

2017 Promising Young Writers Theme

Innovators, Visionaries, and Rebels: Celebrating Risk-takers

Writing is a tool of innovation and change, not only for the English Language Arts, but across disciplines: middle school writers are not only future novelists, poets, and essayists, but also scientists, historians, journalists, documentary filmmakers, and politicians. This year, we invite you to choose a book, poem, story, news article, film, website, or something else you've read that is innovative, inspiring, or provocative in its content (for example, a story about someone changing other people's minds), its form (for example, a website that includes multiple viewpoints or that challenges the usual ways we read), or its subject matter (for example, an article about a scientific innovation or a speech by a political candidate). Write about why you chose this text and why/how it was innovative, inspiring, or provocative in important ways.

You may write in any genre, or type of writing (such as drama, poetry, short story, narrative, an op ed piece, science fiction, memoir, news article, speech, or scientific report.). For example, you might write about the efforts of local activists to fight for clean water, or create a movie trailer for a piece of historical fiction about a famous inventor. If you find it helpful to state the audience for your writing at the beginning of your piece, you are welcome to do so. Remember that your writing for this themed piece should be no longer than four pages (or the equivalent, in a medium like video) and that it should be in a different genre than your Best Writing entry.

Additional information

This year's theme, "Innovators, Visionaries, and Rebels: Celebrating Risk-takers" is especially appropriate for young writers. Writing that innovates, inspires, and provokes is often a gateway (and sometimes a lifeline) for young people searching for a purpose or a profession. This year's prompt encourages students to see reading and writing as ways of inventing, changing minds, and taking action.

Teachers, we invite you to incorporate the Promising Young Writers' theme and writing prompt into your curriculum. In fact, we hope that "Innovators, Visionaries, and Rebels: Celebrating Risk-takers" is an idea that you may want all of your students to explore through their writing and reading. If so, you may be interested in building from the literature and teaching ideas presented at the ALAN (Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of the National Council of Teachers of English) workshop, "Innovators, Visionaries, and Rebels: Celebrating Risk-takers" held at the 2016 NCTE convention in Georgia.

Also, if your state has adopted the Common Core State Standards, it may be helpful to note that nominees for the Promising Young Writers program may choose to write their thematic piece in any genre—including the narratives, arguments, and informative/explanatory texts that the Common Core requires for eighth-grade

writers. In addition, you may wish to submit students' (inter)disciplinary writing from History/Social Studies, or Science & Technical Subjects.

While we believe this contest and theme may be useful in your curriculum, we urge you to also consider writing students may have produced outside of school, as participants in extra-curricular, non-academic communities. In addition to creative non-fiction, we will consider student Maker Movement films, student government speeches, local petitions, and eulogies, to name a few possibilities.