

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Maze, Day 1



Key Paragraph, p. 6

"The Judge stared at him again. 'Who is Rick Walker?' the judge intoned. 'That is the question.'

Am I supposed to answer this? Rick wondered. What kind of a question is this?

'Answer the question,' the judge demanded.

Rick thought hard. Again he was swimming in confusion. Deep down, he didn't really *know* who he was. He hadn't for a long time. He was angry about that too. That was why he couldn't say he was sorry. It's impossible to say you're sorry, and mean it, when you're angry. He didn't deserve all that had happened to him" (p. 6).

Writing Task

Rick is asked to tell the judge who he is and he doesn't know what to say. Pretend you are Rick. What would you tell the judge when asked?

"Who is _____ your name _____"?

What do you like? Who are your friends? Where do you live? What are you passionate about? Why do you do the things you do?

In one paragraph introduce yourself. As you write support your statements with facts and evidence. Be logical in your writing.

Extend:

Have students write an I Am Poem to explore who they are and what they like. Visit the following link to obtain the I Am Poem format.

http://score.rims.k12.ca.us/score_lessons/symbols_freedom/pages/i_am_poem.html

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Maze, Day 2



Key Paragraph, p. 10-11

“Killian’s almost too sad to talk about,” the librarian replied. “His parents literally treated him like a dog. Kept him chained in the backyard, made him live in a doghouse, fed him out of a dog dish.”

To Rick this seemed too monstrous to comprehend.

‘Were they his foster parents or what?’

‘No, his natural parents.’

Rick said nothing. He would have to think about this. Compared to this, he had been lucky to have been abandoned by his parents to his grandmother.

Mr. B was reading his mind. ‘You had your grandmother,’ the librarian said. ‘That’s why you turned out OK.’

‘Turned out OK?’ Rick repeated sardonically. ‘Look where I am at Mr. B.’

‘You’ll do OK, Rick. You’ll do OK. I have faith in you. Heck, you’re normal!’” (p. 10-11).

Writing Task

“You never know a man until you walk a mile in his shoes.”

Rick is able to put his life in perspective after talking to Mr. B about Killian. Sometimes in order to start change you need to have motivation from someone else. Is it helpful to know that even as bad as you think you have it someone always has it worse?

Are you motivated to change if someone like Mr. B puts your situation in perspective? Write about a mentor or person you know who has helped motivate you to change.

Who is that person? What did they tell you to help you? Why did you listen to them? Is that person still in your life? What do you think would have happened if that person did not come into your life?

Write 1-2 paragraph argument in which you tell about this person. Support your statements with facts and evidences that support your claims. Be organized and logical in your writing. Use credible sources to support your claims.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Maze, Day 3



Key Paragraph, p. 21

“It was deadly ironic, his name being on the cigarettes. Cigarettes had killed his grandmother. She’d told him when she was dying that it was the cigarettes” (p. 21).

Writing Task

Rick’s name is on the cigarettes. This means that the guards will give the older kids packs of cigarettes to beat a kid within an inch of their lives. Rick knows that he cannot defend himself.

Being in a position to change means knowing how to get help when needed. Have you ever been in a position that you knew you needed help but didn’t know what to do? Or how to ask someone to help you?

What was the situation?

What did you know you needed to do?

What did you do?

How did the situation turn out?

Would you do it differently next time? How?

In 1-2 paragraphs write an argument that defends the need and ability for a person to ask for help and assistance. Be clear and logical; defend your position with facts and evidence. Introduce the opposing viewpoint. Close with a strong statement that defends your position.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Maze, Day 4



Key Paragraph, p. 26

“It worked. For twenty or thirty minutes the pickup sped along the highway. Then it turned onto badly washboard grave. Rick kept peeking out the sides, trying to figure out where he was going. The truck was crossing flat mesas, crawling in and out of canyons. Had he just made another mistake? He had a bad feeling this wasn’t going to get him anywhere that was going to help him. After several hours the road got so bad that he reached for a twelve pack of toilet paper to sit on” (p. 26).

Writing Task

Rick’s situation seems to be getting worse. He has left the detention center. He was left in the middle of the desert. He climbed into a truck that seems to be driving further and further away from anyone who can help him.

What advice would you give Rick to help him? Should he get out and run or stay with the truck? Is there someplace you can think of that he could go to get help? Do you think Rick is doing the right thing?

Based on your answer to the last question above, take the opposing viewpoint and write a one-paragraph argument. Argue if Rick is doing the right/wrong thing. Give evidence that supports your claim. Be logical in your writing. Conclude with what you think Rick should do and why.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Maze, Day 5



Key Paragraph p. 37

"He missed his grandmother, more than he'd allowed himself to miss her in a long time. He could remember her voice, her eyes. She hadn't been that old when she died, only forty-seven. Her hair wasn't even gray.

'Life isn't fair,' he's pointed out to her once, on the subject of his mother.

'Tough beans, kid,' his grandmother replied. 'How can *life* be fair? Only people can be fair'" (p. 37).

Writing Task

Rick is remembering his grandmother. He was fortunate to have a great human in his life to take care of him when his mother wasn't around. She says to him, "*Tough beans, kid. How can life be fair? Only people can be fair.*"

Respond to the above statement. Do you agree or disagree with the statement? Do you think she is right when she says that to Rick? Does she speak with wisdom or is she being hard on him? Would you give the same advice? Why? Would you tell Rick something else? What?

Write a 2-3 paragraph argument in which you respond to the statement, "*Tough beans, kid. How can life be fair? Only people can be fair.*" State if you agree or disagree with the statement. Using facts and evidence support your viewpoint. Acknowledge the opposing viewpoint. Use clear and concise writing with good organization. In your final statement re-iterate your viewpoint.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Maze, Day 6



Key Paragraph, p. 44

“Rick was relieved that the man was lightening up. Maybe this was a chance to try and be friendly. ‘So what part of Arizona is this?’

‘Arizona?’ There was surprise and a bit of mockery in the man’s deep reverberating baritone. ‘You’re in Utah, kid. Canyonlands National Park. You’re at the edge of the Maze and about ten miles west from where the Green River joins the Colorado. You probably saw the Colorado down at the end of your little ride.’

‘Maze,’ Rick asked. ‘Like rats in a maze?’”

‘That’s right,’ the man said with a wry twist of humor creeping across his face, ‘and you’re the rat’” (p. 44).

Writing Task

At a young age Rick has been through a tremendous amount. His mom has left him. His grandmother died. He was placed in foster care. He was given a harsh sentence for throwing rocks at a sign. Rick’s life was in danger while in custody. He escaped to one of the most remote places on earth.

Rick feels like he is a rat trapped in a maze. Why do you think that is an accurate description for where he is at right now? Have you ever been in a situation like Rick where you kept trying new things and hitting dead ends? What do you think Rick should do to get out of his Maze and continue on with life?

Write a 2-3 paragraph argument in letter form to Rick. Address him formally. Explain to him that you understand his situation BUT it won’t change if he continues to make impulse decisions. Argue that he can learn something from his situation right now. Be specific. Give facts and evidence to support your claim. Close with a strong statement that supports your viewpoint.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Maze, Day 7



Key Paragraph, p. 51

"A minute later Rick came across a yellow mountain bike behind the tents. It was a Diamondback, the same brand he's admired in the ads in bike magazines in Mr. B.'s library. There were also two plastic tubs around twenty feet long, with screw in lids. He wondered what was inside but didn't attempt to open them.

On a bicycle, Rick thought, he could make it back to Hanksville easily. Lon hadn't told him about the bike. Should he take it right now?

Maybe he should wait a few days until the search for him died down. Then go.

Go where? The coast of California. Fort Bragg. And do what? Hide out in a sea cave? His grandmother was gone. Dead ends everywhere he turned" (p. 51).

Writing Task

Sometimes we know we have to change but don't know where to start. Rick knows he has to do something. But, he doesn't know what to do next. Think about your life. If you could change one thing right now what would it be?

Write a one paragraph argument. In which you argue for change in your life. State what one thing you would change, it can be real or imagined. Why do you think that one thing is important? How do you think your life would be different if you changed that one thing? Support your argument with logical reasons and evidence. Make clear connections between your statements and reasons. Close with a strong conclusion that reiterates your need for change.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Maze, Day 8



Key Paragraph, p. 64

“Oh, yeah, he’s special. The day we released them—just ten days ago—he flew out to that pinnacle he’s on right now. That was quite a feat for a condor fledgling. I mean flying off the edge of a cliff with nothing but eight hundred feet of air under your wings, when you’ve only flown shorts burst in a pen . . . that takes guts even for a juvenile, who’s naturally long on stupidity” (p. 64).

Writing Task

Lon talks about M4 and how on his first flight he took an enormous risk. It is interesting that a bird in nature would behave much like a teenage human. These traits are similar across species and cultures.

Why do you think teenagers and young adults (ages 13-25) engage in high-risk behavior? Why do teens naturally try pushing limits? What are teens and young adults trying to find out? Why is this a hard time for teens and young adults? What kinds of things do teens do across cultures that relate to becoming a young adult?

Write 1-2 paragraph argument in which you either support or oppose the tendency for teens to engage in high-risk behaviors, sports, activities, and rite of passages. Introduce your viewpoint. As you write acknowledge that there are other viewpoints. Compare and contrast the two using logic and reasoning. Conclude with a strong statement that defends your position.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Maze, Day 9



Key Paragraph, p. 74-75

“Drive? Drive Where?”

‘Up the dug way, for starters—the switchbacks up the plateau.’

‘You’re kidding.’

‘If I remember correctly, that’s what you were in the process of doing yesterday morning. You might be helpful around here if you could drive’” (p. 74-75).

Writing Task

Change requires a vision, plan, and effort.

Change requires changing bad habits to good habits.

Change requires one step at a time.

Do you think Rick or anyone can change without having a purpose?

Why is belief in something bigger than yourself helpful when you are considering change? Can you change without replacing the bad habits with something new?

Choose a position. You can change without a purpose and plan OR you cannot change without having a purpose and plan. Write 2-3 paragraphs in which you argue your point. Introduce the opposing view and support your argument with logic, reasons, and evidence. Conclude by re-stating your position.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Maze, Day 10



Key Paragraph, p. 88

“Do you ever have flying dreams?”

‘All the time, but now they are hang gliding dreams. When I was a kid I would hover with my arms out wide. All the wings I needed were my outstretched arms.’

‘Where people always motioning for you to come down?’

‘All the time. They thought I was going to crash. They couldn’t believe I could really fly.’

‘What do those flying dreams really mean?’

‘...I have my own theory: Flying dreams signify the desire to fly’ (p. 88).

Writing Task

Do you think Rick’s dreams are just that dreams? Do you think Rick could learn to fly? Would that help him make changes in his life? How do you think flying could help Rick change?

Is there something you used to like to do but don’t participate in anymore? Why? Do you think that activity would help you change? For the positive for the negative? How? Is there something you would like to do that you think would help you change?

Write a paragraph about the things you could start or stop doing to help you change. In another paragraph argue why you need to keep or purge that activity for change. Support your claim with evidence either real or made up. Conclude by stating how you or your life would be altered with or without that activity.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Maze, Day 11



Key Paragraph, p. 100

“Rick couldn’t help it, he’d started to care about the condors himself. Maybe because they were outcasts and the odds were against them.

Rick couldn’t help it but he started to care about the man too, whatever his real name was—even if he was damaged somehow and more than a little strange. The man and the birds and Rick Walker, they were all damaged goods” (p. 100).

Writing Task

Rick sees himself, the birds, and Lon as damaged goods. Think about the following:

Do you think Lon sees himself and the birds that way?

Is it possible that we are all damaged goods but that damage is what causes us to be unique individuals?

Could we survive if we did not all have adversity?

Why is it important to know your strengths and weaknesses before you try to change?

Write a 2-3 paragraph formal letter to Rick explaining that he is not damaged goods. Use logic and reasoning to argue that he is not damaged and that his path is different from others. Give evidence from your own experiences to convey your case. Introduce the opposing viewpoint. Be logical and organized as you give your reasons. Conclude with a strong statement supporting your opinion.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Maze, Day 12



Key Paragraph, p. 104

“The condor was looking all around like a big kid lost in a big city.

‘He looks clueless,’ Rick said.

‘He may be an orphan but he’s got some instincts. He’s been looking at the landscape for six weeks. He knows that those cliffs back there are his home base’” (p. 104).

Writing Task

Lon knows that M4 knows his environment and where he is safe. Lon has a choice to make. He could capture M4 and take him back to a safe place or he can let him try and figure it out on his own.

Some things to think about

Compare your learning to M4’s. Do you learn better if you try things on your own or if someone shows you what to do each time? Is it important to make mistakes in order to learn what to do the next time? Do you have someone like Lon in your life? Some one who will let you fly on your own—but is there to help you when you get in trouble? Who is that person?

Write a one-sentence statement about the way you learn, your learning style, (someone telling you something, doing it, or a combination of both).

Choose one of the other styles that you did not describe how you learn.

Write a 1-2 paragraph argument in which you argue on behalf of that style. How could that style be beneficial? Write a clear opening, state facts about that style, and support it with good logic and reasoning.

NOTE: You are arguing on behalf of an opposing viewpoint.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Maze, Day 13



Key Paragraph, p. 120-121

"Rick was surprised by the man's reaction, by the anger in his voice.

'Can I stay here until Josh comes back?'

'Of course you can. I don't know if I'm going to be able to do more for you than buy you a little time. . . I have to start thinking about it.'

Rick was shaking his head.

'I am not asking you to.'

'I know you're not. What happens to you matters to me, Rick. That's the way it is'" (p. 120-121).

Writing Task

Rick is finally comfortable enough to tell Lon his story. Rick is starting to change. What do you think Rick should do next?

Write a formal proposal to Rick. In it argue based on facts from the book, and your experiences what you think he should do next. Give him two good options and support those options with good logical reasons. Calculate the positive and negative outcome of each.

Do you think he should turn himself in?

Trust Lon's advice?

What advice would you give Rick about his situation?

Can he run forever? What will happen if he tries?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Maze, Day 14



Key Paragraph p. 130

“...I thought everyone had it in for me, and that the world was nothing but closed doors.”

‘It is,’ said Rick.

‘Those doors are in your outlook.’

‘What, Blue Canyon isn’t real?’

‘Sure it’s real. But you have to play the hand you’re dealt, Rick. You aren’t the first kid that’s ever been wronged, you know. Take a number, get in line...I’m saying it’s time to move on, find your way into the clear, where you can shape your own life. I think you’re getting mired down in your own personal tar pit. You need to focus on where you want to go and how you’re going to get there’” (p. 130).

Writing Task

What is Lon trying to get Rick to do? How do you think a plan will help Rick? Think about a change you would like for yourself.

Write a one-sentence statement about your change. Write a 1-paragraph argument in which you defend your change. Be logical and give reasons for it. Then answer the following questions:

What is your plan?

List three things you can do to help achieve your goal?

Are there people who can help you? Who?

How and when do you ask for help?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Maze, Day 15



Key Paragraph, p. 137

“Climbing out of the Maze close to twilight exactly where he had entered, Rick was pleased with himself. This was easy compared to his personal maze, which didn’t seem to have a single exit. Any path he picked was going to lead him back to Blue Canyon. It was only a matter of time” (p. 137).

Writing Task

Rick is still overwhelmed at his “Maze”. Although he has options, at this point he still only sees one final consequence; Blue Canyon. Based on what you have read so far do you think Rick has changed? How do you think those changes could help him when he returns to the judge? Based on where we are in the unit do you think you have changed? Have you seen growth in your goals? Have you changed your attitude about Rick? Environmental issues? Seen a value in animal release projects?

Write a paragraph about one attitude or thing you wanted to change at the beginning of the unit or book. What was it? What have you done to change it on a daily basis? Did something happen to change your mind or point-of-view?

Write one paragraph arguing that the change you made was of value to you. Explain using logic and reasons how this change has affected you or others.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Maze, Day 16



Key Paragraph, p. 154-155

“Lon shrugged. ‘It’s about you. I am going to drive you out. I’ve been thinking about it all day.’

‘Drive me where?’

‘All the way to Reno. Try to get a hearing with the judge who sent you to Blue Canyon. I intend to stand up for you.’

Rick didn’t know what to say. He would have never guessed that Lon would leave his condors.

‘You don’t have to do that,’ he mumbled. Here was a glimpse of hope” (p. 154-155).

Writing Task

Lon decides it is time to drive Rick out and work with the judge in Blue Canyon. Lon realizes that Rick will need help in the court. Why do you think that Lon wants to help Rick?

If you were Lon would you be willing to help someone like Rick, why or why not? Write a 3 paragraph paper in which you:

Describe your relationship to Rick. Explain to her the growth you have seen in Rick in a short amount of time? Argue that he needs a second chance or an alternate sentence. Give examples from the book on Rick’s changes. Give reasons that support your claim. Use clear and concise language and logic.

OR

The final writing product for *The Maze* is an I Search Paper. The I Search Lesson Plans are broken down over a two-week period to give students an opportunity to work on them over time. Lesson plans for the I Search are located at the end of week 5 plans.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Maze, Day 17



Key Paragraph, p. 157

“In the morning everything looked a little different. In the aftermath of flying with Lon, nothing seemed impossible. Surviving Blue Canyon, even that seemed possible” (p. 157).

Writing Task

Rick is the same person in the same situation that he was in yesterday. His circumstances have not changed. His situation is still overwhelming. How did flying with Lon help him change his perspective? Is there something you could do to help you make change in your life? Is there a way to break down an impossible task and make it seem more possible?

Write a paragraph and argue/present why it is important to break a large and impossible task into smaller more doable steps. Give the counter argument of what could happen if you fail to act. Convince your reader using logic and reason that this process works. You can cite examples from your own life or experiences you know of.

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Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Maze, Day 18



Key Paragraph, p. 175-176

“Rick was stunned. He hadn’t imagined they’d just leave him there. They knew his life was in danger. He tried desperately to climb the slick pitch—once, twice, three times. Each time he peeled off. The holds just weren’t there. ‘Hey,’ he yelled, sure the men would be standing by, enjoying his predicament. ‘Hey, quit fooling around!’

...Rick heard nothing but the booming and rumble of thunder. Suddenly he knew better than to think they were fooling around. This was pure malice, inexplicable but no less real” (p. 175-176).

Writing Task

Rick finds himself in a horrible situation. He has worked hard to change and learn to trust people. His life is in danger and he has to rely on Nuke and Gunderson to help save him. They want him to fail. This is a pitfall that often happens when people try to change. There will always be people who don’t want to support you and people who you can count on.

Think about a time you wanted to make changes but your friends or family pulled you back down. What was the change you were trying to make? What did they do to sabotage you? What did you learn from that situation? Next time you try to change, who are you going to surround yourself with? Do you think that a mentor will be a better person to support you?

Write a 2-paragraph argument in which you address your family and friends. In your first paragraph tell them about the change you are trying to make. In your second paragraph argue/convince them that you need their support. Use logic and reasons to convey that your change is important to you. Acknowledge the opposing viewpoint and give reasons why/how you can overcome those issues. Use this as an opportunity to convince your reader that they need to support you. Conclude with a strong statement supporting your viewpoint.

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Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Maze, Day 19



Key Paragraph, p. 192

“Forget M1, Lon.”

‘I can’t,’ the biologist insisted. ‘I’d be down to four. Every condor is too essential, you know that. I’ve got a fair chance of netting her if I can locate her’” (p. 192).

Writing Task

Rick wants Lon to forget the condor and to save himself. However, he knows in his heart there is too much to lose. Lon wants Rick to see the big picture and realize that sometimes there are things bigger than you. Sometimes it is a condor, your family, or faith.

In order to change do you need to believe in something bigger than yourself? Can you change your mental beliefs without changing your core beliefs?

Write 1-2 paragraphs in which you argue the following: Do you agree or disagree that you need something bigger than yourself to believe in in order to change? Why or why not? What do you believe in to help you change? How does your system work for you? Give reasons to support your argument. Be logical and reasoned. Convince your reader that you do or do not need something bigger than yourself to believe in, in order to change.

EXTEND: Trade your paper with a partner. Read what they wrote. In 1-2 paragraphs write a counter argument to what they wrote.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Maze, Day 20



Key Paragraph p. 202

"He had to catch a thermal.

Was he crazy to think he could do that?

From the tandem flight they'd made together, he could remember the turbulence inside the thermal all too vividly. He didn't know if he could control the glider in that kind of turbulence, but he should be strong enough. He thought he could. And if he thought he could, he had to try" (p. 202).

Writing Task

Rick knows that he is Lon's last chance. He and Lon have a strong friendship and respect for one another. Rick finally cares for something and someone more than himself. He is willing to risk his life.

Write a short paragraph in which you argue the need for friends and friendship. Use examples from the book and your life to support your claim. Give reasons and examples in a logical fashion.

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Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Maze, Day 21



Key Paragraph, p. 219

“It was nearly midnight when Josh’s headlights appeared on the dugway. Rick wanted to cry for joy, but he couldn’t. There was no escaping what would come next” (p. 219).

Writing Task

Rick has been through a major ordeal, he has risked his life to save another and for the condor project. He should be happy but he is not. He has to now face the consequences of his actions.

Write Rick a formal letter. In 1-2 paragraphs of your letter argue that he has done the right thing and made the right choices while in *The Maze*. Give him reasons that support your claim. Use language that helps your letter flow. In your last paragraph, if you could give him advice before he goes to court what would you tell him to do? Can this experience help Rick in court? Is there anything he can take from his experiences to help him? Should he have people stand up for him? Who? Explain to Rick how these things can help him.

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Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Maze, Day 22



Key Paragraph, p. 225

“‘Since my grandmother died,’ he began, ‘four years ago, I’ve been like a rat in a maze.’

‘Not a pretty image,’ the judge remarked, ‘but descriptive.’

‘Yes sir. I was only trying to survive, and kept running into dead ends. But I don’t feel like that anymore, thanks to this man.’

Rick glanced briefly to his right, caught a glimpse of the scar, looked back to the judge. ‘I am out of that maze now, sir. I am free to make something of myself.’

‘If you were to be returned to detention, wouldn’t you be back in that maze again?’

‘Not in my mind’” (p. 225).

Writing Task

Rick realized that he created many of his hurdles himself. Much of his maze was real but much of it was created in his head. He had restricted himself from living. We all place restrictions on ourselves. What do you do to talk yourself out of doing something positive? What can you do to change that behavior? Are there people who can help build you up? Is it a risk to become friends with those people? Why?

Write a paragraph where you discuss the things that hold you back mentally and emotionally. What can you do to free yourself from those thoughts to make change? Write an argument in which you defend the actions you take to be free from “hold-ups”. Be sure to give reasons and be logical in your writing. Conclude with a strong statement that convinces your reader that you need to have a good mental attitude in order to change.

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