

An Indian Menu of Writing Ideas

"A special notebook sticker?" you ask. If you are interested in earning a special writer's notebook sticker, you need to create a "meal" from this menu that includes: 1 appetizer, 1 soup, 1 entrée, and 1 dessert. There is also an optional "salad" course, which your teacher may or may not offer as an extra-credit notebook option this month. Ask about it.

Appetizer Choices: (Select one of these **writing trait-inspired** activities to record in your notebook.)

Roasted Eggplant & Garlic Dip: There's no *egg* in eggplant; in addition, there's no *pine* in pineapple. Can you write a full paragraph where you make fun of the names of several types of food (like I did with the first sentence of this description), and can you use a unique transition word or phrase in between the sentences you compose (like I did with *in addition*). Can you always use a different transition? Trait focus: WORD CHOICE (playing with words) and SENTENCE FLUENCY (using a variety of transitional words and phrases)

50 Pieces of Tandoori Broccoli: There's an old Simon and Garfunkle song called "50 Ways to Leave Your Lover." What if there was a song by the new rock group—Revision--called "15 Ways to Improve Your Rough Draft"? Can you come up with fifteen ways? Next to each way, can you identify the writing trait you're talking about? Trait focus: IDEA DEVELOPMENT (brainstorming) and ALL (recalling skills used for revision)

Samosa Pastries: Do people still call money *bread*? Make up a fake historical story that explains why some people started calling money *bread*? Why would they do that? What happened to make people make that connection? Convey the story using the voice of your teacher when he/she gives a history lecture. Read it to a friend. Trait focus: VOICE (using another's voice) and IDEA DEVELOPMENT (creating believable fiction based on an interesting idea)

[Alphabet] Soup Choices: (Select one of these **word-play activities** to record in your notebook.)

Basil and Badam Shorba: There are a lot of interesting words for different phobias; *triskaidekaphobia*, for example, is an actual word that means fear of the number 13. For ten minutes today, invent several words for fears that don't really exist. Don't be obvious, like naming the fear of soup *souphobia*. Name it *slurpphobia* or *campbellsphobia* so that you can show the name to a friend and ask them to guess what your new word means. Describe the fears you make.

Curry Shorba: A *lipogram* is a paragraph or entire story that avoids using one single letter of the alphabet. Lipograms are a word game that some people like to play to battle boredom. Try to write as long a paragraph as you can without ever using a certain letter you choose ahead of time. The more common the letter (like *e* or *t* or *n*), the harder it becomes. How long of a lipogram can you write, and how common of a letter will you omit from your writing?

Tamatar Ka Shorba: Describe the yucky, disgusting gunk one finds deep in the drain-pipes of the sink, bathtub, or shower. The goal of your description is to convince someone they would want to purchase a large quantity of the substance. Think like an advertiser, and choose accurate words while avoiding words—like gunk—that would turn someone off, making them not want to purchase the product.

Create an "Indian meal" this month for a special notebook sticker: 1 appetizer, 1 soup, 1 entrée, and 1 dessert!

Entrée Choices: (All “entrées” are actually three-step pre-writing tasks designed to help you think about any upcoming writer’s workshops. Choose an entrée that will help you become excited about writing a rough draft.)

Lamb Vindaloo & Narrative Naan: Sometimes—as our first reaction to something—we do the wrong thing. In retrospect, we wish we could take it back and often feel bad for doing it, but immediate reactions can be hard to control. For this narrative, you can write about a time (real or fictional) when you laughed when you shouldn’t have, cried when you shouldn’t have, or emoted in some other way that you (or a fictional character) now regret.

- On day one, make a list of ten items. List five situations when people laugh and then wish they hadn’t and five situations when people cry and then wish they hadn’t. How many items from your list were inspired by personal experience? Personal experiences often make a richer narrative. Poll a friend when your list is complete, asking “Which of these situations would make the best narrative story, in your opinion?”
- Write a practice opening paragraph for your story. The first sentence should focus on the laugh, the tears, or the other emotion you wish you could take back. Launch your story in the middle of the action. Describe what happens immediately after the emotion with several follow-up sentences. End the practice paragraph with how you (or your character) felt about the emotional reaction after you thought about it a while.
- Write a completely different practice opening paragraph for this story. This time, start the story with a setting description of the place where the unwanted emotion happened. Lead up to the laughter or the tears, ending your practice paragraph with that action happening. Ask a friend to read both practice paragraphs. Which is better?

“If My Life Was Perfect” Palak Paneer: What’s one manageable change you could make to improve your own life or lifestyle? Sometimes when we think about our lives, there are things that just stand in the way of better living. We all have had moments when we say, “If only XYZ were to happen, my life will be so much better!” What is your ‘XYZ’?

- There are many things in life you have control over, and there are many other things that you don’t. List things in your life that you wish you could change, but only include items on your list that you have a lot of control over. Ask a friend which item from your list would make the best persuasive essay topic.
- On day two, create a chart with your best “change idea” at the top of the page. Make three columns. In the first column list things that would improve in your life if this change were made. In the second column write additional things that would improve in other people’s lives if this change were made. In the last column, write what might be worse or unpleasant if this change occurred; it’s okay to think of others’ perspectives for the third column.
- Write a short letter to the editor of the local newspaper using information from all three columns explaining why this change needs to be made. Put ideas into your own words in your letter so that you can borrow ideas from it when you write a rough draft about the change you’ve brainstormed in a persuasive essay.

Rasmalai & Rice Career Report: What is it with adults who always ask, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” You sometimes just want to scream, “Give it up, I want to be a kid!” But wouldn’t it be cool to find out what a police detective *really* does all day? Or what it would take to be a professional singer? Research an intriguing career.

- Draw a line down the center of a notebook page. On the left side, list all the pastimes you like to do: draw, sing, play football, read, etc. Then on the right side of the paper, write down different jobs people can do with those interests. For instance, I loved to read as a child and as a teacher I am expected to read as part of my job! There are also book critics who read for a living. Look for any trends on the list on the right. Highlight those and then find some time to research a different kind of job in those fields. If you have an opportunity to ask someone who holds a job you’re interested in, ask them about their work. Lots of adults like to talk about their jobs.
- Based on the research you did (or questions you asked) about a specific job, create a “Top 5 Benefits” list about doing the job you now know a little more about. Prioritize the list so the top reason is really at the top.
- Now, pretend you work at the newspaper, and write a ‘help wanted’ ad for the job you’ll be writing about. Be sure to include a brief job description, education and skills needed, as well as typical salary and benefits for someone wanting to pursue a career in this field. Read your ad to a friend to see if they’d apply or not.

Dessert Choices: (Choose one dessert from the menu and create a notebook entry that also includes a funny illustration or a picture that can be taped/glued next to your writing. Have fun! Dessert should be fun!)

Egg Halwa! Create a three-minute drawing of an athlete at the winning moment of his/her sport. Then, for seven minutes, write a verb-filled paragraph about the moment you’ve illustrated.

Mulai Kulfi! Personify “Bad Breath.” Pretend he’s the student sitting behind you in a class. Create a description of him and/or describe what he typically does in class. Add a picture to show your idea better.

Indian-Style Rice Pudding! Find a photo, postcard, or magazine cut-out that shows a beautiful scene. After taping the photo into your notebook, describe it with as many “showing” sentences as you can.