

NONDENOMINATIONAL PROMPT

A PROMPT TO HELP YOUR STUDENTS CRAFT

ARTFUL SENTENCES

Prompt 3: Nondenominational Prompt, a general prompt for a single great sentence. The benefit of this type of prompt is that it offers students the most autonomy to express their ideas.

Sample Nondenominational Prompts. Here are some examples of nondenominational prompts.

- In one carefully crafted sentence, describe a central theme of this short story.
- On the basis of today's reading, describe the impact of the Stamp Act in a single well-written sentence.
- In a single beautifully written sentence, explain the contrast of the settings between Chapters 1 and 2.
- Write a sentence summarizing the key discussion points on today's discussion about ...

The biggest challenge in using nondenominational prompts is that the resulting sentences can be low rigor and poor quality if students haven't been equipped with tools for crafting top-quality sentences. The best time to use nondenominational prompts is *after* students have had some practice with sentence starters and sentence parameters—prompts that provide them with structures and tools for writing quality sentences. Before using nondenominational prompts **be explicit about your criteria** for an “excellent” or “beautiful” sentence, so that students have a clear set of quality guidelines to follow. On the next page you’ll find a list of criteria that’s posted on the wall in a high-performing teacher’s classroom. Of course you may adapt this list to fit the needs of your students. In addition to its primary benefit of setting clear expectations, we found it powerful for establishing a common language that students could use when drafting and reviewing their own sentences as well as for sharing feedback on sentences that their peers have drafted.

CRITERIA FOR AN “EXCELLENT” SENTENCE

- ✓ Start with something other than a subject noun, pronoun, or definite article
- ✓ Include carefully chosen words
- ✓ Pay particular attention to the verbs
- ✓ Strike out unnecessary words
- ✓ Precision matters
- ✓ Respond directly to the prompt