

[The Write Place At the Write Time](#)

[Home](#)[About Us](#)[Announcements](#)[First Annual Contest](#)[Interviews](#)[Fiction](#)[Poetry](#)["Our Stories" non-fiction](#)[Writers' Craft Box](#)[Writers' Challenge!](#)[Submission Guidelines](#)[Indie Bookstores](#)[Artists' Gallery](#)[Feedback & Questions](#)[Scrapbook of Four Years](#)[Archives](#)[Inscribing Industry Blog](#)

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Writers' Challenge!

The two winners of the summer edition Writers' Challenge that tied for first place, Stephen Carey and Amy Sprague, designed two brand-new prompts for our current winter/spring edition. Below you will find not only their cleverly crafted prompts, but also brief beginning examples provided by the staff to give you an idea of what the prompts are looking for. One winner, based on the storytelling strength of their entry, will be chosen. They will get to design the next Writers' Challenge and receive a \$15 giftcard to Barnes & Noble bookstore!

Prompt: Snapshots in Time (designed by Stephen Carey)

Create a word scrapbook. Think of how a single photograph captures the essence of a moment in time. Tell a story about someone making a positive difference in another's life through describing a photo or a series of photos and providing details on the significance behind the images. Examples might include a character talking about a few previously unknown black & white photos they discover of a relative that inspired them or there could be a series of child to adulthood photos that show a friendship over the years. The story can be fiction or non-fiction, based on imaginary or real photographs. Use only a few lines to describe the photo(s) and beneath each description of an image, elaborate on the sentiment behind the image

(s). You may tell the story from any perspective. Word Limit- 1,000.

Example:

Photograph~ A blonde and a brunette stand close together in matching caps and gowns, smiles wide, two pairs of eyes holding the same mischievous gleam.

I don't quite remember what we expected of the future or know what we would have thought if we'd been told all of the things that would come in the years between now and then. I am certain, however, that we took on the unknown with an I-dare-you-to-try-and-hold-us-back attitude. It was a friendly challenge, one that implied a winking camaraderie between us and the future as though we knew it was on our side, throwing open doors, unlocking gates, glancing over its shoulder in excited anticipation to see us fast on its heels. I remember the unshakable confidence and the power of our collective laughter to chase off any shadows or swoop down with tornado force to clear a path of obstacles.

The poem I have taped below the picture in the scrapbook speaks of the value of old friends. I think of the distinct language we share, the way in which we communicate that can be picked up without a hitch like one long, continued conversation...whether after a few days, a few months or a few years.

When that dreaded time came in her ninetieth year, when I needed you as you'd once needed me, I took a chance on the alchemical power of that language to turn back the clock and rediscover the hand of the friend who understood it all, all too well. It was only a chance, perhaps, but to me, I already trusted in the promise of the desired outcome and was willing to take the risk. I knew what I had to do, wanted to do and could do for myself to be able to make it through. How can I thank you? How do I express my gratitude not only for being there at the most crucial moment, but also for helping me remember and find strength in who we were...who we are?

Prompt: Put it in a Letter (designed by Amy Sprague)

Someone is waiting to hear from their doctor about test results concerning whether or not they have a terminal illness. Have them write a letter to one person talking about the lessons they have and have not learned in their lives. What is most important to them? Who do they choose to send this letter to and what kind of relationship

do they have with that person? What issues do they address in it? Word Limit- 1,000.

Example:

Dear Carl,

I know that I'm probably the last person you'd want or expect to hear from. It's amazing how time colors everything. If we were still the same two young guys who'd grown up together, just taking the first glimpses into what adulthood, freedom, could offer us, I would know just how to word this. I would know what to say if I wasn't just a lost middle-aged version of the person you came to hate the day I looked into the eyes of the one girl you loved and claimed her for myself. It wasn't just that, though, was it? Even after the divorce, even after Sandy admitted that she wished she had ended up with you instead of me, you still didn't forgive and forget. Still didn't return or pick up the phone even though I hoped you would, as though the divorce was a heavy penance I'd guiltily offered up to you... I was angry for a time, angry that you wouldn't look past what had happened. I would be angry still were it not for being faced with the high probability of getting the kind of news no one ever wants to receive; and it's this, this fear of what's to become of me, much more than any mature sort of spiritual crap that has me writing to you.

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