

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Holes, Day 1



Key Paragraph, p. 5

"If you take a bad boy and make him dig a hole every day in the hot sun, it will turn him into a good boy" (p. 5).

Writing Prompt

Camp Green Lake believes that people can change by digging holes in the hot sun. **Write an argumentative paragraph that demonstrates whether or not you agree with Camp Green Lake's method of change.**

If you do agree, what is it about hole digging that has the power to change. If you do not agree, proceed by describing what is capable of changing a bad boy into a good one. Provide three reasons to support your argument.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Holes, Day 2



Key Paragraph, p. 17

“‘I want you to know, Stanley, that I respect you,’ Mr. Pendanski said. ‘I understand you’ve made some bad mistakes in your life. Otherwise you wouldn’t be here. But everyone makes mistakes. You may have done some bad things, but that doesn’t mean you’re a bad kid’” (p. 17).

Writing Prompt

Mr. Pendanski assumes Stanley has made mistakes and deserves to be at Camp Green Lake. Stanley wants to tell him that he is innocent. He doesn’t because he knows that Mr. Pendanski won’t believe him. Mr. Pendanski believes that life is fair. Stanley is receiving a first-hand lesson that life is not. Think of a time when someone accused you of something you did not do. In a letter to Stanley describe the situation. In an **argumentative paragraph explain why you were innocent. Provide three reasons to support your answer. Include how you felt when you were unfairly accused for something you did not do. Finally, describe one positive lesson you learned by reflecting on this experience.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Holes, Day 3



Key Paragraph, p. 21

“Stanley couldn’t help but think that there was something special about the shoes, that they would somehow provide the key to his father’s invention. It was too much of a coincidence to be a mere accident. Stanley had felt like he was holding destiny’s shoes” (p. 21).

Writing Prompt

When Stanley picks up Sweet Feet’s shoes, he gets the sense that he found them for a reason, like it was his destiny. Destiny suggests that life – or a part of your life – has already been decided for you. Do you believe that you have a destiny, that your life has already been decided for you? What are the things in your life that you can change? What are the things that you cannot? Reflect on whether or not you believe in destiny. Write an argumentative paragraph that supports or disproves the idea of destiny. Provide three reasons to support your argument.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Holes, Day 4



Key Paragraph, p. 39

“‘If only, if only,’ the woodpecker sighs,
‘The bark on the tree was as soft as the skies.’
While the wolf waits below, hungry and lonely,
Crying to the moo—oo—oon,
‘If only, if only’” (p. 39).

Writing Prompt

Recall a time in your life when you found yourself in a situation that was quite different from how you hoped it would be. Reflect on this situation and think about the positives that came from this experience. What did you learn during this time? What opportunities came from this experience?

Write a letter to yourself that would have encouraged you during this time in your life. **In an argumentative paragraph persuade yourself that life will be better in the future. Provide three positive outcomes that will come from this experience.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Holes, Day 5



Key Paragraph, p. 46

"Dear Mom,

Today was my first day at camp, and I've already made some friends. We've been out on the lake all day, so I'm pretty tired. Once I passed the swimming test, I'll get to learn how to water ski" (p. 46).

Writing Prompt

Stanley is not telling his mother the truth, because he does not want her to worry. Instead of telling the truth, he is telling her what he knows she would like to hear. He is giving her the "if only, if only" version.

Pretend you are Stanley and write an honest letter about the reality of Camp Green Lake. **In an argumentative paragraph prove that Camp Green Lake is unsuitable for youth. Using three examples to support your argument.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Holes, Day 6



Key Paragraph, p. 57

“Nothing in life is easy. But that’s no reason to give up. You’ll be surprised by what you can accomplish if you set your mind to it. After all, you only have one life, so you should try to make the most of it” (p. 57).

Writing Prompt

Mr. Pendanski explains that it is important to be persistent and determined in pursuing your life goals. What are your life goals? How are you persistent and determined? Think about one goal you have for your life. What are some obstacles and challenges that might slow you down or prevent you from pursuing this goal? **In a motivational letter to yourself, provide three reasons why you should never give up on this goal. In an argumentative paragraph, argue why this goal is important to you.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Holes, Day 7



Key Paragraph, p. 71

“One thing was certain: They weren’t just digging to ‘build character.’ They were definitely looking for something.

And whatever they were looking for, they were looking in the wrong place.

Stanley gazed out across the lake, toward the spot where he had been digging yesterday when he found the gold tube. He dug the hole into his memory” (p. 71).

Writing Prompt

The author begins to describe Stanley as a budding detective. Pretend you are Stanley, take the clues you have gathered—the gold tube labeled “KB” and the warden’s obvious excitement—and come up with a theory about what you are doing out there if not just “building character.”

In an argumentative paragraph prove your theory. Provide three reasons to support your theory.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Holes, Day 8



Key Paragraph, p. 81

"Dear Mom and Dad,

Camp is hard, but challenging. We've been running obstacle courses and have to swim long distances on the lake. Tomorrow we learn...to rock climb. I know that sounds scary, but don't worry...I'll be careful. It's not all fun and games here, but I think I'm getting a lot out of it. It builds character" (p. 81).

Writing Prompt

Other than the first sentence about camp being hard, Stanley's letter is a total lie. He doesn't tell his folks the truth, because he doesn't want to worry them. Reread Stanley's letter and find three untrue statements.

In an argumentative paragraph prove that Stanley's letter is inaccurate. Using quotes from the novel, disprove three untrue statements in Stanley's letter. Include page numbers for each quote.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Holes, Day 9



Key Paragraph, p. 90

“So you think he stole your sunflower seeds?”

‘No, he says he stole them, but I think it was--’

She stepped toward him and struck him across the face” (p. 90).

Writing Prompt

Clearly, this is not what the reader expected to happen. Nor is it what the warden expected to happen. Write about a time when you witnessed someone being treated cruelly. This could be a recent or past example of a person or an animal being treated unfairly. Describe the event, how you felt, and your reactions to it. If you had to experience it again, what would you do differently? What do you think you should do if you see someone being treated unfairly?

In an argumentative paragraph explain why one should stand up against cruel treatment of a human or animal. Provide three reasons to support your answer.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Holes, Day 10



Key Paragraph, p. 111

“At that moment, however, Hattie Parker stepped out of the general store. They didn’t see her, but she saw them. She pointed her quivering finger in their direction and whispered, ‘God will punish you!’” (p. 111)

Writing Prompt

Many have experienced injustice in life. If you have not experienced it firsthand, you have most likely witnessed injustice. Write about a time in your life when you experienced injustice or prejudice. Describe the event, how you felt, and how you reacted.

As an enlightened and responsible person, **write an argumentative letter to persuade that person that it is important to treat others with respect. Provide three reasons to support your answer.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Holes, Day 11



Key Paragraph, p. 112

“There were no telephones, but word spread quickly through the small town. By the end of the day, everyone in Green Lake had heard that the schoolteacher had kissed the onion picker. Not one child showed up for school the next morning” (p. 112).

Writing Prompt

News often travels quickly through a small town, sometimes by word of mouth and sometimes through the local paper. Knowing that Katherine Barlow was a schoolteacher and that she had no children to teach on this particular day, pretend that she spent that time (before the angry mob arrived) constructing an editorial or an open letter to the local paper. Respond to the town’s reactions.

As Katherine Barlow, include an argumentative paragraph that explains your views on love and what you believe to be right. An editorial is an opinionated article written for a newspaper. You need not provide any other view than yours. Keep in mind, however, that you are writing as Katherine Barlow: provide reasonable and rational statements to support your point of view. Maintain a professional tone and plead for the people of Green Lake to return to sanity.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Holes, Day 12



Key Paragraph, p. 132

"It was possible, he realized, that he was somewhere near where Kate Barlow had robbed his great-grandfather. If that was really her lipstick tube he'd found, then she must have lived somewhere around here" (p. 132).

Writing Prompt

In the book, *Holes*, there are many untold stories. One is how Stanley's great-grandfather came to be in the town of Green Lake and how he was robbed by the famous outlaw, Kissin' Kate Barlow. In one paragraph, **tell the story of the robbery. What was Mr. Yelnats doing there? What was Kate doing back in Green Lake? What did she say to Stanley's great grandfather? What did Stanley's great grandfather have that was so valuable? And where is it now? What did he say to her to convince her not to kill him?**

In a second paragraph write what you would do if you encountered Kissin' Kate Barlow. **Write an argumentative paragraph to convince Kissin' Kate Barlow not to kill you. Provide three reasons why she should let you live.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Holes, Day 13



Key Paragraph, p. 140

“He knew he never should have let Zero dig part of his hole for him. He still could have taught him to read. If Zero could dig all day and still have the strength to learn, then he should have been able to dig all day and still have the strength to teach” (p. 140).

Writing Prompt

There is a saying that hindsight is 20/20. After the fact, it seemed so simple to Stanley that he had been wrong to let Zero dig part of his hole. However, before everything fell apart, it had seemed so right.

Write an argumentative letter to Stanley to convince him that it is not a good idea for Zero to dig part of his hole. With future insight, provide three reasons to support your answer.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Holes, Day 14



Key Paragraph, p. 153

“The boat lay upside down, half buried in the dirt. Someone may have drowned here, he thought grimly—at the same spot where he could very well die of thirst.

The name of the boat had been painted on the back. The upside-down red letters were peeled and faded, but Stanley could still read the name: Mary Lou” (p. 153).

Writing Prompt

On page 115, the author states, “These are the facts.” Review this paragraph. In an **argumentative paragraph re-create the story, in detail, that supports these facts and explains why the boat sits upside-down, half buried in the sand of a dry lakebed. Include three details to your statement and include Trout, Katherine, Sam, and Mary Lou in your story. Describe what happened to Sam in the end, what Katherine did about it, and what happened to the town of Green Lake as a result.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Holes, Day 15



Key Paragraph, p. 159

“‘I should warn you,’ Stanley said. ‘I’m not exactly the luckiest guy in the world.’
Zero wasn’t worried. ‘When you spend your whole life living in a hole,’ he said,
‘the only way you can go is up’” (p. 159).

Writing Prompt

Stanley and Zero are at rock bottom. Now the only way they can go is up. **In an argumentative letter, prove that Stanley and Zero are determined. How are they persevering during their challenging journey? Provide three examples that support your argument.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Holes, Day 16



Key Paragraph, p. 177

“My husband knows exactly where I am now and how I am dressed, thank you,” said Mrs. Tennyson. ‘We have both been up all night and half of the morning with Rebecca. She almost died from stomach sickness. It seems she ate some bad meat.’

Hattie’s face flushed. Her Husband, Jim Parker, was the butcher” (p. 177).

Writing Prompt

Stanley picks up Zero and carries him up the mountain. As he climbs higher, Stanley’s strength comes from deep inside. Pretend you are a news reporter.

Write an argumentative article that proves Stanley is a hero for not abandoning Zero and for carrying him up the mountain. Provide three facts to support your argument.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Holes, Day 17



Key Paragraph, p. 191

“It wasn’t even noon yet when they reached the boat. They sat against the shady side and rested.

‘I don’t know what happened to my mother,’ Zero said. ‘She left and never came back.’

Stanley peeled an onion.

‘She couldn’t always take me with her,’ Zero said. ‘Sometimes she had to do things by herself’” (p. 191).

Writing Prompt

Pretend you are Zero’s mother. In a letter to Hector, describe what happened to you on that fateful day when you did not return.

In an argumentative paragraph explain why you left Hector. Provide three reasons why you thought it was best at that time. Explain that it is not a day you can look back on fondly. In this letter, write down exactly what you would want to tell Hector if you ever saw him again. Ask him for his forgiveness.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Holes, Day 18



Key Paragraph, p. 204

“‘Let her ask her questions,’ said the Warden. ‘Just so long as I have the suitcase, I don’t care what happens. Do you know how long...’ Her voice trailed off, then started up again. ‘When I was little I’d watch my parents dig holes, every weekend and holiday. When I got bigger, I had to dig, too. Even on Christmas’” (p. 204).

Writing Prompt

The author reveals some information on the Warden’s childhood. Pretend you are the Warden as a little girl on Christmas day and your parents want you to dig holes. **In an argumentative paragraph, argue why you should not dig holes on a holiday. Provide three reasons to support your answer. Think about how a childhood dedicated to digging holes could affect your entire life.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Holes, Day 19



Key Paragraph, p. 213-214

"The Warden rushed to them. She hugged Zero. 'Thank God, you're alive,' she said, as she tried to take the suitcase from him.

He jerked it free. 'It belongs to Stanley,' he said" (p. 213-14).

Writing Prompt

The Warden spins a lie about Stanley and Zero sneaking into her cabin, stealing the suitcase, and falling into the hole. **Pretend you are the Warden and write a statement to convince a judge of your lie. In an argumentative paragraph, defend your inaccurate side of the story. Provide three details to support your story.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Holes, Day 20



Key Paragraph, p. 227

“Stanley’s mother insists that there was never a curse. She even doubts whether Stanley’s great-great grandfather really stole a pig. The reader might find it interesting, however, that Stanley’s father invented his cure for foot odor the day after the great-great grandson of Elya Yelnats carried the great-great-great grandson of Madame Zeroni up the mountain” (p. 227).

Writing Prompt

In this novel, people are punished for bad deeds until the bad deed has somehow been righted. For example, The Yelnats family’s luck changes for the better as soon as Stanley carries Hector Zeroni up the mountain. Rain falls again on Green Lake, but not until the Walker family is brought to justice.

Write about a time in your life when correcting a mistake made your life better. Describe the benefits of fixing this mistake. **In an argumentative paragraph, prove why it is important in correcting a mistake. Provide an example from your past as a reason to support your argument.**