

No matter how hard we try, sometimes a question/prompt just doesn't work. Often, problem questions/prompts lack specificity. Other times, we try to pack too much into one question/prompt. Sometimes we don't align with the standards.

This is an example of a problem question/prompt.

*In a paragraph, describe the economic, political, and cultural features of the Native American society.*

That's what we would call a "loaded prompt." If you assign something like this students are

- Forced to write unwieldy paragraphs or skim content in an effort to be concise.
- This asks for only a paragraph. Most writing tasks connected to CCSS should be multiple paragraphs.
- The content is too broad and involves several topics.

*Revision: Write a report in which you compare the two selected articles on the political structure of the Pueblo Indian community in northern New Mexico.*

See how the revision is more specific? It looks at specific informational text and asks a more structured question.

Now it's your turn. Working with a partner, take the questions below and decide what makes them a problem prompt/question. You will probably only have time for 2-3. Then write a revision.

1. Research the Greek play *Pyramus and Thisbe*, and then write a report that defines "star-crossed lovers." Support your discussion with evidence from your research. If you had friends who were in love and whose families disapproved, what advice would you give them?
2. Write an essay about the causes of the Civil War.
3. What is the most important challenge you have ever met? Read several personal challenge essays on the Internet. Then write an essay that explains a challenge you have had and how you met it. Support your discussion with evidence from your research.
4. Should the United States have shot Osama bin Laden? Write an editorial in which you address this headline question.
5. Draw a picture of a house and talk with a classroom partner about your house.