

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Breaking Through, Day 1



Key Paragraph – p.10

“The motel room was small, like the cabins we lived in at the colon labor camps. We took the sagging mattress off the bed and placed it on the worn yellow linoleum floor so Papa and Mama could sleep on it. The rest of us went to bed on the box spring. That night I felt listless and had a hard time sleeping. I kept thinking about what I had done. The following morning, I went outside, holding the rock in my fist and wondering what to do. I thought of throwing it underneath the overpass, but I felt guilty and scared. I went back to the office and, pretending I was getting a brochure, put it back.”

Writing Prompt 1: I am Responsible for the Actions I Take, or Don't Take:

Francisco first admires the rocks in the motel office, and picked one up. His mother slapped his hand and told him to put it back. When no one was looking he took the rock. This action later bothered him, because he had gone against his idea of what was the right thing to do. Francisco ended up taking on the responsibility of his theft, by taking corrective action.

Think about an experience from your life when you may have done something that you knew was wrong, and it bothered you, until you took action to correct your mistake. Write three **narrative paragraphs** about the course of events. In the first narrative paragraph, clearly explain the circumstances involved, using details and sequential explanations of the event. In the second narrative paragraph, describe the things and/or people you felt responsible to. In the third narrative paragraph, describe how you corrected your action. Remember all experiences are a part of our learning process to become more responsible people.

Writing Prompt 2. Responsibility Requires Action:

Francisco discovered a love of learning at an early age, in spite of the fact that he was unable to read or speak English. In the beginning of chapter one, he describes his state of mind when trying to attend school while his family struggled:

“As I got older, my fear of being deported grew. I did not want to return to Mexico because I liked going to school, even though it was difficult for me, especially English class. I enjoyed learning, and I knew there was no school in El Rancho Blanco” (2). Francisco was determined to succeed in school. He took responsibility for the fact that he needed to take action to make this happen.

Reflect on your own life, and consider a subject or ability that you wanted to master. Write a **narrative paragraph** defining your chosen subject, and the efforts you made toward a better mastery of that subject matter. When answering the question above, consider the following:

- How did you feel about taking on the responsibility of making that happen?
- Were you successful in taking strides toward your goal?
- What did you do specifically to improve your abilities in your chosen task?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Breaking Through, Day 2



Key Paragraph – p.26

“Roberto and I continued going to school and working in the fields after school and on weekends. We missed our family and worried about not being able to send them money to help them out. We were barely making ends meet ourselves. But things were about to change.”

Writing Prompt 1: Roberto and Francisco’s Sense of Responsibility

Francisco’s family worked hard to make ends meet. They fended for themselves, in a very responsible manner, working extremely hard: “3 Picking carrots was easier than thinning lettuce, but a lot messier. The ground was usually muddy, so our shoes and pants got soaked in mud. We worked on our knees, pulling the carrots out of the ground after they were loosened by the tractor-plow. We topped off the leaves by hand and dumped the carrots in a basket until it was full. We then emptied the bucket into a burlap sack. We got paid fifteen cents a sack.”

Roberto and Francisco showed an amazing amount of family commitment and responsibility, by sending any left over money home. Write a **narrative paragraph** that exemplifies Roberto and Francisco’s commitment to family. Provide three examples that show how they take responsibility to care for their family. When answering the question above, consider the following:

- What do you think is the motivation for their actions?
- Would you do the same thing in this situation? Why or why not?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Breaking Through, Day 3



Key Paragraph – p.31

“Roberto and I began to tune in to rock ‘n’ roll music on the radio. We listened to Little Richard and Elvis Presley. I enjoyed the rhythm, but I did not pay much attention to the words like I did with Mexican music. Of all the popular singers, I liked Elvis the best. His fast songs released energy in my legs and made them move almost on their own. His slow songs were melancholy, like some Mexican ranchera songs.”

Key Paragraph – p.36

“The next time I saw Peggy, she asked me to walk her home after school. When Roberto came to pick me up, I told him that I would meet him at work and explained why. Peggy’s house was a few blocks from Main Street School, on the east side of town. The houses in Peggy’s neighborhood were different from the barracks in Bonneti Ranch. They had sidewalks, front lawns, and beautiful flower gardens. I did not have to watch out for potholes or stray dogs. I had been in a house once before. I was in the fifth grade when my friend Carl invited me to his home to see his coin collection. Peggy’s house was twice as big as Carl’s house. It was a two-story home with a double garage.”

Key Paragraph – p.40

“‘Late for what?’ she said, laughing. She grabbed my arm and pulled me toward her, trying to force me to sit next to her. I dug my heels in the thick carpet and leaned backward. ‘What’s wrong with you?’ she said, annoyed. The dog sensed Peggy was upset and started barking at me and pulling at my pant leg.”

Key Paragraph – p.41

“The next day when I saw Peggy at school, she avoided me, even outside of class. She did not walk home after school. When I saw her mother waiting in the car, I waved to her, but she looked the other way. I could not understand why. The following day I cornered Peggy in the hallway and asked her why she was avoiding me. She walked away and refused to talk to me. I was hurt and puzzled.”

Writing Prompt 1: Differences in Race/Social Class?

In chapter 3, Francisco befriends Peggy Dossen, who shows a mutual, if not stronger romantic interest. Yet, the next day, Peggy ignores him. What do you think could be a possible reason that Peggy and her mother acted the way they did the following day? Do you think that the fact that Francisco was Mexican, and from a poor family had something to do with it? Consider the following exchange from page 39 of chapter 3:

“Are you Spanish?” Mrs. Dossen asked politely. “I detect a strong accent.”

“I am Mexican,” I said proudly. “But born in Colton, California,” I quickly added.

“That’s interesting,” Mr. Dossen said after a short silence. His wife nodded her head and smiled uneasily.

Write 2-3 **narrative paragraphs** that describe Francisco’s friendship with Peggy and how it changed after meeting her parents. Why do you think Peggy ignored Francisco the following day and how did this make you feel? When answering the question above, consider the following:

- Wouldn’t it be easy for him to make judgments on all white, financially secure people based on the mean things that Peggy and her parents did?
- Why is it important, responsible, and courageous for him not to generalize?
- What should he do about their irresponsible behavior to reveal to them how he feels? How can he attempt to be the unifier rather than hate in return for the hatred shown to him because of his race or social class?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Breaking Through, Day 4



Key Paragraph – p.44

“‘It was a miracle,’ I said, remembering how Mama had made Torito an outfit just like the one the Holy Child Jesus wore in a picture prayer card Papa carried in his wallet. We all prayed to the Santo Nino until my brothers got well.”

Key Paragraph – p.46

“I went to her hut in the outskirts of Tlaquepaque. It was like the garage we lived in Selma. It had a dirt floor and no electricity. Behind it was a corral where she raised chickens and pigs. In one corner of the hut was a small table covered in black cloth. In the opposite corner was an altar with the Virgin de Guadalupe. It was surrounded with small, lit candles, pieces of clothing, wreaths, dried flowers, burning incense, and holy cards. We sat at the table facing each other and drank bitter tea that made me sleepy. She then had me strip to my waist and lie face down on a straw mat. She massaged my back with raw eggs and chanted in Huichol. I understood one or two words because your grandmother used to speak it. I fell into a deep sleep. When I woke up, I was soaked in sweat and my face was in the middle of a thick pool of blood covered with mucus. It had a foul smell, like dead flesh. She told me I had vomited it during my sleep.”

Writing Prompt 1: Family Ties

In chapter 4, the boys eagerly awaited the return of their family from Mexico. They found supplies at the dump to fix up their home, and when the family did return, they enjoyed a happy reunion, exchanging special gifts, family news and stories. In your family, can you think of a time when family member(s) had been gone, and were later reunited?

In a **narrative autobiographical paragraph** describe the experience to have the individual(s) gone and what it was like when they returned? Compare how your feelings were similar or different from Francisco's. Was it a good experience? Did you show them respect? Was this a responsible thing to do?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Breaking Through, Day 5



Key Paragraph – p. 48

“I missed being with Roberto. While I worked, I daydreamed about going to the Vets dances and played rock ‘n’ roll in my head. Most of the time, I studied thing I needed to learn for school. I wrote the information in a small notepad, which I carried in my shirt pocket, and memorized it while I picked.”

Key Paragraph – p. 51

“Sundays, Roberto and the rest of my family went to work. Torito took care of Ruben and Rorra while Mama joined the rest of us in our battle with the weeds and mud clods. On Saturday nights Roberto and I did not go out. We stayed home to study. During that time, I barely kept up with my schoolwork. My social studies and English classes suffered, and so did my math. I sat in the fifth seat for three weeks in a row.”

Key Paragraph – p. 54

“Papa kept staring into space. Roberto and I stood in front of him with our hands folded in front of us, waiting for a response. There was a long and painful silence. *Why do we have to go through this torture every time we want to go out?* I asked myself. I glanced at Roberto and rolled my eyes.”

Key Paragraph – p. 55

“‘Let them go, viejo. They are good kids; they’ve never gotten into trouble, even when they lived by themselves,’ she said softly.”

Writing Prompt 1: Responsibility Requires Action

In chapter 5, the family concentrated on working the strawberry fields, Papa became a sharecropper, and he did not have to work for anyone else. This goal required a tremendous commitment, and was an important step in bettering their lives. Papa had to join forces with neighbor Joe Garcia, and borrow money from a savings and loan company to buy equipment to work the fields.

In your life, think about a time when you made an important decision to take action on a personal goal. In a narrative, describe what kinds of actions were necessary in order for you to accomplish that goal? What was your goal? Did you have a clear plan of action? What actually took place in terms of following that plan? Did you accomplish your goal? Keep in mind that this experience provided a lesson in responsibility. If your actions were sincere, it helped you become a more responsible person, regardless of the outcome. Write 2-3 narrative paragraphs about this personal experience. Include details regarding your goal, actions you took, and the outcome.

Writing Prompt 2: Responsibility may be lessened only to the extent my actual freedom or knowledge was actually and unavoidably limited.

In this chapter Francisco was obligated to work the fields along with other members of his family. As stated in the story, Francisco needed to make sacrifices to accomplish this: “On Saturday nights Roberto and I did not go out. We stayed home to study.”

Unfortunately, Francisco also had to sacrifice something else: “During that time, I barely kept up with my school work. My social studies and English classes suffered, and so did my math. I sat in the fifth seat for three weeks in a row.” [p. 51]

Under these conditions, one might think that Francisco was not living up to his responsibilities at school. Yet, he had to comply with the demands of the family, and, unfortunately, these obligations of working in the strawberry fields got in the way of his schooling. So, it seems that here we have an example of responsibility being lessened because of an unavoidable obligation. Francisco’s freedom to spend time studying was unfortunately compromised. What do you think of this state of affairs? Write a **narrative paragraph**, describing Francisco’s dilemma. When answering the question above, consider the following:

- Was it right for Francisco to be expected to work in the fields so much, when he had schoolwork to do?
- Was he responsible for his slipping grades in this case?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Breaking Through, Day 6



Key Paragraph – p. 57

“The hardest task for me was writing a final paper for my science class. We were to pick up any science topic, research it, and write a report on it. I had a hard time deciding on a topic, research it, and write a report on it. I had a hard time deciding on a topic. Nothing came to mind. Then one day as I was flipping through a history book, I came across a brief section on Christopher Columbus and the discovery of the new world. As I skimmed it, my eye caught the name Herman Cortes. I was fascinated. It was the first time I had read about someone with a Spanish name. I read the paragraph several times and said the name Herman Cortes out loud. I liked the sound of it. His name ended with a ‘z’ sound just like my family’s last name. I felt proud. I began to wonder what it was like to be an explorer over four hundred years ago.”

Key Paragraph – p. 55

“‘Let them go, viejo. They are good kids; they’ve never gotten into trouble, even when they lived by themselves,’ she said softly.”

Key Paragraph p. 59

“‘I don’t want you to smell like rotten strawberries,’ he said, smiling. ‘If you smell like me, nobody will want to get near you.’ He took off his Saint Christopher medal, which he wore around his neck, and handed it to me. ‘Here, mijó,’ he said, ‘I want you to have this. It will guide you.’”

Writing Prompt 1: Responsibility in Study

Though the family is devastated by the strawberry blight, Francisco uses this opportunity to study hard in school and make his family proud. He studies hard and is able to get wonderful grades. In a **narrative paragraph**, write about Francisco’s attitude towards life. How he uses the time when he and his family are the worst off to strive for something greater than himself? In a second **narrative paragraph**, write about yourself during a difficult time in your life. What strengths you can use to act responsibly and a better life during a bad situation?

When answering this question, consider the following:

- What actions can you do now to make your world better and plan for a better life?
- How can you take responsibility in what has happened?
- What can you do to make your life better?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Breaking Through, Day 7



Key Paragraph – p.62

“I glanced at Ito. He had a puzzled look on his face but did not say anything. I hope he didn’t see me, I thought. I continued working and, to keep my mind occupied, began whistling rock ‘n’ roll tunes and daydreaming about Peggy and the Vets. I danced song after song with her. Suddenly I felt a blow on the back of my right shoulder. I instinctively reached behind with my left hand and scooped up a rotten strawberry. I turned around. Roberto was picking on his knees behind me, four rows away. He had his head down, trying to hide his smirk. At lunchtime Roberto and I put on our jackets to hide our strawberry stains.”

Writing Prompt 1: Responsibility is Doing What is Best for Everybody

In chapter 7, Papa demonstrated his appreciation for the opportunity to work for Ito by working 15 minutes longer than expected, without pay. (It can be assumed that Ito had the type of character that deserved such gratitude, as displayed when he privately joked to Francisco about throwing strawberries while on the job.) In any regard, Papa’s act of respect and kindness can be seen as an example of responsibility; of doing what is best for everybody.

Write a **narrative paragraph** about a personal experience in which you were either the executor or the recipient of such an act of appreciation. How was this act of appreciation an example of a responsible action? When answering the question, consider the following:

- How did this experience better everyone involved?
- Think of the ways that it made people feel and think. Are these feelings good?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Breaking Through, Day 8



Key Paragraph – pp. 74-75

“Mr. Kinkade sat at his desk, which was piled with folders and papers. Behind him was a tall, dark brown bookcase full of thick binders and books. To his left was a window that looked out onto the courtyard. He was dressed in a gray suit and a light blue bow tie. His thick hair was peppered with white and combed back. After he introduced himself, he picked up a folder with my name on it and said, ‘I see you graduated from El Camino Junior High School. Have you thought of what you want to do after high school?’ Before I had a chance to answer, he added, ‘We have excellent vocational programs in car mechanics, electronics, and wood shop. We also have a program for future farmers.’

‘I’d like to be a teacher,’ I responded, thinking about Mr. Lima, my sixth-grade teacher, who had helped me with English during the lunch hours when I was far behind in my class because I had missed so many weeks of school.”

Prompt 1: Responsibility and Father/Son Behavior

In chapter 8, Francisco attends a social studies class where he sees a film about a father son relationship. In the film, the father prevents the boy from going out on a school night, and the boy gets upset, throwing his books on the floor and running into his room, slamming the door. The class agrees that it was wrong for the boy to throw his books, but felt that it was ok for him to argue with his father. Francisco felt confused by this. Consider that Francisco is from a different cultural background from many Americans. Would the responsible thing to do be to never argue with one’s father, no matter what the circumstances? In a narrative paragraph describe why Francisco felt confused by this film. How did the boy’s actions in the film differ from Francisco’s behavior towards his father? When answering the question above, consider the following:

- What would be the responsible thing to do in this situation?
- Is the boy showing respect to both his father and himself?
- Explain what you think the responsible thing for him to do is.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Breaking Through, Day 9



Key Paragraph – p.82

“A few days later, my feet began to itch. I told the coach and he said I might have athlete’s foot. I thought it was a compliment until I found out what it really meant. I took off the two layers of socks and I noticed I had cracked, blistered, and peeling areas between the toes. This lasted a long time, even after I got a new pair of tennis shoes. I ended up getting a C in P.E. at mid-semester.”

Writing Prompt 1: Responsibility Requires Action

In chapter 9, you might think that Francisco acted irresponsibly by losing his tennis shoes. How he reacted to the consequences gives an indication of his character, and the character of his siblings. It is also an illustration of the type of challenge that a poor family goes through when they encounter an unexpected expense.

Write a **narrative paragraph** about a personal experience in which you faced a problem having to accommodate an unexpected expense, and your family was involved. What might you have learned about your and your family’s personal character as a result of this experience? How did you act responsibly and deal with the problems of the expense? Did you ask people for help? Did you or your family work more?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Breaking Through, Day 10



Key Paragraph – p. 84

“‘How can I?’ he said, shrugging her hands away. ‘This life is for the dogs. No, it’s worse. Dogs can at least seek out their food. I can’t even do that.’ He slowly got up from the table and hobbled to his room. Mama gave us a pained look, shook her head, and followed him, trying to console him. ‘I have to get an extra job,’ Roberto said, slumping in his chair and lowering his head. ‘I don’t know what else to do.’”

Writing Prompt 1: Responsibility is doing what’s best for everyone

In chapter 10, the boys land a job with a janitorial service; Roberto’s second job, in order to help make ends meet for the family, since Papa was unable to work as he used to. Their attitude was one of gratitude for having found the job with Mike Nevel. What do you think was a main source of motivation for the boys to do this, other than earning the extra money? How was this decision a responsible action? Put yourself in Francisco’s position. You have to find a job to get money for the family. Write a **narrative paragraph** describing what you would you try to do? How would you find a job? What jobs would you look for? Would you work as a janitor if that was the only job offered? How would you balance school with work and homework? Would you give all you paycheck to your family?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
Breaking Through, Day 11



Key Paragraph – p. 93

“Thank you,” I said excitedly. Then I remembered Papa telling us to avoid owing anybody anything, including favors. ‘I’d rather buy it from you,’ I added.”

Key Paragraph – p. 93

“I took the typewriter home and practiced on the kitchen table every night after work. My younger brother and sister complained about the noise because they could not sleep, so I placed a towel underneath it to keep the clatter down. Mama was pleased when I told her I got an excellent grade in typing. ‘You’re a typing machine, mijo,’ she said, chuckling. ‘You got fast fingers form picking strawberries and cotton.’”

Prompt 1: Responsibility is doing the one thing I should be doing right now.

Francisco has demonstrated in this chapter his desire and motivation to improve himself, by doing his best, and trying to prepare for the future. Write a **narrative paragraph** that demonstrates how Francisco is an example of living out the motto: “responsibility is doing the one thing I should be doing right now.” What is he doing to improve himself to create a brighter future? Include three examples from the text.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Breaking Through, Day 12



Key Paragraph – p. 102

“After I finished reading the novel, I could not get it out of my mind. I thought about it for days, even after I had turned in the book report to Miss Bell. She must have liked what I wrote, because she gave me a good grade. My success made me happy, but, this time, the grade seemed less important than what I had learned from reading the book.”

Writing Prompt 1: Autobiographical Experience

In chapter 12, Francisco is given the assignment to write something autobiographical. He picked a dramatic family event to write about. He chose a subject that did not embarrass him (admitting that he was an illegal.)

Write an autobiographical story about an experience that you’ve had within your family that would make an exciting short story. The story can be comical, dramatic, romantic, or inspiring. In a **narrative paragraph**, set the context by describing the circumstances of the time, who was involved, the time period, etc. Include details to describe the sequence of events. End the story that describes the lesson learned.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Breaking Through, Day 13



Key Paragraph – p. 106

“‘I know it’s weird,’ he said, ‘but I have this strange feeling; it’s hard to explain.’ He placed his right hand on his chest and added, ‘It’s like nothing I felt before. I can’t stop thinking about her!’”

Key Paragraph – p. 107

“‘No, I didn’t tell him I was born in Mexico,’ he said, anticipating my question. ‘But when I said I was Mexican there was dead silence. After a while we continued talking, but they seemed uncomfortable and less friendly. I thought it was strange, but I didn’t think much about it until Susan told me today at school. She couldn’t stop crying. I felt terrible.’ Roberto choked up. ‘Her father even promised to buy her a car if she stopped seeing me. Can you believe it?’”

Prompt 1: Confronting Prejudice: Responsibility to Oneself and Others

In chapter 13, Francisco is subjected to ridicule by his classmates at lunchtime. Students called him names and Francisco pretended not to get upset. Write a **narrative paragraph** about the prejudice Francisco faced at school. Write a **second narrative paragraph** describing in detail how he responded. When writing your response, consider the following questions:

- Was this the right thing for him to do?
- What kind of impact did his behavior have on himself and others?
- Could such behavior possibly help change the racist ideas about him by being respectful even though he was being disrespected?
- If he has gotten angry, would it had helped or even continued the problems between him and his classmates?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Breaking Through, Day 14



Key Paragraph – p. 112

“One day Roberto passed by as I was walking out of the fairgrounds on my way to school. I looked the other way, hoping he did not see me. The next morning he got up at the same time I did. ‘Why are you getting up so early?’ I asked. I am helping you clean the Western Union. ‘You are!’ I exclaimed, smiling ear to ear. ‘This means. . .’”

Writing Prompt 1: One Brother Helping Another: Responsibility to Oneself and Others

In the conclusion of chapter 14, Roberto offers to help Francisco and offers to drive him to school in the morning. Write a **narrative paragraph** about what Roberto did for Francisco and why it was significant to Francisco at the time. Describe Roberto’s actions in detail and what made it responsible. Consider:

- What kind of impact did Roberto’s behavior have on himself and others?
- Would you do the same thing for your brother or family member or friend?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Breaking Through, Day 15



Key Paragraph – p. 116

“In the afternoon we visited one of the dormitories that was far away from the administration building. It was a long concrete building with windows in every room. It looked like a fancy arm barrack. We went into the lounge to look around and rest for a few minutes. I saw a student sitting on a light brown couch, reading. He has on a gray sweatshirt that read CAL POLY. I wondered if he felt lonely, like Roberto and I did when we lived alone. The student seemed annoyed by the noise we were making. He looked up, made a bad face, and left in a hurry, leaving one of his books behind on the couch. He was gone before I had a chance to tell him. I assumed it was a college book and wondered if I would be able to read it. Just as I was about to move toward the couch, I heard the guide say, ‘Time to head back.’ Everyone followed him out the door, but I stayed behind and waited until everyone had left before picking it up. It was an American history textbook. I looked at the table of contents, turned the page, and started reading. ‘I can read this!’ I exclaimed under my breath. *Maybe college isn’t as hard as my teacher said it is*, I thought. That evening at work I thought about our visit to Cal Poly. I imagined myself in college and living in the dorm, away from home. I felt excited and sad at the same time.”

Writing Prompt 1: Responsibility as an Attitude

In the conclusion of chapter 15, Roberto realized that he could read the college level American history textbook. This realization was very exciting for him. It affirmed that he could handle college level work. Francisco had been nervous about attending college, in part, based upon one of his teacher’s comments (Mrs. Taylor). Also, Francisco came from a poor family, where the idea of affording, and attending college was out of the question. Yet, Francisco also won a scholarship- he had come a long way from not being able to understand English in the first grade!

Pretend you are a journalist. Write a **narrative article** that highlights Francisco persistence, hard work, and dedication. Demonstrate how Francisco’s sense of responsibility helped him to achieve his academic goals. Talk about Francisco’s attitude and how that helped him succeed?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Breaking Through, Day 16



Key Paragraph – p. 120

“We left the meeting and agreed to meet once again before the Christmas break to make sure everything was in order. Every day the number of food bags increased, and by the end of the second week in December we had collected forty-one bags. On the last day of school before Christmas break, Captain Tracy from the Salvation Army came to collect the food. He thanked Los Santitos and gave us a certificate of appreciation for ‘rendering eminent and memorable service to the Santa Maria community by helping the Salvation Army to give a happy Christmas.’”

Writing Prompt 1: Responsibility Requires Action: The Community Benefit of a Club Activity

Responsible action can be powerfully put into effect by a school activity club, as is the example in chapter 16. In what way was the Los Santitos club acting in a responsible manner? What effect did their Christmas food drive activity have on the community- on an individual and on a group level? Can you think of another activity idea that the club might have put into effect?

Pretend you are writing an article for the Francisco’s high school newspaper. Write a **narrative paragraph** summarizing the Spanish club’s activity and how it showed responsibly to the community. Include a suggested of an additional activity that the club can do in the future.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Breaking Through, Day 17



Key Paragraph – p.

One of her class assignments was for us to ask our parent their opinion on politics and the presidential campaign. Papa, who was in one of his bad moods, did not want to talk about it, but Mama finally convinced him. I don't know much," Papa said. I didn't go to school, but I can tell you that in Mexico the rich have all the power. They choose the president, not the people. They tell us we have a vote, but it means nothing."

"I am in favor of Kennedy. That's all I know, she said.

If he gets elected, he'll help people like us. I thought. At that moment, I decided to be for Kennedy and the Democratic party from then on.

"Did you know that some people didn't vote for Kennedy because he is Catholic?" I said, raising my voice and slamming the paper on the table.

"I never hide that I am Mexican," I said. "I am proud of it too. Besides, even if I tried to hide it, I couldn't; my accent gives me away. My friends tell me that they can cut it with a knife."

Writing Prompt 1: Responsibility as a U.S. Citizen: To become Informed about Political Candidates

In this chapter, Miss Kellog told Francisco's history class that they had the responsibility as citizens to: "be informed about what's happening in politics," "Our democracy depends on it." The book explains that Francisco, among few in the class, shared her enthusiasm. "During our present political campaign, how informed are you about the candidates for president? Why is it responsible of you to stay informed?"

Go online (if no computers are available provide the students with a sheet of paper from <http://www.2decide.com/table.htm>, and find out who is running for the Democratic and Republican platform. Who do you want to win? Write a **narrative paragraph** describing who is running, who you would like to win, and why that candidate would be the most responsible for the people.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Breaking Through, Day 18



Key Paragraph

"I opened my mouth, but no words came out. My mouth felt as though it was stuffed with cotton. Then I heard Roberto holler from the back of the bleachers. '*No te rajes, Panchito!*' As his words of support echoed throughout the gym, Papa's face flashed in my mind. I slowly released the microphone, took a deep breath, tilted my hat, and said, 'Okay, I am ready.' The words to 'Cielito Lindo' flowed like a stream. Halfway through the song, several people in the audience sang along to the refrain, '*Ay, ay, ay, ay, canta y no llores,*' and at the end they cheered and applauded. George and I bowed and left. Marvin then went to the microphone and asked all of the participants to join him onstage.

We all got a standing ovation. After the audience had left, we cleared the stage, played rock 'n' roll, and danced the Chicken, the Mash Potato, the Twist, the Stroll, and many other dances. On the way home that evening and for days after, I kept hearing "Cielito Lindo" in my mind.

Writing Prompt 1: Responsibility to Oneself: Following One's Creative Inspiration

In this chapter, Francisco performs a Mexican song "Cielito Lindo" for the Junior Scandals show. He might have easily chosen to perform a silly skit, or dress in girls' clothing and joined a modeling show. Instead he remained true to his own calling: he loved the Mexican songs that he'd heard as a boy. He chose to celebrate his uniqueness and to represent his culture, proudly and without reservation.

Write a **narrative paragraph** in which you recall a creative endeavor that you have pursued, not automatically following the same type of activity that your peers had chosen. How did you feel about expressing your own unique vision? Were you being responsible to yourself about it? Include details about your type of creative expression, what the others around you may have been involved with, and how people responded to your form of expression.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Breaking Through, Day 19



Key Paragraph

"I wiped my eyes with the back of my hand and responded, 'I am fine, Papa.' Trying to cheer him up I added, 'I got good news, Papa. I was elected student body president and my friend was elected treasurer.'"

Writing Prompt 1: Responsibility to Oneself and Others

In this chapter, Francisco runs for student body president. Even though he already has a very full schedule of activities and work obligations, he manages to fit it into his schedule.

What is your personal response to Francisco's way of conducting his life while in High School? Is he a source of inspiration to you? How? What is going on in your life that you might take his lead about, and handle in a way similarly to the way Francisco might have handled it? Write a **narrative paragraph** describing Francisco's choices. Describe the sequence of events that have led him to becoming President of his school. Write a **second narrative paragraph** about how you might conduct your life to live more responsibly like Francisco?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Breaking Through, Day 20



Key Paragraph – p. 148

“Papa folded his hands on the table and stared at Roberto, waiting for my brother to break the long silence. Roberto glanced at Darlene, Looked up at me, swallowed, and said: ‘Papa, Darlene and I are getting engaged and we want your blessing.’”

Key Paragraph – p. 150

“Every day that went by, I felt more and more worn out. One night while I was cleaning the Standard Oil Company, I felt completely exhausted. I had a hard time keeping my eyes open. I went in the men’s bathroom and splashed cold water on my face and arms. I looked in the mirror. My face was haggard and full of blemishes. I had dark circles under my eyes. My pants felt loose around the waist, so I tightened the belt another notch. My reflection reminded me of Papa. I understood for the first time how he must have felt in his darkest moods. I dropped to my knees, buried my face in my hands, and cried.”

Writing Prompt 1: Responsibility to the Family

In this chapter, the family rallies to help out when Papa falls into a depression. This is a family that continues to support each other to survive, coming from an impoverished background, and trying to make a go of it in the U.S. Can you imagine how it might have been had they not come to each other’s assistance? Do you think that they could have made it in America?

Write a narrative paragraph that describes the family’s responsible behavior toward each other in times of need. Include three references from the text that to illustrate your point.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Breaking Through, Day 21



Key Paragraph – p. 152

“I felt worse when I remembered that I had to clean the Western Union and be at school on time to welcome the incoming freshmen at the school assembly. ‘I have to get up,’ I said. Holding on to Mama’s arm, I slowly stood up. I felt dizzy and weak. I took a few steps but had to stop. I could not stand the pain in my joints and muscles. Mama helped me back to bed.”

Key Paragraph – p. 156

“I began praying on a regular basis once again. Slowly I began to recover and after four weeks I felt much better. Trampita continued helping me at the gas company and Mike Nevel gave him two places to clean on his own, a coffee shop and a pet store. This brought our family extra income, which we badly needed.”

Writing Prompt 1: Responsibility to Oneself

In this chapter, Francisco falls very ill with mononucleosis. He finds himself unable to work or attend school. He has a hard time staying in bed and resting: Still feeling worn-out and achy, I dragged myself out of bed Friday morning. I took a long time to get ready. Pain shot up my legs when I moved quickly. I finished cleaning the Western Union after it had opened and was late for school.”

Write a **narrative paragraph** describing Francisco’s illness and his recover to health. How did Francisco handled his illness? What was his primary responsibility in this case? Was he responsible for getting ill in the first place? How responsible was he in complying with his ordered treatment? What about his responsibilities at school? What responsibilities were paramount in his mind?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Breaking Through, Day 22



Key Paragraph – pp. 159-160

“Go on,’ Mr. Muse said, giving me a gentle shove. I slowly walked up, went behind the podium, and grabbed on to it. I felt dizzy and had a sudden pain in the side of my stomach. I could hear my heart pounding as I glanced up at the audience. My mind went blank. I could hear my own silence. My face felt on fire and my legs trembled uncontrollably. Words slowly came out of my mouth, but I had no control over them. Spanish words wove with English words like braids. I knew I was not making any sense when I saw Mr. Muse frowning and staring at me as though he were seeing an animal with two heads. I finally managed to stop myself from babbling. I caught my breath, said a few words about student government, and rushed back to my seat, wishing I could disappear.”

Writing Prompt 1: Responsibility for Something that Goes Wrong.

In this chapter, “A Fumble”, Francisco finds himself required to make an impromptu speech at the Rotary Club luncheon. He does indeed fumble this moment. He is not prepared for it, and gets so nervous that he speaks Spanish along with English, as is described in the key paragraph above. Also, he can’t think of much to say, and embarrasses himself. Afterwards, he feels uncomfortable every time he remembers the event. Francisco has taken this hard. If you think of his behavior thus far in the story, it makes sense that someone who is so caring, and expects so much of himself, as Francisco does, would feel badly about being unprepared. Yet, when he does think back on the event later, he is angry with the Rotary Club president: “*He should have asked me ahead of time, I thought.*” One might conclude that Francisco does not feel responsible for the failed speech.

Consider a time when you were in a similar situation where you were not prepared for an unexpected situation. Write a **narrative paragraph** that details this event. What happened first, second, and third? What lessons did you learn? Did you feel responsible? Why or why not?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Breaking Through, Day 23



Key Paragraph – p. 170

“I know what you mean, *mijo*,’ she said, stroking the back of my head. ‘Have faith in God. I’ll talk to your father tomorrow when he feels better. Remember, he didn’t say no. That’s a good sign. Now go outside to get some fresh air and go to bed. You need rest.’”

Key Paragraph – p. 171

“Yes, Mr. Penny. What a strange name. . . Why would they name him Centavo? Anyway, he asked Mr. Osterveen to talk to us. *Es Buena gente*. We couldn’t believe that an important person like him would visit us. He and Papa talked about Mexico. His wife is from Oaxaca, you know, and he lived there for many years. He went on and on talking about college and you. *Hablo como perico*. Papa and I didn’t understand a lot of what he said about college, but we felt really proud about all the nice things he said about you.’”

Writing Prompt 1: Taking Advantage of an Opportunity: Does it Sometimes Mean Delegating Responsibility to Others?

In this chapter, with the help of his counselor, Francisco takes quick action to prepare the way for his dream of becoming a teacher. Whereas he had avoided pursuing the option of attending college, to stay home and help out the family, he becomes convinced of the possibility of delegating work responsibility to his younger brother, Trampita. He then, later with the help of his teacher, manages to convince his father of the importance of his decision: “It’s my only chance!” He repeats.

In your life, can you think of an opportunity that you would like to take advantage of, but one, which might require you to pass on some of your present responsibilities to others? Or, perhaps you experienced something like this in your past.

Write a **narrative paragraph** describing a time when you took advantage of a good opportunity. What was the opportunity? Did you have to make any sacrifices for that opportunity? Provide three details in your narrative.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Breaking Through, Day 24



Key Paragraph – pp. 183-184

“I picked up my cap and left, not knowing whether or not Pap would attend. I got to the gym in a few minutes before the procession. I moved up to the front of the line to join my classmates who had also made the California Scholarship Federation every semester for four years. We marched up the middle of the aisle, banked on both sides by rows of seats reserved for our graduating class. I sat in the front row, facing a low platform that served as the stage. After the Reverend Glen Johnson from the Gloria Dei Lutheran Church gave the invocation and benediction, I was introduced. I walked up to the podium, feeling nervous but confident. I quickly scanned the bleachers, hoping to see my family, and began: ‘I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God . . . with liberty and justice for all.’ I could hardly hear my own voice as thousands of others joined and recited it with me. It sounded like a prayer in church. As I finished, I saw Papa and Mama entering through the door in the back of the gym. My father braced himself on my mother’s shoulder. My heart raced with excitement. I smiled, took a deep breath, and proudly gave the welcome.”

Writing Prompt 1: Responsibility to the Future

In this chapter, Francisco graduates from high school with all of his family in attendance. He has successfully achieved what many might consider to be unachievable: from immigrant, non-English speaking origins, to graduating high school at the top of his class, and bound for college. But, not only does he carve out a future for himself, but he also serves as an inspiration to others that may come after him. He has created a legacy. What ways has he been a responsible person in creating this legacy?

Write a **narrative paragraph** that describes the kind of legacy that you would like to leave behind and how responsibility plays key role in that. Include three actions steps on how to create your legacy.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
Breaking Through, Day 25



Key Paragraph - p. 190

“Everyone was ready to leave. We secured the front door with a padlock and stood outside by the car, waiting for Roberto, Darlene, and Jackie to arrive to say good-bye. As soon as we saw them, I felt a lump in my throat. My brother parked his car behind ours. His eyes turned red and watery as we approached and hugged each other. We were silent. Each one of us knew what the other was feeling.”

Key Paragraph – p. 193

“I speeded up, crossed the bridge, and headed north to Santa Clara. I was going to college. After so many years, I was still moving.”

Writing Prompt 1: Responsibility to the Family

In this chapter, as in previous chapters, the family gathers together to support each other during hard times, and during times of transition, as when Francisco leaves for college. Francisco’s entire family chooses to accompany him to college. Can you think of an example from your life when you were there for a family member or friend when they needed you? If you can’t, think of what that would have been like and what you could do to be there for someone else.

Write a **narrative paragraph** detailing an experience you’ve had when you supported a family member or friend. How would it make them feel if you were there and kept your word? How is this a responsible action that does the best thing for everyone?

Character Based Literacy Program Lesson Plan

Breaking Through, Final Assignment



Outcomes for Today

Final Assignment:

Unit: Responsibility Requires Action

Novel: “*Breaking Through*” by Francisco Jimenez

Final Assignment: Autobiographical Essay

Task: Write an autobiographical essay.

Directions: Over the past five weeks, you have read the novel “Breaking Through by Francisco Jimenez. In the novel, Jimenez shows a child growing up under difficult circumstances. This is a family who faces the worst of times, racism and poverty. Through it all they always have each other. No matter what obstacles get in their way, they find a way through it as a family. Jimenez had to grow up way too soon and help support his family at a very young age. Many young boys go through the same issues Jimenez has gone through. Does this make one stronger? Why or why not?

Using the writing projects you kept over the five weeks, write an autobiography sharing a period of time in your life. You should use the section on Autobiographical Writing to guide you through this exercise. Remember that one paragraph should flow into the next. In order to produce this effect, you may have to re-write some sentences or paragraphs from your daily projects and writings. You may also need to add leading or unifying sentences at the beginning or end of paragraphs to aid your reader in following the direction of your essay.

Prewrite to organize your ideas

Rough draft

Edit/peer edit

Final Draft turn in

Rubric:

http://content.scholastic.com/content/collateral_resources/pdf/u/unit_autobio_rubric.pdf