

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Outsiders, Day 2



Prompt 1. Responsibility Requires Action: Responsibility to the Family

Ponyboy describes in great detail several major people in his life. The members of his family and friends are interconnected and to various degrees take responsibility for each other.

Write a narrative paragraph describing 3-4 major people in your life starting with the people who are most responsible for you or take responsibility of you. (Mom, brother, grandma, uncle, legal guardian, or teacher are just a few examples). How do they model responsibility for you? Provide specific examples of their acts of responsibility. Why do you think they take responsibility for you?

Variations for Writing (as needed):

Take a section of the timeline and write a summary of the story so far. Or look at the story so far and write a narrative paragraph about what you think will happen next.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Outsiders, Day 3



Prompt 1. Responsibility Requires Action: Responsibility to the Family

Because their parents were killed in an auto accident, the three boys Ponyboy, Sodapop and Darry are left to fend for themselves. Darry is the oldest at age 20, and has taken on the responsibility of raising himself and his two younger brothers. As Ponyboy says: “Darry would kill me if I got into trouble with the police.” Darry has tried to make sure that his brothers behave themselves, in part at least because: “Since Mom and Dad were killed in an auto wreck, the three of us get to stay together only as long as we behave.”

These orphans have a strong responsibility to themselves and each other. They must be responsible as far as obeying the law and attending school, for example, in order to remain a family among themselves. Darry has taken on the role of parent to his younger brothers; it is Darry who shoulders the most responsibility. But Soda and Ponyboy also have the responsibility to follow the rules that Darry has made. This must be done even though they identify as greasers and have adopted many of the behaviors of that gang.

What kind of responsibility do you have within your family? Are you in a position of authority within your family structure? Because of your family’s rules, do you monitor your behavior to maintain a certain level of responsibility, in consideration of the expectations of all of your family members? What sorts of small things could you do to be more responsible? Write a descriptive paragraph about your position in your family structure, and about what behaviors you are responsible for within your family.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Outsiders, Day 4



Prompt 1. Responsibility Requires Action: Responsibility to oneself and others may involve taking the risk to make new friends.

In the chapter, Ponyboy became acquainted with two girls from the Soc group. Uncharacteristically, Ponyboy and Johnny were able to converse with relative ease with these girls. They took a big risk, though in doing so, they were breaking an unspoken rule that greasers are not to get involved with girls that are not of their social rank. What do you think was successful about Ponyboy's and Johnny's approach to these two girls that made their meeting a success? Were they acting in a responsible manner in the way that they treated these girls? In contrast, Dally's behavior got him driven from the group.

Write a narrative paragraph describing how you have approached someone who is relatively different from you (in appearance, age, and so on.) to form a friendship. Using the characters from the story as examples, describe what works best (and perhaps not so well) in approaching and meeting new people?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Outsiders, Day 5



Prompt 1. Responsibility Requires Action: Responsibility to oneself and others may involve taking the risk to make new friends.

In this section, the reader is confronted by the stark reality of the violence between the Soc gang and the greasers. Johnny is forever scarred by a violent outburst and Ponyboy lives with the memory. While talking with Cherry, Ponyboy hears that the Soc's have their own problems and that life is not great for them either.

Write a **narrative** paragraph describing what troubles both groups could have. Use a quote from the text if possible. What sorts of problems do the Soc's have? The Greasers? What sorts of things are the Soc's poor in? How can these realizations bring the two groups together if they wanted to try?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Outsiders, Day 6



Prompt 1. Responsibility Requires Action: I am responsible for the actions I take, or I don't take.

Ponyboy is exasperated in chapter 3. On page 43 he is exasperated by the condition of his life, and by what he sees his friends go through: "It ain't fair!" I cried passionately. "It ain't fair that we have all the rough breaks!" As Ponyboy reflects upon his life, and upon the life circumstances of the people in his life, he feels compelled to make a change: "But I gotta do something. It seems like there's gotta be someplace without greasers or Socs, with just people. Plain ordinary people."

What kind of responsibility does Ponyboy have to himself, in terms of bettering his life; in terms of being happy? How can he do it? Brainstorm about what you would do if you were in his situation? Write a narrative paragraph reflecting on YOUR life, like Ponyboy; what you can do to better your life? What is your plan? How will you make it happen? How will you show responsibility in your plan?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Outsiders, Day 7



Prompt 1. Responsibility Requires Action: I am responsible for my own emotions.

At the end of the chapter, Ponyboy and his brother Darry get into a fight. Darry hits Ponyboy, which shocks everyone. In a rash decision, Ponyboy decides to run away with Johnny. Write a narrative paragraph describing what you would think and feel if someone that you loved hit you. Describe the different emotions. Would you give up on them? Is this a break in responsibility toward you? Can someone redeem themselves after an irresponsible act?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Outsiders, Day 8



Prompt 1. Responsibility Requires Action: Taking responsibility for decisions you make, or don't make

In chapter 4, Johnny felt a responsibility to his friend Ponyboy to try to save his life, as Ponyboy was being drowned in the fountain. Johnny, too was having his life threatened by the Socs. Johnny killed Bob defending Ponyboy and himself. He and Ponyboy decide to plan an escape from the law. Ponyboy panics. He nearly screams. : "What are we gonna do? They put you in the electric chair for killing people!" Johnny responds: "We gotta get outa here. Get somewhere. Run away. The police'll be here soon. " I was trembling, and it wasn't all from the cold. But Johnny, except for the fact that his hands were twitching, looked as cool as Darry ever had. "We'll need money. And maybe a gun. And a plan." [p. 57]

Now it's time to take the lead. Write a narrative paragraph describing what the responsible thing to do would be in this situation? Considering the definition of responsibility, what do you think would be the best course to take? Describe your plan.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Outsiders, Day 9



Prompt 1. Responsibility Requires Action: Taking responsibility for decisions you make, or don't make

At the end of chapter 4, Ponyboy and Johnny are cooling off in a church. Both of them are exhausted from the night before and the travel. Put yourself in Ponyboy's shoes. Ponyboy shows incredible loyalty to Johnny. Ponyboy sticks with Johnny even though sticking with him even though this could put Ponyboy in danger. Why does he do this? What responsibility to Johnny does Ponyboy have? Does he have more responsibility for him because Johnny saved his life? Do you owe someone more if they save your life? Would you stay? Why or why not? What is the right thing for Ponyboy to do? Since it was self-defense, Johnny would probably be let off. Do you consider going to the police to be an option? Why? Write a narrative paragraph illustrating what you imagine will happen next in an ideal situation.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Outsiders, Day 10



Prompt 1: Responsibility Requires Action: I am responsible for the actions I take, or don't take.

In chapter 5, Ponyboy and Johnny have been hanging out in an empty church, running from the law, after Johnny has killed Bob in self-defense. Realizing what he has done, Johnny has started pacing back and forth. Ponyboy begins to cry. Johnny admits to Ponyboy that he regrets getting him involved. He feels responsible. Ponyboy is only fourteen. Ponyboy gets upset at this, feeling just as involved. He cries himself to sleep. Late that night they wake up and agreed that they are done crying. The boys have decided to make an escape, and to somehow avoid the legal consequences of what Johnny has done. They have released their emotions, and now may be ready to take on the responsibility of dealing with the consequences of their actions.

Can you think of a personal experience, when you had to face consequences that required you to make an important decision and do the responsible thing? Did you find that you had to get beyond your emotions first before you could act? Write a narrative paragraph about your experience and examine your decisions based on the many things and people you were responsible for pleasing.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Outsiders, Day 11



Prompt 1: Responsibility Requires Action: I am responsible for people I don't even know.

At the end of chapter 5, Ponyboy receives a letter from his brother Sodapop. Sodapop reveals that he and Darry are worried about Ponyboy and that they miss him. Soda says that Darry is sorry for hitting Ponyboy and that he did not mean it. Imagine that you are Ponyboy. You ran away from home, and got into trouble with a friend who killed someone.

The letter says that your family is worried sick. Do you have responsibility for putting their worrying at rest? But at the same time, what responsibility do you have to Johnny? Are you his family too? Write a **narrative** paragraph in letter form, as if you were Ponyboy sending it to Soda, describing your feelings, thoughts, and responsibilities.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Outsiders, Day 12



Prompt 1. Responsibility Requires Action: Taking action to save lives

At the beginning of chapter 6, Ponyboy and Johnny are stunned to find out that Cherry Valance has been spying on the Soc's for the greaser gang, and more importantly for Ponyboy, Johnny, and peace between the gangs. Why does this information confuse the two boys? Since Cherry is a Soc by social class and does not know Ponyboy and Johnny or the rest of the greasers that well, what are her reasons for helping? Is she being heroic in trying to stop the bloodshed between the two groups? How is she being responsible for people she does not know? Does this seem to be honorable? Why or why not? Would you do the same thing she did? Why or why not? Explain your answer in a persuasive paragraph.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Outsiders, Day 13



Prompt 1. Responsibility Requires Action: Taking action to save lives

In chapter 6, Ponyboy and Johnny break into a window of the burning church to try to save the lives of children trapped inside. They risk their lives to save them, and manage to save 4-5 children. Dally, Ponyboy and Johnny all get hurt. Johnny is the most seriously hurt, with a broken back and serious burns. They have taken the responsibility upon themselves to act in a time of intense need.

Can you think of a personal experience when you faced something that, because of your actions, you had to act quickly to do the responsible thing, even if it meant risking your own life? Write a narrative paragraph about your experience. Make sure to include details about what circumstances you faced, what decision(s) you made, and how you went about taking action based upon your decision(s). Who was impacted by your decision making? What was the outcome of your actions?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Outsiders, Day 14



Prompt 1. Responsibility Requires Action: Responsibility to your family

Ponyboy is confronted with the situation that he might be put into a boys' home. Darry has constantly watched out for his family, and now Ponyboy feels betrayed by the system that he lives under. Write a narrative paragraph: Imagine Ponyboy is dreaming about his boy's home experience. Describe in great detail, using your imagination, what it looks like, who is there, and what are his responsibilities while there? Be sure to include how Ponyboy feels upon waking up (i.e. relieved).

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Outsiders, Day 15



Prompt 1. Responsibility Requires Action: Responsibility to Others

In the end of the story, Randy comes to visit Ponyboy and he congratulates him on saving the kids in the fire. He tells him that he would not have done so. Randy also talks to him about the fact that he is not going to the rumble. Randy is upset about Bob's death, and about being in a gang in general. He can't see anyone winning such a game. Ponyboy, in turn, is able to see another side to Randy, a Soc: he is able to see him as another person, not just an adversary. In this exchange, Randy is taking responsibility for the fact that he does not have to remain identified with the Soc gang- that he can take responsibility for his own actions apart from the group.

Write a narrative paragraph defining a time when you were willing to break away from the mold and think for yourself, not following someone else's plan. What kind of responsibility does this involve?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Outsiders, Day 16



Prompt 1. Responsibility Requires Action: Responsibility to Others

In a narrative paragraph describe an act of giving out of responsibility. Why does it hurt when someone gives you something because they feel sorry for you? How did Cherry and Ponyboy find common ground to unite on? Think about the people in your life that give to you. Are they giving because they are sorry for you or because they want you to do well and genuinely care about you?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Outsiders, Day 17



Prompt 1. Responsibility Requires Action: Responsibility to Oneself

At the end of this section, the rumble is about to take place. All of the groups are ready to fight each other. Remember the reasons behind it. The Socs win, nothing changes. The greasers win, the Socs don't go on their territory. Do you think this fight is worth it? Think about all of the consequences. There are the police and people getting hurt. Will anything really change? If the Socs lose, will they always stay off of the territory, or will they just go back on again? Given these factors, is the rumble a responsible endeavor?

Write a narrative paragraph describing the most ideal outcome you can think of as an outcome/conclusion to the rumble. Is the outcome realistic? Can you picture happening in real life, why/why not? Is it a responsible outcome?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Outsiders, Day 18



Prompt 1. Responsibility Requires Action: Responsibility to Oneself

When Johnny is about to die, as Ponyboy is by his bedside, he says: “Stay gold, Ponyboy. Stay gold. . .” this is in reference to the Robert Frost poem, on page 77. What does this statement mean to you? How can you relate it to your life? In a narrative paragraph describe what will you need to change to “stay gold?”

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Outsiders, Day 19



Prompt 1. Responsibility Requires Action: Responsibility to Oneself and Society

In chapter 10, Dally robs a grocery store, and, armed with a gun, flees to the vacant lot where his friends witness his shooting death when he confronts the police. It would seem that Dally has staged his own death. (See the key paragraph above.) What responsibility do you think Dally had for his own life, and to those who loved him, when he committed such an act? Do you understand why he would do such a thing? Was he justified and responsible in doing this?

Write a narrative paragraph describing an alternate ending to Dally's story.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Outsiders, Day 20



Prompt 1. Responsibility Requires Action: Responsibility to a Friend Who's Died

In chapter 11, Ponyboy has taken on the imagined responsibility of having killed Bob, as he admits to Randy, in the key paragraph above. He seems to really have convinced himself that this is true: "I swallowed hard and blinked. He was just like all the rest of the Socs. Cold-blooded mean. Johnny didn't have anything to do with Bob's getting killed." Ponyboy is also convinced that Johnny isn't dead. Darry tells Randy that he is racked up mentally and emotionally; that he will get over it in time.

Why do you think Ponyboy chooses to believe that Johnny isn't dead? Put yourself in Ponyboy's shoes. Would you take responsibility for a dead friend's actions? It would seem that Ponyboy is not legitimately responsible for the death of Bob or to his friend Johnny for taking the blame. Does that make what Ponyboy does any more or less right? Write a narrative paragraph about a time in your life you were in denial? Is being in denial avoiding responsibility?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Outsiders, Day 21



Prompt 1. Responsibility Requires Action: Responsibility to Oneself and One's Calling

In the final chapter, Ponyboy struggles with an English assignment: a theme. Since the hearing, and all of what had happened to him in the story, he had been acquitted, but, he was far from normal. He'd been having trouble concentrating, and was failing English. He'd stood ground against a group of Socs with a broken bottle, and hadn't thought twice about it. He was even thinking of dropping out and getting a job like Soda had done. But, his English teacher was willing to give him a chance: "Pony I'll give it to you straight. You're failing this class right now, but taking into consideration the circumstances, if you come up with a good semester theme, I'll pass you with a C grade." The theme assignment was not a reference theme. It was to be about his own ideas and experiences.

After an altercation with his brothers, and a plea from Soda that they stick together and not fight anymore, Ponyboy really makes an attempt to do his homework. Looking at the *Gone with the Wind* book that he'd gotten from Johnny, he finds a note from him. In so many words, Johnny asks him to stay young at heart: to enjoy sunsets and make himself be what he wants. It is after reading this note that Ponyboy really becomes inspired to write about his life experiences; about Johnny, and Dally, and the others.

What do you think of Ponyboy's final spark of inspiration? Would you say that he was finally taking responsibility for his own life and others by staying in school? What can you relate from your own life, as a time when you'd been stuck, and finally had a breakthrough? Was this an instance of being responsible for your goals and yourself? Write a narrative paragraph describing in detail a challenge you had to take on, and how you were successful in expressing yourself. Relate your experience with Ponyboy's. Were you taking responsibility for which you were like Ponyboy is finally doing? What would be the end of your story?