional intelligence. It measure things like self-awareness and ability to get along with others. Which do you think is more important—having a high IQ or a high EI—for being successful in life? Why?

____________________

You’re planning your summer vacation. You’ve already chosen a gorgeous resort, but haven’t decided what form of transport to take. You’re not quite sure whether a train or airplane would be more comfortable and suitable. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of these two means of transportation for your trip.
**Argument**

1. F
2. F
3. F
4. Opposing view

**Persuasion**

1. C
2. C
3. C
4. Opposing view
In this paper I will write about Abraham Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln was the sixteenth president of the United States. He was born in Illinois and wore a big black top hat. He won the civil war and was a good president that did many good things to help make the United States the awesome country that it is today. Cuz of him there is no more slavery. I hope you like my paper.

“Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president of the United States, discovers vampires are planning to take over the United States. He makes it his mission to eliminate them.” Thus reads the tagline for the 2012 action film Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter. Though a simple man from Illinois with a top hat, Lincoln is consistently one of the most revered and talked about presidents in US history, to the extent of being featured as the star of the (obviously) fictional film mentioned above. He helped to hold the country together during the Civil War, signed the Emancipation Proclamation to end slavery, and promoted economic modernization. His legacy has left a lasting impression on American politics.

Now it’s your turn. How can you capture the reader’s interest so they want to read on? Be creative!
The first impression matters. “Hook” the reader in the first sentence by starting with one of these so your first paragraph will stand out from the rest.

- a paradoxical statement
- a vivid, show-not-tell example
- a rhyme or riddle
- a question
Please read each of the items and evaluate where you are by placing a number between 1 and 10 on the appropriate blank line. (1 = needs work, 5 = doing pretty good, 10 = great)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Start</th>
<th>Finish</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy writing in my spare time.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can easily think about what to write.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
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<tr>
<td>I enjoy sharing my writing with others.</td>
<td>______</td>
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<tr>
<td>I believe I’m a clear and concise writer.</td>
<td>______</td>
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<tr>
<td>I enjoy expressing my opinions through writing.</td>
<td>______</td>
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<tr>
<td>I organize my papers before I write them.</td>
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<td>I believe being able to write well is a valuable skill.</td>
<td>______</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can write confidently in both personal and professional styles.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can write a strong, engaging introduction.</td>
<td>______</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel confident in my writing abilities.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
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<tr>
<td>My overall feeling toward myself as a writer ...</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Prompt I’ll be writing about:
“I write because to form a word with your lips and tongue or think a thing and then dare to write it down so you can never take it back is the most powerful, brave thing I know. I write because I am trying to come alive, to find the distances in my own recesses and bring them forward and give them color and form.”

(excerpt from Writing Down the Bones by Natalie Goldberg)
Thesis: __________________________________________
______________________________________________
______________________________________________

Summary: _________________________________________
______________________________________________
______________________________________________
• _______________________________________________
______________________________________________
• _______________________________________________
______________________________________________
• _______________________________________________
______________________________________________

Conclusion: _______________________________________
______________________________________________
______________________________________________
“I write because I would like to live forever.
I seek to immortalize the world I have found and made for myself, even knowing that I won’t be there to witness that immortality.
The future doesn’t just happen. We make it. This works no differently in [writing] than in any other field of endeavor.”

(excerpt from *Why I Write* by Reginald Shepherd)
Write on!
Think of an important event in your life, then write a poem about the moments just before or just after the event.

Think of a subject that “eats away at you” and write a poem that exaggerates it.

Write about something you love from the perspective of someone who hates it.

Think of something tiny and write about it, making it seem large.

Imagine you are an inanimate object. What is it like?

Write about something that no one else seems ever to have noticed … a time, place or thing, or a common occurrence (like the oil spot on the driveway, water draining in the bathtub, stepping off a bus, etc.)
ABC
The first letter of each line in the poem spells out the topic

SuperCamp
Standing at registration alone,
Unsure about where I am.
Promises made to come here,
everyone seems weird.
Replace old ideas with new,
cement has trapped me in the past.
About to face a new start,
Me and my new friends have courage.
Promises I can keep.

Mil Preguntas by Gary G. Gaffney
Each line is a question addressed to the world

Why is hating so easy and loving so hard?
Why is leaving so easy and staying so hard?
Why seek integrity when celebrity is enough?
Why seek depth when superficiality is enough?
Why seek?
Is being a hero worth the effort?

You, Me, Them, Us, You, Me Frame
Another pattern that a lot of different poems can fit into

You – So committed, so present, so tuned in to who I am. I’m scared that you won’t be there when I change.
Me – Unclear, confused, struggling between what is really going on in me and what needs to happen to strengthen our relationship.
Them – Judging, questioning, watching—or that’s what I imagine.
Us – To start fresh with you and stay committed. Can we?
You – Solid and sure foundations for the future.
Me – Wanting it all, counting the cost, again.
"I am" Repetition Frame

I am (two special characteristics you have)
I wonder (something you are actually curious about)
I hear (an imaginary sound)
I see (an imaginary sight)
I want (an actual desire)
I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

I pretend (something you actually pretend to do)
I feel (a feeling about something imaginary)
I touch (an imaginary touch)
I worry (something that really bothers you)
I cry (something that makes you very sad)
I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

I understand (something you know is true)
I say (something you believe in)
I dream (something you actually dream about)
I hope (something you actually hope for)
I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

Inspiration (example of "I am" Repetition Frame)

I am inspiring and searching
I wonder where my path may lead me
I hear the practical voices of reason
I see the purpose of controlling wishes
I want to be free
I am inspiring and searching

I pretend to have it all figured out
I feel doubtful and afraid
I touch nothing
I worry I won’t be safe
I cry for the possibilities and people I keep away
I am inspiring and searching

I understand time passing
I say I am ready to fly
I dream that I am
I hope it won’t hurt much to fall
I am inspiring and searching

Addressing an envelope: