

A Greek 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.)

Stuffed Grape Leaves: *Inside the grape leaves, she stuffed the spicy lamb and rice.* This a great-sounding sentence because it starts with a prepositional phrase (*inside the grape leaves*) that explains where the action is occurring. Describe the process of making something in the kitchen with 5-10 sentences that all start with different prepositional phrases. Include relevant sensory details, like *spicy*. Trait focus: SENTENCE FLUENCY (beginning sentences with different words) and IDEA DEVELOPMENT (including sensory details)

Three “Opa!” Tzatziki Dip: A well-developed action sequence in an adventure story should have—at least—three different action verbs: To escape the pit, for example, our hero must 1) *scale* the ancient stone wall, 2) *crawl onto* that rickety platform, and 3) *pull* himself desperately over the moss-covered edge. Each of these three actions can be thoughtfully described using two or three sentences when the three-part sequence becomes a rough draft. In your notebook, develop a graphic organizer that plans for a heroic character escaping something with three separate actions. Leave enough room to describe each of the actions with multiple sentences. Trait focus: ORGANIZATION (developing a graphic organizer before writing) and WORD CHOICE (using interesting action verbs)

Hummus & Pita: Think of a school/home rule you don't agree with. For five minutes, write an explanation—in your voice—on why you disagree with the rule; then, for five more minutes, write a “counter explanation”—in your principal, teacher, or parents' voice—explaining why the rule has to exist. Really try to capture the voice of the adult whose perspective you are explaining. Trait focus: VOICE (writing from another's perspective)

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

Greek Fisherman's Soup: A fish is a pretty basic shape that almost everyone can draw. In your notebook, create a “shape poem” about something that is easily drawn—like a fish. The poem needs to be about the shape, and the words need to create the shape. It might be helpful to draw the shape lightly in pencil before writing and make sure the words fit inside the outline of the shape.

Lentil Soup: A lentil may look like a bean, but it's actually a *legume*. Peanuts are legumes too, not nuts. There is neither pine nor apple in a pineapple, and a tomato is a berry, not a vegetable. Food is so weird. Spend ten minutes making fun of food—any type. You can make fun of a single type of food, or you can mock many foods. Your choice.

Chicken Soup Avgolemono: Try to say the name of this soup five times really fast; with practice, it becomes easier—like most tongue twisters. In your notebook for ten minutes today, using skills of alliteration, create several original tongue twisters. Can you make one as hard as “The sixth sick sheik's sixth sheep's sick”?

Create a “Greek 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.)

Narrative: Souvlaki Story: Don’t ever ask me to go somewhere up too high...I am terrified of heights! The idea of bungee jumping or one of those tall amusement rides is my ideas of pure terror. Other people can’t stand to be in the vicinity of a spider or a mouse. Everybody one has things they are afraid of, and writing about a time you (or a character you invent) were afraid can turn out a pretty good narrative story.

- Think of two things you are truly frightened by—clowns, heights, spiders, science tests; the possibilities are practically endless. Write what you are afraid of and then list specific details about both things that terrify you. Don’t neglect those sensory details: sounds, textures, tastes, sights, feelings, etc.
- Remember/Imagine a time when you (or a fictional character) encountered your best fear. Create a list or make an outline that explains—step-by-step—what happened. If you take less than ten minutes to list or to outline, you haven’t included enough specific details in your outline...so go back and add details!
- Combine details from the two previous days’ brainstorming to create an opening paragraph for a personal narrative or a fictional narrative. Why not start your narrative in the middle of something interesting happening?

Pastitsio Persuasion: Can one person really change the world? Your teacher definitely thinks so. Sure, you can’t just decide to change something huge—like promoting peace between two warring nations—and expect to have much impact immediately or just by yourself. You have to begin practicing the change process by starting with a small, more-manageable attempt. A community or neighborhood is a great place to practice the “change the world” philosophy. Ask yourself, “What could a small group of people be persuaded to do differently together to begin the change process?”

- First, for ten minutes, make a list of as many things that—if changed—would improve your neighborhood or community. Ask a friend, “Which of these things—if I wrote about just one—might really begin a change?”
- Next, after choosing just one of your topics, list three or more specific reasons why the neighborhood or community would be nicer if the change were to happen. Include enough space next to each item on your list to be able to write several sentences about each one; these sentences need to include persuasive facts or details.
- Finally, write a “What Would Happen” introduction paragraph about your topic; for this, you need to imagine a neighborhood or community where the change you are proposing *doesn’t ever happen*. Describe that neighborhood and community, using details that might convince someone to really read the rest of your persuasive paper about the change you are proposing. Use *showing* and *sensory* details in your paragraph.

Legendary Expository Lamb Shanks: Ask yourself, “What’s monster or legendary creature I’d be willing to do a little research on in order to create an organized essay for an upcoming writer’s workshop?” Go through the following steps to prepare and prioritize ideas:

- First take ten, uninterrupted minutes to simply brainstorm all of the monsters (like *vampires*) or legendary creatures (like the *Loch Ness Monster*) you know a little about. At the end of the ten minutes, show your list to a classmate, friend or family member and ask them, “What creatures did I forget to add?”
- The next day, decide which type of expository paper you’d prefer to write:
 - An essay that shares lots of in-depth, researched details about one monster or creature that you’re very interested in
 - Or an essay that shares some “most interesting facts” about multiple creatures from your brainstorm.
 Once you’ve made your decision, create a graphic organizer based on your choice and begin filling in details.
- Compose a detail-filled “showing paragraph” that shows your monster(s) doing something interesting. After it is composed, ask yourself, “Might this paragraph serve as an interesting introduction to my essay/report?”

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!)

<p><input type="checkbox"/> Baa-klava! The idea of counting sheep as a way to fall asleep is commonly known, though perhaps not commonly practiced. What—besides sheep--would be funny to count as a means to fall asleep or do some other verb? Illustrate your original idea, and then write a caption and/or dialogue for your art. Can you turn this idea into a narrative?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> La-dish-us Loukoumades! It’s sometimes fun to take a multi-syllabic adjective—like delicious—and switch the sounds around to make a new word that can mean the same thing—like la-dish-us! Create three brand new adjectives by switching sounds around in words, and then provide a drawing that helps us understand the new word’s meaning.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Vasilopita: Treasure Cake! Some cultures bake prizes (coins, toys, etc.) into dessert cakes so that the finders of the prizes experience good luck. Create a unique cake full of interesting and unexpected “surprise prizes.” Draw a picture of someone finding one of the prizes, then add a caption and/or dialogue to your picture. Can you turn this into a narrative?</p>
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