

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Popcorn Days and Buttermilk Night, Day 1



Key Paragraph, p. 4

“It was perhaps proper for the building to kill itself before it had to fit into the new times, before it had to leave its intended purpose...” (p. 4).

Writing Prompt

Think of a building, house, apartment, room, or place you know well. What memories are stored there? Holidays? Friends? Family? Hard times? Good times? How would you feel if this place was destroyed? Do you think that a building has a soul?

Write an argument to support or oppose the statement that buildings have a soul. Introduce your claim and acknowledge your opposing viewpoint. Support your claim with logical reasoning and relevant evidence using credible sources. Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion. Provide a concluding statement that supports your opening claim.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Popcorn Days and Buttermilk Nights, Day 2



Key Paragraph, p. 15

“The road was fairly smooth. A horse-drawn grader had evened it down from the ruts of spring thaw. The ditches had standing water, and now and again a set of mallards would get up, flying ahead of us to land in the ditch up a ways until we came on them again. The woods back of the fields were a deep green that made me think of pictures I’d seen of Ireland in a *National Geographic Magazine*” (p. 15).

Note: Pages 15-18 describe the country; pages 22-25 describe the inside of the house

Writing Prompt

Do you feel the author does a good or bad job of describing the setting? **Write a one-paragraph argument in which you agree or disagree with the author’s descriptions. Introduce your claim and acknowledge the opposing viewpoint. Organize your reasons logically with supporting evidence. Use words and phrases to create cohesion in your writing. Provide a concluding statement, which supports your claim.**

Final Writing Product

Do you think that Carley’s punishment from the court fit his crime?

What do you think of alternative punishments?

Make a list of 3-4 crimes and the punishment you would give someone who committed it (example, person caught doing vandalism must clean the same area they committed the crime in and formally apologize to the owner. Person caught stealing food must work in a community garden to grow food)

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
Popcorn Days and Buttermilk Nights, Day 3



Key Paragraph, p. 28

“David studied me through the pipe smoke. He didn’t stare, just looked. Then a strange thing happened. He turned his face from me and said to Emily, “I think Bets is going to calf tomorrow. She didn’t come in tonight. We should find her and get her home, so we don’t lose the calf to wolves when it comes” (p. 28).

Writing Prompt

Some may say that the kitchen is the heart of the home. As Carley sits in the kitchen and eats dinner he starts to feel like he belong in the family. Part of the reason is that he is part of the discussion between David and Emily and also because the scene takes place in the kitchen. Do you agree that the “kitchen is the heart of a home”?

Write a one-paragraph argument in which you agree or disagree with the above statement. State your claim and acknowledge opposing viewpoints. Give evidence to support your claim. Provide a concluding statement or section that supports your claim.

Final Writing Product

Investigate what it costs per person to prosecute a first time offender.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Popcorn Days and Buttermilk Nights, Day 4



Key Paragraph, p. 41

“Nine years old to my fourteen, Tinker showed me things I had never dreamed could be, a way of living I couldn’t believe at first. Soon I was living the same way—running barefoot through the dust and mud, cleaning fish, tanning in the sun—a way of living that boiled down to just one word, happiness” (p. 41).

Writing Prompt

What is happiness? What does it take to make you happy? In which ways has Carley become happy? Does Happiness come from money or an internal place?

Write a one-paragraph argument in which you define happiness and argue that it comes from money or the things and feelings around you. Introduce your claim. Acknowledge counterclaims. Give details and examples to support your claim. Use examples and evidence to support your claim. Conclude with a statement, which supports your argument.

Final Writing Product Day 4

Investigate what alternative punishments are currently being used and their effectiveness.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
Popcorn Days and Buttermilk Nights, Day 5



Key Paragraph, p. 48

"I knew they were all laughing at me, knew that it was because of the way I looked packed with mud and manure all over, and the hot worm came into my thoughts" (p. 48).

Writing Prompt

Write about a time you knew you were going to get mad ahead of time. What strategies could you use to help control your anger? Remember, change requires 3 things: vision, plan and effort. What could your vision be? Your plan? Write one paragraph in which you defend your plan to another person. Argue that your plan will help you control your anger.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
Popcorn Days and Buttermilk Nights, Day 6



Key Paragraph, p. 52

“‘I’m...’ I was going to say I was sorry, but it struck me that being sorry wasn’t enough” (p. 52).

Writing Prompt

In today’s reading, Carley was heartbroken that he hurt Tinker and let David down. He realized he needed to stay on the farm and was willing to do what it took to mend relationships. Do you agree with Carley that an apology was not enough?

Write a one-paragraph argument in which you defend his need to do more than apologize to Tinker. Introduce your claim and acknowledge the counter claim. Give evidence to support your claim. Use good transitions to create cohesion in your writing. Conclude with a statement, which supports your claim.

Final Writing Product

If you committed a crime (vandalism, curfew, stealing, drugs) what alternative punishment would help you? Explain.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
Popcorn Days and Buttermilk Nights, Day 7



Key Paragraph, p. 66

“...Although I first hated the wheel at first, that soon changed. The wheel became part of me, of maybe I became part of the trip-hammer wheel. It became my part of the smithy. A place for me to be” (p. 66).

Writing Prompt

Carley is appreciating and valuing his ability to learn and become part of something bigger than himself. He knows he has value and he is able to have a “place” where he belongs.

Write a one-paragraph argument in which you defend the need people have to belong. Introduce your claim and acknowledge the opposing viewpoint. Give evidence to support your claim. Use transitions and clauses to create cohesion. Conclude with a statement, which supports your claim.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
Popcorn Days and Buttermilk Nights, Day 8



Key Paragraph, p. 73

“I had never acted what you’d call serious or older than I was, and I didn’t mean to act that way now.

I was just thinking that all these people really need David, and David really needs all these people” (p. 73).

Writing Prompt

In the city it was considered weak to be needed. In the north it is a relationship. David success is directly related to the townspeople and their success is directly related to what he can do to keep their machines running. Which system do you think is better?

Write an argument in which you defend the city system or the country system. Once you make your claim acknowledge the opposing viewpoint. Give evidence to support your claim. Using good transitions and clauses to create cohesion. Conclude with the statement that supports your claim.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
Popcorn Days and Buttermilk Nights, Day 9



Key Paragraph, p. 85

“‘No’ he said, and I realized he was sitting there crying. ‘No we won’t talk about it tomorrow. Talking never did anything about getting anything done. That’s what’s wrong now—everybody talks. No, I am through talking’” (p. 85).

Writing Prompt

Write a 1-paragraph argument in which you defend David’s desire to take action. State your claim and acknowledge the counterclaim. Give examples to support your claim. Conclude with a statement which supports your claim.

Final Writing Product Day 9

Create a Venn Diagram of Carley. In what ways has Carley changed?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
Popcorn Days and Buttermilk Nights, Day 10



Key Paragraph, p. 97

“‘I was down to the state fair in Minneapolis one time,’ he said, smiling up at the Farris wheel frame against the sky. ‘And it was something to see, but it didn’t hold nothing to this. More’n once David has taken the town by surprise. But this...this...I just had to help’” (p. 97).

Writing Prompt

Do you think one person can make a difference? **Write an argument in which you support or oppose one person’s ability to make a difference in a community. State your claim and acknowledge a counter claim. Give examples to support your claim. Use transitions and clauses to create cohesion. Conclude with a statement, which supports your claim.**

Character Based Literacy Program Lesson Plan
Popcorn Days and Buttermilk Nights
Final Writing Product



The final writing product for *Popcorn Days and Buttermilk Nights* is an argument essay. Write a 5-paragraph argument essay in which you agree or disagree with alternative punishments to help rehabilitate lesser criminals. Students need to introduce their claim. Use evidence from the reading and research to support their claim. Use transitions and clauses to create cohesion in their writing. Write using formal style and format. Include a strong conclusion, which supports their initial claim.

On days 2, 3, 4 6 and 9 students wrote or investigated alternative punishments. Have students review that information and pull it together for their final writing product.

- 1st paragraph might begin with what they initially thought about the punishment Carley received for his crime and if they believe in alternative punishments to jail. State your claim to agree or disagree with alternative punishments.
- 2nd, 3rd, and 4th paragraph can give evidence that alternative punishments can help or hinder someone's rehabilitation.
- 5th paragraph will conclude your essay giving support to your initial claim

Final Writing Product Day 2

Do you think that Carley's punishment from the court fit his crime?

What do you think of alternative punishments?

Make a list of 3-4 crimes and the punishment you would give someone who committed it (example, person caught doing vandalism must clean the same area they committed the crime in and formally apologize to the owner. Person caught stealing food must work in a community garden to grow food)

Final Writing Product Day 3

Investigate what it costs per person to prosecute a first time offender.

Final Writing Product Day 4

Investigate what alternative punishments are currently being used and their effectiveness.

Final Writing Product Day 6

If you committed a crime (vandalism, curfew, stealing, drugs) what alternative punishment would help you? Explain

Final Writing Product Day 9

In what ways has Carley changed? Use Venn Diagram if needed.