

Ideas for Student Consideration 2022
“The Return of the Prodigal: The Thing Imagined” Writing Prompts

1. Imagine you have been away from home for five years. What real or imagined changes do you notice to your neighborhood? What things have stayed the same? How does that make you feel? Describe the place where you live and call home. Describe what is special about your hometown and the people who live there. Discuss both negative and positive things. As you are writing, imagine how your friends and family would feel about what you have to say.
2. Describe what it would be like if you were a famous author, but everyone from your hometown was mad at you for the things you had written. How would you apologize? Or would you? How do you think a visit back home would go?
3. In Thomas Wolfe’s story the main character returns home, but he has changed so much in appearance that his mother does not recognize him. Imagine that you go to see someone you once knew well, but now they do not know who you are. Or imagine you arrive at school one morning and no one recognizes you. You sit down at your desk, but your classmates are whispering, asking who you are and if you’re a new student. What do you think has happened? How do you handle the situation?
4. This story is based on an ancient parable, a short fictitious story that illustrates a moral attitude, about a person who left home, often under bad terms, and who then has a long-awaited and much celebrated return home. The person is surprised when their family welcomes them back gladly. Imagine a situation in which you leave home, live in a way that is wasteful of your time, and are forced to return home. Write about how your family might treat you when you come back home.
5. At the end of this story the main character Eugene Gant hears from the room overhead some footsteps, which he believes is the ghost of his favorite brother who has died long ago. The ghost tells him “You know now that you can’t go home again.” Imagine a story in which a ghost speaks to you, is it someone you know? What does the ghost say, and how do you react?