

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Esperanza Rising, Day 1



Key Paragraph, p. 7

“After their Quinceañeras, they would be old enough to be courted, marry and become *las patronas*, the heads of their households, rising to the positions of their mothers before them.”

Writing Prompt

Do you think that Esperanza is limiting herself? At this point in her life she wants nothing more than to marry and be the head of a household. What other options is she missing? Although this is a noble cause do you think she should make that decision without having more life knowledge or a skill herself? Did you imagine what you wanted your life to be like at 13? How was it different?

Write a one-paragraph narrative in which you describe a real or imagined event. Pretend you planning or having your Quinceañera or 15th birthday. Write a narrative in which you describe the event. Engage your reader by establishing context and point of view. Introduce your characters. Organize a sequence of events that unfolds logically. Use narrative techniques such as dialog, pacing, and description to develop experience, events, and characters. Use a variety of transition words. Use precise words and phrases to convey detail and imagery. Provide a conclusion that follows form and reflects on the narrated experiences.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Esperanza Rising, Day 2



Key Paragraph, p. 25

“Her face crumbled, ‘Señor,’ she said, choking back tears. ‘Have you not heard?...my papa is dead’”

Writing Prompt

Think about a time (real or imagined) you had to convey or receive bad news. It could have been about a friend, family member, pet, school, or job. What was that experience like for you?

Write a narrative paragraph or two designed to detail to your reader how this event affected you and the other person. Engage and orientate your reader by establishing a context and point of view, and introduce the narrator and or characters. Organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically. Use narrative techniques such as dialog, pacing, and description to develop the experience, event, and characters. Provide a conclusion that follows form and reflects on the narrated events.

STEP 1: Autobiography/personal narrative:

- *The goal of this unit is for you to write a personal narrative about a specific event in your life.*
- Think of a memorable experience that happened over a short period of time.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Esperanza Rising, Day 3



Key Paragraph, p. 50

“Esperanza, do you remember the story of the phoenix, the lovely bird that is reborn from its own ashes?’ Esperanza nodded. Abuelita had read it to her many times from a book of myths. ‘We are like the phoenix, rising again, with a new life ahead of us.’”

Writing Prompt

In what way is Esperanza’s family like the Phoenix? Why do they have to move? What happened to their house and land? What awaits them? How do Mama’s actions show responsibility for her family and her friends? Have you ever had to start over in your life or in a new situation?

Write a one-paragraph narrative in which you describe a situation that occurred in your life that forced you to start over (real or imagined), it could be a new school, new job, and a fight with a family member. Introduce the situation. Introduce the characters and context. Organize the events so they unfold naturally and logically. Use description to detail the events and the situation. Use sensory language and detail to convey your experience from the event. Provide a conclusion that reflects on the narrated experience.

STEP 2:

- Fill out a 5W’s chart to help you collect your details.
Chart attached below. Use this cube to assist you in your rough draft.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Esperanza Rising, Day 4



Key Paragraph, p. 76

“Carmen smiled. ‘I am poor, but I am rich. I have my children, I have a garden with roses, and I have my faith and the memories of those who have gone before me. What more is there?’”

Writing Prompt

Respond to the above quote—what do you think of this idea of being thankful for very simple things? What are you thankful for in your life? Do you think if more people were appreciative of what they had, instead of focused on what they didn’t have, people would find life more satisfying?

Write a one-paragraph narrative in which you detail the important riches, people, or experiences in your life. Engage your reader and establish context and point of view. Use techniques such as detail and description to develop the experience. Use precise words and phrases to give relevant details and convey sequence. Provide a conclusion that follows form and reflects on the narrated experience.

STEP 3: Finish rough draft and review effective traits

- We are going to use this first personal narrative of the year to introduce the traits of effective writing.
- This initial writing activity provides you with an opportunity to *slow things down and take a closer look at what makes good writing*.
- The object here is to focus on the *process of revision*- not just the product, or getting it turned in.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Esperanza Rising, Day 5



Key Paragraph, p. 97

“Esperanza started back at Marta, unblinking. What had she done to deserve this girl’s insults? Through gritted teeth she said. ‘You know nothing about my papa. He was a good man, kind man who gave much of his property to his servants.’”

Writing Prompt

Have you ever been in a situation where regardless of how hard you tried, you could do or say nothing right to another person?

Write two narrative paragraphs in which you describe the situation. Who was involved? What was the context of the moment? Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.

Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters. Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.

STEP 4: Revising→Focus on Organization

- Today, take a closer look at how you have organized your paper. Jot down how you decided to tell your story. Did you start at the beginning and go to the end? Did you start with the ending and then cut to the beginning? When writing creatively, an author has choices to make. The choices he or she makes impact the reader’s experience.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Esperanza Rising, Day 6



Key Paragraph, p. 120

“Isabela, I will tell you about how I used to live. About parties and private school and beautiful dresses. I will even show you the beautiful doll my papa bought for me, if you will teach me how to pin diapers, wash, and. . .”

Writing Prompt

Esperanza has to ask for help to be able to assist her mama and family in the camp. It is really hard asking for help and sometimes we avoid it. Think of a time you needed to ask for help and you didn't or you asked for help from someone.

Write a one paragraph narrative in which you describe the situation and who was involved.

Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters. Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one frame to another. Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.

STEP 5: Revision and word choice

- Take a pencil and circle all the **verbs** in your paper.
- Then, go back and think about how you could make some of your choices more specific and colorful.
- Remember to use the thesaurus as necessary.
- After you have gone through and revised your verbs, do the same thing with **nouns**.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Esperanza Rising, Day 7



Key Paragraph, pp. 123-124

“After the fire, my father and I dug down to the roots. Many were still healthy. We carried the cuttings from Aquascalientes. And that’s why we had to keep them wet. We think they will grow. In time, we will see how many bloom.”

Writing Prompt

Think of the thoughtfulness and symbolism of this gesture. In what way did Miguel take responsibility for someone else’s feelings? Explain the symbolism of putting a trellis near Esperanza’s rose- bush so “it can climb.” Think of a time that someone did a small gesture for you or you did a small gesture for someone else that made a lasting and significant impact.

Write a narrative paragraph in which you describe the event. Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.

Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters. Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one frame to another. Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.

STEP 6: Revision with modifiers (specifically adverbs today)

- Take a look at your paper. By now you have added more colorful verbs.
- Circle any adverbs you already have in your paper.
- Can you revise any of these to make your writing clearer to your reader?
- Now go back and ask yourself if there are any additional adverbs you would like to add.
- Make those changes.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Esperanza Rising, Day 8



Key Paragraph, p. 139

“Esperanza struggled to carry both babies back to the cabin. Thank goodness Isabel had already helped her feed and dress them. She settled them on a blanket on the floor with some tin cups and wood blocks, then put the beans into a big pot on the stove... ‘I wish Abuelita could see me,’ she thought. She would be proud.”

Writing Prompt

In what way is Esperanza rising to the occasion? How is she handling her new responsibilities? How do you know she is being responsible even though she gave the babies raw plums and let the beans burn? Why do you think she believes Abuelita would be proud? What are your responsibilities where you live?

Write a one-paragraph narrative in which you describe a time in your life (real or imagined) that you had the opportunity to rise to an occasion. Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters. Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one frame to another. Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.

STEP 7: Revision with modifiers (specifically adjectives today)

- Look at your paper. You have added more specific nouns.
- Circle any adjectives you already have in your paper.
- Can you revise any of these to make your writing clearer to your reader?
- Now go back and ask yourself if there are any additional adjectives you would like to add.
- Make those changes/additions.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Esperanza Rising, Day 9



Key Paragraph, p. 164

“‘I have to do something,’ said Esperanza, holding back tears. Hortensia put her arm around Esperanza.

‘Don’t worry,’ she said. ‘The doctors and nurses know what she needs and we will take care of one another.’”

Writing Prompt

Reread the theme responsibility requires action. Esperanza has been steadily becoming more and more responsible. She has taken care of the babies and is now taking care of Mama. Do you like her better as a character now or *before* she took on additional responsibilities?

Think of a time you slowly or gradually became more responsible. It may be at home, school, work, or in a volunteer position. **Write a narrative paragraph in which you engage your reader. Describe the situation, your characters, and what you were like. Organize your writing to share your story as it unfolds logically and naturally. Give details that support your experience and your characters. Provide a conclusion follows form, supports and reflects on your experience.**

STEP 8: Revision and voice

- Think of a song or singer that you think has a strong voice in his or her music.
- How would you describe that voice?
- You have the same thing. You are a unique individual with your own voice.
- Share your writing with someone who knows you and your voice, either a peer, teacher, aide, or parent. Ask them if you think your writing sounds like YOU.
- What could you add to make it sound more like you?
- Make revisions as necessary.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Esperanza Rising, Day 10



Key Paragraph, p. 197

‘What’s the occasion?’ Asked Esperanza.
‘I got a job in the machine shop at the railroad.’”

Writing Prompt

Miguel is finally getting close to realizing his dream. He knows the situation is temporary but if he does well he may get hired permanently.

Think of a time, real or imagined that you realized a dream or a goal was coming to fruition. Write a one-paragraph narrative in which you introduce the scene, context, and characters. Introduce the narrator and the characters. Write a dialog with two or three of the characters in which you share your news. Who was involved, what was said? Be detailed Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.

STEP 9: Revision and dialogue

- Add at least 1 series of dialogue to your story.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Esperanza Rising, Day 11



Key Paragraph, p. 212

“Laundry waved on the clothesline. Plates with rice and beans sat on crates and swarmed with busy flies. Shoes were lined up in front of tents, as if waiting for someone to step into them. The breeze picked up loose newspapers and floated them across the field. It was quiet and desolate, except for the goat still tied to the tree, bleating for freedom.”

Writing Prompt

The author does an amazing job describing the setting as it changes from scene to scene. What impression do you get of the strike? The shed? The camp? And now, the abandoned strikers' homes? Notice her word choice.

Write a narrative about a moment in your that you noticed something either significant or insignificant (the sunrise, the sky, someone you passed in a store, etc.). Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically. Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events. In today's writing focus mostly on the descriptive language.

STEP 10: Revision and reflections

- Add reflections where you see appropriate.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Esperanza Rising, Day 12



Key Paragraph, p. 227

“I want you to have something that will last more than one day,’ said Esperanza. She lifted the doll from the valise and handed it to Isabel. ‘To keep as your own.’”

Writing Prompt

What kind of role model has Esperanza become for Isabel? What impact do you think giving the doll to Isabel had on her sense of self? Have you ever given something to someone that was meaningful to you? What feelings accompany such gifts?

Write a narrative about a moment in your life that you were the recipient of a special gift or you gave someone a special gift (real or imagined). Engage your reader by establishing a context and point of view. Introduce the narrator and the characters. Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters. Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one frame to another. Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.

STEP 11: Revision and sentence style

- Vary your sentence length and structure.
- Examine transitions.
- Are your sentences easy to hear/listen to?
- Make appropriate revisions.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Esperanza Rising, Day 13



Key Paragraph, pp. 234-235

“A few weeks later, Esperanza stood on the shed dock in the morning and marveled at the peaches, plums, and nectarines that poured into the shed. ‘How will we ever sort them all?’ she asked. Josefina laughed. ‘One piece at a time. It gets done.’”

Writing Prompt

How is this an analogy for life and through working through tough situations? In what way is this similar to the crocheting that Anza also did?

Write a narrative about a moment in your life that you were tasked with something that seemed overwhelming. Describe how you overcame the task and were able to complete it, “one piece at a time”. Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters. Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one frame to another. Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.

STEP 12: Editing and correct copy

- Correct punctuation, spelling, grammar and capitalization

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Esperanza Rising, Day 14



Key Paragraph, p. 262

“Our accomplishments were her accomplishments. She wished the best for all of us and rarely looked back on the difficulties of her own life.”

Writing Prompt

How did grandmother’s ability to look forward make it possible for her family to do the same? What happens if people are constantly looking back? Think about a time in your life you were forced to look forward and plan and succeed instead of looking back.

Write a narrative in which you focus on the moment you decided to look forward and work ahead. Who was involved? Organize your story so it unfolds use narrative techniques to develop your characters. Use a variety of transition words to convey sequence. Use precise words to convey sequence and events. Provide a conclusion that follows form and reflects on the event.

STEP 13: Response checklist

- Use the checklist to guide any last edits to your paper.
- Word process final drafts.