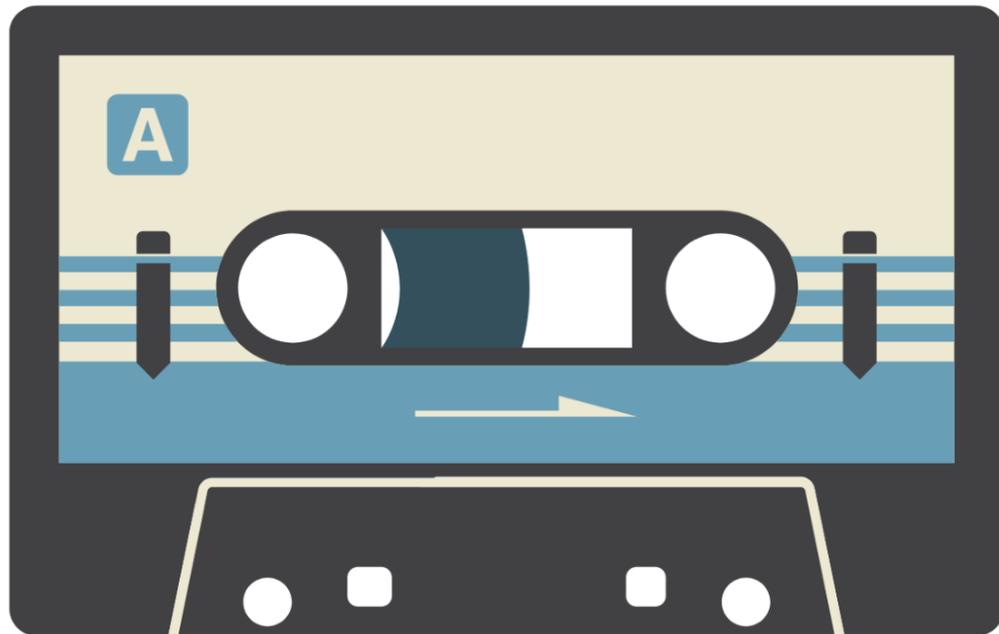


31 DAYS

OF MUSIC

WRITING PROMPTS



MARTHA BECHTEL

31 Days of Music

a Saturday Story Prompt Collection

Martha Bechtel

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WHAT SORT OF PROMPTS are THESE?

From sweeping symphonies to simple earworms, music is interwoven throughout our lives. Have a story that could use a little musical interlude? Then grab a pen and a Muse and take a stroll through a month-long adventure in song. We might not all dance to the same system clock, but there's magic in everyone's tune and a soundtrack for every story!

This eBook contains 31 prose prompts, which are one or more sentences of story. This type of prompt is meant to invoke a setting, emotion, or plot idea. They can be used in multiple ways and I've included examples of those at the end of the book.

The prompts are set in a variety of genres including fantasy and science fiction, but many are not genre-specific. If you're not familiar with my style of prompts, please hop over to my website (www.Martha.net) and check out the **Saturday Story Prompts** category.

This eBook contains a mix of Saturday Story Prompts previously posted to the blog as well as prompts that will be posted in the future.

Prompts are not divided into categories and have been mixed to make sure themes and genres are not clumped together. The prompts are meant to be read in this random order to shake up your muses and get them hopping around between wildly different ideas!

PROMPTS

1. Music flows from the well at night, soft somber orchestral tunes that seep out between the bricks and reverberate in her bones.
2. Songs are for victors and there's no one left to sing.
3. It's easier to make a drum from the tree than they expected and only a few hours pass between the fall and the first beats of the SOS.
4. Space is neither empty nor silent, if you have the right senses, and the Ship has the best that money can buy. She soaks in the static song of the cosmo as she hops from point to point, interweaving her own complex mathematical counterpoint melodies.
5. "Hey, hey-- *driver* picks the music," he objected and swapped the station back to classical country against the objections of everyone else in the rental car.
6. Angels don't sing, not where we can hear them at least. You only know they're coming into range when your bones begin to hum and your ears pop under the pressure.
7. The violist that sits at the edge of the park on Sunday afternoons, well off the path and without a tip jar, plays quiet melodies meant to soothe rather than entrance.
8. When she'd said the right music could make you fly, he hadn't thought she meant it literally.
9. The alien flute is light in his hand, too light, and he runs his fingers down it trying to find the balance to it. But almost as soon as he's finished the thought, the instrument thickens and pulses until it's perfectly synced with his memories.

10. It's basic percussion, thumps and rumbling booms and sharp pings, all dancing past each other in an improv twirl as the musicians deftly turn noise into song.

11. He's always heard the weather as music, certain melodies mean rain, others wind-- it's not something he's ever tried to explain, not where the whisper of 'witch' is as damning as murder. So he hides it behind a lifetime of studying the sky, wrapping up his magics in the veil of science.

12. "Work as hard as you like, effort can never replace talent."

"To professional ears maybe, but to everyone else?" He waved a hand at the empty concert seats. "They won't care, they'll just enjoy the show. So go back to your ivory towers, I have work to do."

13. The best way to annoy telepaths is to get a song stuck in your head, the more inane and catchy the better.

14. Singing is the one thing that brings her back from where her mind has trapped her. They cajole her into singing gospel songs, ancient show tunes, even commercial jingles bring the spark back to her eyes and the flutter of recognition to their interactions.

15. They exchange songs the way other tribes intermarry, a musical tie from one family-- one species to another. Whatever he teaches them, they'll teach their children and their children's children to honor his memory and they expect him to do the same.

16. Music dances along the hallways between the practice rooms, a joyful cacophony of craft that's only slightly muted by the aging soundproofing.

17. She can feel death creeping along her spine and she begins the notes of her Last Song, hoping against hope that somehow they'll be able to save her in time. It's a long song, she's led a long life and she's honoring every moment... but the final chorus comes and she's still alone.

18. There's a lull in the concert as they frantically try and fix the sound system. The opening act are seasoned pros and they take the loss in stride. They keep the crowd entertained and engaged until things are sorted and the headliners swing in to steal the glory.

19. It's a war song, full of fire and vengeance and the battlefield echoes with it as a hundred thousand voices blend together into a roaring chorus that the darkness cannot smother.

20. The ship has learned to sing, somewhere among the decades it's been in service, using music to control its human crew. It tries to teach others the basics of it: music is just ordered noise, pitched and metered in a way to elicit the desired emotional responses, but the other AIs don't seem to have the knack for composition.

21. She finds the old mixtapes in a box of random paperwork as she cleans. Ancient cassettes whose secondhand music has long since been lost to static are worthless, useless things... but there in shaky blue ink is proof of their love half a century later.

22. There's a constant symphony inside his head and it takes him much longer than he likes to admit to realize no one else can hear the music playing in the background of their lives.

23. The city sings them to sleep with the sounds of a life they'd both forgotten in the mists.

24. Parrots are quick studies when there's food involved and soon the music --and the message they've hidden within it-- is spreading through the city.

25. The music rises from the orchestra pit, a fog of soft woodwinds punctuated by sharp darting flutes and the deep rumble of the drums. She doesn't want to be here but the music doesn't care, lifting her up into its embrace and washing the world away.

26. Courier robots aren't meant for speech, but the rudimentary AIs have learned to chain their beeps and clicks into musical cues that function well enough. It isn't until the children start using the 'excuse me coming through' tune that someone figures out the game.

27. She hates the piano with a passion, but music lessons have never been optional. There's too much of her mother's dignity at stake for her daughters to fail at such a basic social grace.

28. It's easier for humans to remember things put to music so they teach the refugees the basic math and science of their new world with a catchy beat and purloined nursery rhymes.

29. Magic fights against categorization, turning any attempt to contain it with formulas or functions into puddles of ink or corrupted files. Oddly, it has no such hatred of musical rules and they finally learn to control it with a composer's touch.

30. The music lies still on the paper, harmless, silent, but in his head, a symphony unfolds.

31. His apartment is layered with music, each room singing its own separate tune, and she marvels at how the sounds gently weave together along the edges, never discordant, but never quite in harmony.

HOW DO I USE THESE PROMPTS?

Prose prompts are one or more sentences of an unfinished story. This type of prompt is meant to invoke a setting, emotion, or plot idea that the writer can expand upon.

They are more restrictive than single-word prompts, but that extra layer of context will sometimes make it easier to get your Muses in gear.

These prompts can be used in a wide variety of ways and I'll cover the most common ones below and then provide some example responses.

The best part about these types of prompts is that they are wide open to remixing, so there's really no wrong way to go about it!

Like, Literally Dude!

The easiest way to use a prose prompt is as the start of a scene.

This can be verbatim use or a slight rewrite to fit your own style, but you simply continue the story from where the prompt ended. Much like the 'finish this sentence' prompt, this method is only concerned with what happens next.

Don't worry if the prompt drops you into the middle of a fight or a conversation. Pick up from that point and move forward, you can write the missing bits later if the plot bunnies strike. The purpose of the prompt is to jumpstart the creative process, not replace it!

I use a randomly selected prompt this way as a warm-up exercise since it's very limiting on where the story can go.

Prompt: You could see the lights of the city from miles away, tiny glimmers of civilization scattered among the weeds.

Genre Neutral response

You could see the lights of the city from miles away, tiny glimmers of civilization scattered among the weeds. I wasn't used to the flatlands and their endless horizons yet and it was creepy in ways I couldn't quite put words to. My hometown was all well-forested hills— you were lucky if you could see around the next bend in the road, much less fifty miles.

Fantasy response

Even here at the edge of the forest the lights of the city still called out to him, tiny glimmers of civilization scattered among the weeds. For a moment the pull of home was stronger than the curse and he stood there, entangled in the memories of everything he'd lost.

Rough Ideas

The next way to use the prompt is to spark an idea based on the concept presented and not the actual words.

This allows you more freedom than the first method while still limiting things enough that you aren't fighting to find a topic. Part of getting past Writer's Block is the hurdle of 'what do I want to write about?' when there are an infinite number of answers.

I use this method when I'm trying to start a new story from a prompt that I've chosen ahead of time. This rarely works well for me when the prompt is randomly drawn.

Prompt: History 131 was much more interesting when your teacher was an Immortal.

Concept: Teachers who are immortal would be more entertaining when teaching history classes because they had lived through the events.

Science Fiction response

The ancient interface was caked with dust, but it slowly warmed to the touch as the city awoke from hibernation. If their luck held and the AI was intact, they'd finally have a teacher with first-hand knowledge of the war.

Urban Fantasy/Magical Realism response

Professor Daniels was one of the first immortals she'd met that made no attempt to hide his curse. It was actually a selling point of the doctoral program that the university had managed to attract non-humans into the faculty, but sitting down to a lecture from one was so much more fascinating than she could have hoped.

Multiverse Genre Shift, GOGOGO!

Say you've gone hunting for a prompt in the Saturday Story Prompt archives and your random pick is something in a genre you don't write (or want to try).

For many prompts, it's easy to change genres by invoking Clarke's Third Law or its inverse, but sometimes you have to stretch a little further to get the shift to work.

It's a little more work than just using the basic concept, but it can generate some fun and unusual twists!

Prompt: Choosing a magical companion animal wasn't something one undertook lightly, after all choosing the wrong pet could absolutely ruin your chances of getting an invitation to the ball.

Concept: The choice of a partner, pet, or tool can have a significant social impact.

Science Fiction response

Battlesuits ranged from thin catsuits meant for covert missions to heavy exoskeletons more akin to tanks than mobile infantry. In theory, we could pilot any suit, but it didn't take long for the team to settle into a pattern of favorites. Rotational agents were forced into piloting our discards, so we weren't a popular assignment.

Genre Neutral response

First impressions meant everything in this world. Come across too rich and they'd avoid you for fear of causing offense, too poor and you weren't worth their time. He had to walk the thin line of costuming and mannerisms that made him the perfect target for the hunt.

Urban Fantasy response

They'd be expecting her to use something small and discreet, so she enthralled flocks of pigeons instead. The senior council called her crazy—well now was time to earn that insult. Hundreds of birds poured into the office building, more than any sane mind could control at once, and she flicked from bird to bird as she pulled them inside.

The Six Million Dollar Prompt

We can rebuild him! Err— it!

What if the prompt is a 100% miss and there's nothing about it you can use? The genre is wrong, the setting is wrong, the premise doesn't fit your story at all... Then it's time to look at things a bit sideways.

Instead of setting a timer and writing to the prompt, set a timer and write about the prompt. Free association bingo!

Writing prompts can give you story ideas or they can loosen up your creativity. In this case, it's all about practicing looking at things a little sideways. You generally won't end up with prose, but the list of ideas you come up with might spark a story themselves.

This method of using the prompts is the hardest. Sometimes it's better to just skip it and move on, but it can be fun to find just the right angle where they become useful!

Prompt: If anyone deserved to be followed around by a neon purple springbok, it was Charles.

Concepts: We've got a few things to work with here: a person named Charles, the idea that someone deserves bad luck or embarrassment, and a crazy colored version of a real-life animal. For broader ideas, you could use: methods of revenge, poor clothing choices, things that might attract magical animals, hallucinations, etc.

Real-world response

Charles was the sort of name that boring parents gave to boring children in the vain hope of emulating kings. He threw out the resume without reading further— he was building an empire and there was only room for one king here.

Genre Neutral response

Insanity was the best revenge and she took her time driving him to the edge time and time again before she'd had enough of the game and pushed him all the way over.

High Fantasy response

Magic was chaotic and unpredictable even after years of study and training. There were no 'wild' magicians outside the tower walls because they rarely survived their first accidental incantations.

THANKS FOR READING!

If you've enjoyed these prompts, **please take a moment to drop me a review** or share a link with friends.

I'd love to hear from you, so please feel free to tag me on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), or [Twitter](#). It's so much fun to see the various stories and artwork that these prompts spawn!

If you're interested I have a mailing list that I send out freebies and discount codes to (from time to time). [Come join the fun!](#)

31 Days Of...

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