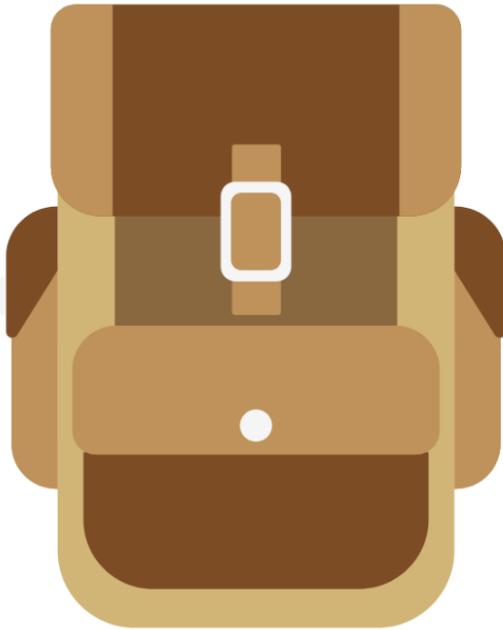
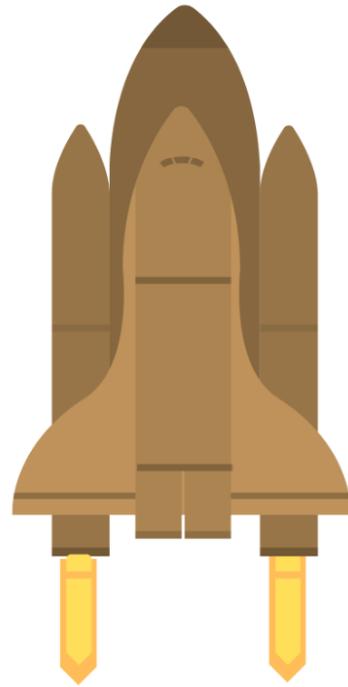


31 DAYS

OF TRAVEL

WRITING PROMPTS



MARTHA BECHTEL

31 Days OF Travel

a Saturday Story Prompt Collection

Martha Bechtel

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WHAT SORT OF PROMPTS are THESE?

By foot, by car, or by dragon sometimes our stories go out for a stroll. So gas up the spaceship, oil those riding leathers, and take a trip through a month-long adventure on the road. From quick walks to lifelong journeys, there's something in these pages to fit every Muses's whim!

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. It's a short walk down to the corner store, but they can't let him go alone. Each inch of the way is layered in a lifetime of memories and sometimes he gets lost in the past.
2. Dolphins pilot most of the deep space ships these days, but it's still crows and magpies who drive intrasystem travel. Save for the one macaw, I don't think I've ever ridden a short-hop shuttle without a corvid at the helm.
3. None of them are dressed for the journey and as the days wear on the fragile fabrics fray and tear leaving them barefoot and sunburned.
4. Maps show only a vague outline of a desert, no one has been brave enough to try and chart the featureless sands. Until now. She sings to the snakes as they lead her into the dunes, pausing to build a new spire of magically spun glass when glimmers from the last beacon begin to fade.
5. The Fae realm exists in the spaces between time and the Elves use it to travel anywhere and *anywhen* they want.
6. The highlight of every market trip is the road past the Ivanov farm. As soon as you pass the first marker the rough muddy mess turns into a meticulously tended paradise. Cracked paving stones are carefully mended, mud and debris are whisked away, and the fencelines are lined with blackberries and raspberries.
7. We followed markers meant for someone else down those dim starlight trails, unraveling mathematical hints almost as old as the dying stars we passed.
8. Fairy foxes lead them through the snowy forest. Their bright red coats are flashes of fire against the drifts every time they drift off course. At first, the horses shy when they pop up, but over the hours become accustomed to their unnatural guides.

9. She's used to relying on trains and buses to travel, even the *thought* of spending three days cooped up in a tiny compact car for their road trip is more than she can stomach.

10. Commercial space travel is fast and efficient, done in hops between known points, through giant spiral gates that twist the dimensions in a mathematical vise. Exploratory travel beyond the gates is fusion-powered: slow, boring, and a great way to get away from your troubles at home.

11. Exile to the roads isn't all that bad, once you've had a few centuries to think about it. The views are spectacular out here and I never liked that town anyway.

12. Thunderclouds break beneath them with every wingbeat, snarled with lightning and heavy with icy rain.

13. His plow mule is a massive thing, made for raw power instead of riding comfort, but it's fast enough to save him from the floodwaters and smart enough to keep him from walking across landslides and broken bridges.

14. The car finally breaks down half an hour from home and they spent the last hours of their holiday sitting in a mechanic's waiting room, enthusiastically mangling drinking songs and passing around the last of the alcohol.

15. Short-hop spaceship crews are more entertainers than engineers. It's rare to face anything more complicated than grumpy passengers --and there are a lot of those-- but it still earns her flight time and that's all that matters.

16. Coming down the cliffs is something you do once in a lifetime. The trip itself takes years and only the healthiest among the pilgrims survive the journey to the sacred valley.

17. She daisy-chains Ubers from one end of the city to the other, like a skipping stone over troubled waters, trying to lose him in the waves.

18. They invent games to play on the long trips between the stars. The ships travel faster than messages can follow, so there's nothing new unless they create it.

19. There's no money left for proper offerings to all the weather gods and they're forced to choose a path that avoids those they cannot pacify.

20. I walk in my grandfather's footsteps just as he walked in his grandfather's. The path of our clan throughout the seasons is worn deep into the rocks and deeper into our shared soulsongs.

21. He paused the bike at the foot of the hill, dead tired but determined to prove all of them wrong. He had until sunset and that was still plenty of time...

22. It turned out to be easier to keep people alive during interstellar travel than it did to freeze them. So generation ships wandering among the stars-- but they didn't land when they got there. They just dropped off the portion of the population they needed to settle the planet and then moved on.

23. The walls of the canyon are steep but rough and he has no problems finding handholds as he works his way to the top. They may have barred him from the path itself, but it can't keep him from following alongside.

24. Warm summer rains drum along the wagons' canvas tops. The monsoons are a dull background roar that permeates every moment until she's ready to rip off the fabric and just deal with being wet.

25. It still takes almost a year to reach Mars, but now there are plenty of stops along the way. They've turned the trip into a cruse of sorts, with faux-landfall adventures at each station spaced a few weeks apart.

26. Ancient white rocks mark the edges of the roadways at staggered intervals. Intricate carvings that might be words adorn each face, but there's no men left alive who can read them.

27. The iron golem paces through the cornfield with a single-minded focus, ignoring the objections of his passengers.

28. Like sharks behind ships, the birds follow the caravan in lazy loops, reveling in the sunlight. Buzzards and crows feast on the scraps and offal, songbirds take treats and shiny baubles to line their nests, and ravens linger as the edges of spellcastings, soaking in the excess magic.

29. The subway holds an unreasonable thrall over her life: it takes her to work, and home, and shopping, and dining... every aspect of her day revolves around its schedule and routes. She joked once to friends that the Subway Gods even controlled who she dated, but now she's not so sure it was just a joke.

30. Being a traveler might be every farmboy's daydream, but the roads aren't always fun adventures and majestic scenery. Villagers might leave more boring lives, but they have dry beds, warm fires, and all the things we daydream about in the winter rains.

31. The clouds seal off the sky, a grim undulating wall of gray that thwarts her attempts to chart their course. By the fifth day, she can only answer 'at sea' when the prince asks where they are.

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...

Need a few more plot bunnies? [Check out my Amazon page](#) for the yearly collections and month-long dives into...

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