Expository Essay Writing Prompt

This writing prompt totals in length of four pages. Below is the breakdown of the prompt per page:

Page 1	General Instructions
Pages 2-3	Reading Passage
Page 4	Writing Prompt

In a few moments, you will see a passage(s) and a prompt. You are to plan and write an essay about the passage(s) according to the instructions provided in the prompt. This activity will show how well you write. Express your thoughts clearly and make your writing interesting to the reader. Your essay will be scored as a rough draft, but you should watch for careless errors.

Before writing, spend some time reading the passage(s), thinking about the prompt, and planning your thoughts.

Your essay should reflect clear structure, a variety of topics used to answer the prompt, and logical structure that flows through the topics to fully answer the writing prompt.

While there is no stipulated length for this essay, to answer this prompt fully with an introduction, conclusion, and clear topic paragraphs, you should plan to write no less than five paragraphs.

WRITE ONLY ON THE PROMPT AND PASSAGE YOU ARE GIVEN.

Please plan to spend no more than 60 minutes answering this writing prompt.

Your Reading Passage / Stimulus Material Begins on the Next Page

In this essay, Judith Ortiz Cofer recalls how her childhood fantasies and her mother's dreams intersect. Read the essay "Volar," which means "to fly" in Spanish, and answer the questions that follow.

Volar

by Judith Ortiz Cofer

1 At twelve I was an avid consumer of comic books—*Supergirl* being my favorite. I spent my allowance of a quarter a day on two twelve-cent comic books or a double issue for twenty-five. I had a stack of *Legion of Super Heroes* and *Supergirl* comic books in my bedroom closet that was as tall as I. I had a recurring dream in those days: that I had long blond hair and could fly. In my dream I climbed the stairs to the top of our apartment building as myself, but as I went up each flight, changes would be taking place. Step by step I would fill out: my legs would grow long, my arms harden into steel, and my hair would magically go straight and turn a golden color. . . . Supergirl had to be aerodynamic. Sleek and hard as a supersonic missile. Once on the roof, my parents safely asleep in their beds, I would get on tip-toe, arms outstretched in the position for flight and jump out my fifty-story-high window into the black lake of the sky. From up there, over the rooftops, I could see everything, even beyond the few blocks of our barrio;[1] with my X-ray vision I could look inside the homes of people who interested me. Once I saw our landlord, whom I knew my parents feared, sitting in a treasure-room dressed in an ermine coat and a large gold crown. He sat on the floor counting his dollar bills. I played a trick on him. Going up to his building's chimney, I blew a little puff of my super-breath into his fireplace, scattering his stacks of money so that he had to start counting all over again. I could more or less program my Supergirl dreams in those days by focusing on the object of my current obsession. This way I "saw" into the private lives of my neighbors, my teachers, and in the last days of my childish fantasy and the beginning of adolescence, into the secret room of the boys I liked. In the mornings I'd wake up in my tiny bedroom with the incongruous—at least in our tiny apartment—white "princess" furniture my mother had chosen for me, and find myself back in my body: my tight curls still clinging to my head, skinny arms and legs . . . unchanged.

2 In the kitchen my mother and father would be talking softly over a café con leche.[2] She would come "wake me" exactly forty-five minutes after they had gotten up. It was their time together at the beginning of each day and even at an early age I could feel their disappointment if I interrupted them by getting up too early. So I would stay in my bed recalling my dreams of flight, perhaps planning my next flight. In the kitchen they would be discussing events in the barrio. Actually, he would be carrying that part of the conversation; when it was her turn to speak she would, more often than not, try shifting

[1] *barrio* — a Spanish-speaking neighborhood
[2] *café con leche* — coffee with milk

the topic toward her desire to see her *familia* on the Island: *How about a vacation in Puerto Rico together this year, Querido?*[3] *We could rent a car, go to the beach. We could . . .* And he would answer patiently, gently, *Mi amor,*[4] *do you know how much it would cost for the all of us to fly there? It is not possible for me to take the time off . . . Mi vida,*[5] *please understand. . . .* And I knew that soon she would rise from the table. Not abruptly. She would light a cigarette and look out the kitchen window. The view was of a dismal alley that was littered with refuse thrown from windows. The space was too narrow for anyone larger than a skinny child to enter safely, so it was never cleaned. My mother would check the time on the clock over her sink, the one with a prayer for patience and grace written in Spanish. A birthday gift. She would see that it was time to wake me. She'd sigh deeply and say the same thing the view from her kitchen window always inspired her to say: *Ay, si yo pudiera volar.*[6]

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[3] *Querido* — dear
[4] *Mi amor* — my love
[5] *Mi vida* — my life, used as a term of endearment
[6] *Ay, si yo pudiera volar* — Oh, if only I could fly

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READ THIS WRITING PROMPT CAREFULLY BEFORE YOU BEGIN WRITING.

Intersection of Dreams

Write an expository essay explaining the intersection of the Judith Cofer's dreams with those of her mother's. How do the difference between the dreams reveal the characters of mother and daughter? Include information about how the author's specific word choices helps to establish tone and mood. Draw evidence from the passage to support your analysis. Develop your topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, concrete details, or other information and examples. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling in your response.