**Writing Prompts, Questions, and Lists for Discovering (what you have to say)**

*“How do I know what I think until I see what I say? “*  
E. M. Forster

*“I write entirely to find out what I'm thinking, what I'm looking at, what I see and what it means. What I want and what I fear”*Joan Didion

1. Make a list of things you want to remember.

2. Make a list of things you want to forget.

3. A Bucket List is a list of things you want to do before you die. What’s on your bucket list?

4. *“I realized that sure, I was a Spokane Indian. I belonged to that that tribe. But I also belonged to the tribe of American immigrants. And to the tribe of basketball players. And to the tribe of bookworms. And to the tribe of teenage boys. And the tribe of small-town kids. And the tribe of Pacific North Westerners. And the tribe of tortilla chips-and-salsa lovers. And the tribe of poverty. And the tribe of funeral-goers. And the tribe of boys who really missed their best friends.”*  -Arnold Spirit from Sherman Alexie’s The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian. What tribes do you belong to?

5. An Incomplete List of Small Pleasures

* Referring to friends and family by the first letter of their name.
* Sound of passing traffic without horns or sirens. Just whooshes.
* Folk tales.
* Bridges- rivers, noses, ships, songs.
* Believing that things other than buildings can have architecture.
* Rereading.

What would be on your list?

6. *“Instructions for living a life: Pay attention. Be astonished. Tell about it.”* – Mary Oliver

What would be your instructions for living a life?

7. *“You gain every strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face…You must do the thing you think you cannot do.”* List your fears. What is the thing you think you cannot do? Would you ever consider doing it or facing it?

8. Make a list of People in Your Life. Think about which people have had a positive effect on your life. Which people have had a negative effect on your life?

9. Imagine your house is sinking. You only have a few minutes to leave, knowing you will never return. Who would you take with you? What would you take with you? Think about what you would want to leave behind and forget.

10. What surprised you recently?

11. What is bugging you and why?

12. What is changing?

13. What did you expect to happen that didn’t?

14. What is something that made you really mad? And why did it make you so mad?

15. What is something you keep remembering?

16. What have you learned?

17. What are you an expert at? Make a top ten list. It doesn’t have to be something you are “good” at. It can be a list of things you know well. For example: I’m an expert at:

* Eating carbs
* Avoiding negative people
* Making little kids laugh
* Procrastinating
* Buying new clothes and never wearing them, then giving them away
* Making “chicken noises”
* Forgetting too many things
* Growing up in the country
* Letting things go easily

Think about yourself. You are an expert based on what you do, where you live, how you spend your time, who you spend your time with, hobbies, your flaws, things you say, etc… Create a list of things you are an expert at.

18. Make a List of the Best Events of Your Life.

19. Make a List of the Worst Events of Your Life.

20. Make a list of things that make you happy.

21. Make a list of things that make you sad.

22. What are you wondering about?

23. Where Do You Come From? Read George Ella Lyons’ Poem

Where I’m From

What do you notice about this poem?

What kinds of things did she list as where she is from?

Notice the specific details. Never once did she say I’m from the country.

Each item is almost a small story itself.

Think about your past, your history, your details? Think about the objects, or specific places you played as a child, or things you heard growing up, things your mother used to say, or sounds you heard daily. Smells evoke memories. What smells remind you of your past?

Make a List Poem titled Where I’m From.

24. What Do You Believe In?

*Everyone has something they believe in. We have things we trust, things we live by. Sometimes things we say are what we believe. (The early bird gets the worm.) (Others don’t have to believe what I believe. What is true for me, may not be true for others.)*

*For example:*

I believe sunshine makes me happy.

I believe everyone is gifted at something.

I believe smart doesn’t mean straight A’s or perfect SAT scores.

I believe kindness has incredible power.

I believe we don’t know what it is we want to say until we write it.

I believe writing allows you to discover what you want to say.

I believe beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

I believe laughter makes people more attractive.

I believe in doing things that you are afraid of.

I believe in letting things go.

I believe the first to apologize is the bravest.

I believe the first to forgive is the strongest.

I believe the first to forget is the happiest.

I believe in trying new things, eating good food, and discovering new places.

I believe working hard is better than being smart.

I believe in looking for the good in people.

I believe that everyone has had it rough at some point in their life and everyone is going through something.

I believe in reflecting. I believe you can always be better.

What are some things you believe? You may believe the same things that I did, or something I said may have sparked a thought of something else you believe. Share out loud something you believe.

Next, look at the following words. What beliefs do you have about the words listed below?

art writing music kindness disabilities diversity

discrimination compassion

art equality faith family fear forgiveness

the golden rule good and evil gratitude

change hope humor laughter illness

friendship love integrity honesty

nature parenthood patriotism peace

helping others pets kids city ocean country

America beauty purpose questions race respect

community responsibility self-determination self-knowledge sports

courage tolerance values war work

creativity death freedom democracy technology communication