

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Jungle, Day 1



Key Paragraph p. 7

“Chicago and its saloons and its slums fade away—there are green meadows and sunlit rivers, mighty forests and snow-clad hills. They behold home landscapes and childhood scenes returning; old loves and old friendships waken, old joys and griefs to laugh and to weep” (p 7).

Writing Prompt

The family and guests are moved by the music at the celebration. They are taken from the slums of Chicago to a more innocent and pleasant time. How does music help people remember? What role does music play in celebrations? Do you think it is relevant for people to appreciate and know all different types of music?

Write a 2-3 paragraph argumentative paper in which you answer the following question, do you think it is relevant for people to appreciate and know all different types of music? Explain your position and support it with facts and good reasoning.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Jungle, Day 2



Key Paragraph, p. 34

“To the two who stood watching while the darkness swallowed it up, it seemed a dream of wonder, with its tale of human energy, of things being done, of employment for thousands and thousands of men, of opportunity and freedom, of life and love and joy. When they came away, arm and arm, Jurgis was saying, “tomorrow I shall go there and get a job” (p. 34).

Writing Prompt

Jurgis and his family were chasing the “American Dream”. They were awestruck by Packingtown. They were in awe of the story and the enterprising spirit. They were chasing the dream—freedom, life and love and joy. Their plan was to get a job and to succeed. Do you think they were prepared for “the dream”? Or do you think they needed to have more information to find success?

Write a 2-3 paragraph argument to either support or oppose Jurgis’s plan for success. Explain what you think they need to do to have a better opportunity at success. If you think their plan is adequate, predict the family’s outcome for the novel. Use evidence from the text, to point out their strengths and weaknesses, and your experiences to defend your claim.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Jungle, Day 3



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Writing Prompt

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Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Jungle, Day 4



Key Paragraph, p. 48

“Marija had nothing to take with her save her two brawny arms and the word “job”, laboriously learned; but with these she had marched about Packingtown all day, entering every door where they were signs of activity. Out of some she had been ordered out with curses; but Marija was not afraid of man or devil, and asked everyone she saw...” (p. 48)

Writing Prompt

In every industry or location there is a process for asking for work. Sometimes it is very formal other times it is informal and just “happens”. Prior to looking for work do you think that Marija should have studied the customs and process in order to be more successful?

Write a 3 paragraph argument in which you describe the process that Marija used to find work, explain what she could have done to better prepare in her search. Why do you think industries have standards when they are hiring employees? Explain and defend why standards are important when hiring? Be logical in your writing giving reasons and evidence. Use a variety of words, phrases, and syntax in your writing. Make sure there is a relationship between claims and counterclaims as you write.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Jungle, Day 5



Key Paragraph, p. 79

“You are like the rest’, she said;
 ‘They trick you and eat you alive. They never sell the houses without interest. Go get your deed, and see.’ Then with a horrible sinking of the heart, Teta Elizabeth unlocked her bureau and brought out the paper that had already caused them so many agonies. Now they sat round, scarcely breathing, while the old lady, who could read English, ran over it.
 ‘Yes,’ she said, finally, ‘here it is, of course:’ ‘With interest thereon monthly, at the rate of seven per cent per annum’” (p. 79).

Writing Prompt

There is a saying, “the large print giveth, the small print taketh away.” The old woman informs the family that they also owe the bank interest on their home. This information is in their deed and was part of their purchase agreement. Do you think the family had a responsibility to know what they were purchasing and all of the costs that go along with it or do you think they were victims?

Do you agree or disagree that the family had the responsibility of determining all of the costs associated with purchasing their home? Write 2-3 paragraphs argument in which you support or oppose the need for personal responsibility in this situation. Give evidence for your claim and point out the counterclaim. Use your writing as an opportunity to change your reader’s perspective of the situation. Make sure you include a strong conclusion that supports your thesis.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Jungle, Day 6



Key Paragraph, pg. 90

“The new hands were here by the thousands. All day long the gates of the packing-houses were besieged by starving and penniless men; they came, literally, by the thousands every single morning, fighting with each other for a chance for life” (p. 90).

Writing Prompt

Packingtown attracted workers by the thousands. There were thousands of starving people wanting to work. The factory owners knew it. Therefore they could pay less money since people were desperate.

How does the influx of cheap labor affect pay? Because people were desperate to work what is the best way to change the labor conditions?

Write a 2-3 paragraph argument in which you detail the labor problem in Packingtown as you see it. Explain what the three major issues are. What would you do to correct them? Connect the issues with evidence that supports your claim from the text and from experience.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Jungle, Day 7



Key Paragraph, p. 109

“The people of Chicago saw the government inspectors in Packingtown, and they all took that to mean that they were protected from diseased meat; they did not understand that these hundreds and sixty-three inspectors had been appointed at the request of the packers, and that there were paid by the United States Government to certify that all the diseased meat was kept in the state” (p. 109).

Writing Prompt

The people of Chicago were relying on the meat inspectors to protect them from the diseased product. Do you think that the people have a responsibility in this issue? If the consumer didn't want the cheapest prices available do you think manufacturers would cut so many corners?

Write 1 paragraph argument in which you agree or disagree with the role the public has to keep themselves safe from the government. Be clear and concise. Detail where responsibility begins and ends with the public, wanting cheap product, and the manufacturers trying to make a profit. Why is this topic significant today? Be logical, give evidence and reasons for your opinion.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Jungle, Day 8



Key paragraph, pg. 123

“Perhaps, Jurgis thought, that this was intended to signify to Jurgis that this was his baby; that it was his and Ona’s, to care for all its life. Jurgis had never possessed anything nearly so interesting—a baby was, when you came to think about it, assuredly a marvelous possession. It would grow up to be a man, a human soul, with a personality all its own, a will of its own!” (p. 123)

Writing Prompt

This passage relates what an awesome responsibility having a child is. Jurgis, like many people didn’t consider the lifelong commitment children are. Do you think Jurgis and Ona were/are equipped to be parents? Do you think that they are prepared to meet the mental, physical, and spiritual needs of a child? Should people be able to meet a human minimum prior to having children?

Write 2-3 paragraph argument in which you state you introduce your knowledge on your claim. Why is your claim significant? Be organized, logical, give evidence to support your claim? Conclude by supporting your argument.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Jungle, Day 9



Key paragraph, pg. 142

“The particular bitterness of all this was that Jurgis saw so plainly the meaning of it. In the beginning he had been fresh and strong, and he had gotten a job the first day; but now he was second hand, a damaged article, so to speak, and they did not want him. They had got the best out of him,—they had worn him out, with their speeding —up and their carelessness, and not they had thrown him away!” (p. 142)

Writing Prompt

Jurgis had started his life in Packingtown so idealistic and positive. He was going to work and he was going to support his family. He only relied on his body. He never was in a position to have a plan B. He is now older, has been sick, and poor. He is and looked damaged. Now he has been thrown away. What do you think he should have done to prepare for this as a possible outcome? What do you think he should do now? Do you think there is a need to constantly learn, train, and better yourself to prepare for such an accident? (Think about professional athletes—what they do after they retire).

Write a 2-3 paragraph argument explaining the need for persons to be “cross trained” to be a variety of different things to lessen the fiscal and emotional impact in case a job or career is lost. How do you intend on preparing for your “back-up” plan. As you write develop your claim and your counter claim fairly. Include the strengths and limitations for each side of the argument. Give reasons and evidence to support your claims for each viewpoint.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Jungle, Day 10



Key paragraph, p. 156

“They knew they were beaten; they had lost the game, they were swept aside. It was not less tragic because it was sordid, because that it had to do with wages and grocery bills and rents. They had dreamed of freedom; of a chance to look about them and learn something; to be decent and clean, to see their child grow up to be strong. And now it was all gone—it would never be! They had played the game and they had lost” (p. 156).

Writing Prompt

The family realizes that their opportunity did not turn out the way they had imagined it. Do you think that the dream they were chasing was based on reality? “*Come to America, the streets are paved in gold!*” Do you think they could have changed their outcome if they would have approached their move more logically? Based on the definition of change above—do you think they could have changed their outcome if they would have made plans to change their situation with a vision, plan, and effort?

Write one sentence in which you state your position on the family’s ability to change their circumstances as defined above. Write a 2-3 paragraph argument in which you defend the opposite claim then the one you just stated. Be fair; give evidence that supports your writing. Show a relationship between your claims and the evidence that supports them. Remember you are writing the opposite viewpoint.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Jungle, Day 11



Key paragraph, p. 175-176

“...he began to see beyond his momentary gratification; that he had nearly killed the boss who would not help Ona—not the horrors that she had borne, not the memory that would haunt her all her days. It would not feed her and her child; she would certainly lose her place, while he—what was to happen to him God only knew” (p. 175-176).

Writing Prompt

Everyone in this specific situation made horrible decisions. The boss chose to blackmail a poor employee so he could have “relations” with her. Ona’s supervisor chose to ignore the situation. Ona chose to not tell her family and try to keep everyone happy. Jurgis chose to go and beat a man. None of these characters acted in a responsible manner.

Write a 3-4 paragraph argument in which you choose one of the characters. Explain what their role in this situation was. Explain what action they should have taken based on the situation as it is presented. Why is this action significant? Supply evidence that supports your viewpoint from the text or experiences. Extrapolate how you think the outcome of the situation would/could have been if ONE person would have made a different choice?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Jungle, Day 12



Key paragraph, p. 186

“He seated himself on the floor with his back to the wall and his legs crossed, and went on talking easily; he soon put Jurgis on a friendly footing—he was evidently a man of the world, used to getting on, and not too proud to hold a conversation with a mere laboring man” (p. 186).

Writing Prompt

Jack is a small character in today’s reading and despite the obvious flaws in his character has many positive traits. He was a real “human” to Jurgis. Do you think a man or woman can be a criminal and still be a positive person?

Write a reasoned and logical argument in which you support and condone the ability of criminals to be “good” people. Use as many details and examples as possible to support your point of view. Develop your claim fairly. Give evidence to support the strengths and limitations of both claims. Your paper should be 3-4 paragraphs. Conclude by supports your viewpoint on the argument.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Jungle, Day 13



Key paragraph, p. 203

“He and his family, helpless woman and children struggling to live, ignorant and defenseless and forlorn as they were—and he enemies that had been lurking for them, crouching upon their trail and thirsting for their blood!” (p. 203).

Writing Prompt

It is agreed that Jurgis and his family are victims on many levels. They were taken advantage of by the agent and lied to about the house. However, they still had a responsibility to investigate the situation and read all of the documents before they signed them.

They were overworked and underpaid. The employers did what they could to make a maximum profit for their investors. Do you think they should have investigated the wages and jobs before coming to a new country? Could they have immigrated to another area that was not overpopulated with immigrant labor and made better wages? Many of these issues are prevalent today. Think about the housing crisis of 2008 and the current jobless rates. What roles do individuals have to be responsible for their actions?

Write 2-3 paragraphs in which you explain with detail the role that the family played in their situation? Give a reasoned argument describing why buyers should be responsible for their own purchases and decisions. Be clear, concise, and objective. You can reference current events to support your claim.

Extend: To extend this writing trade your paper with another classmate who has the opposite claim. Write a rebuttal argument in which you give an opposing claim. Supply your reader with evidence. Be logical and organized as you write. Create a relationship between your partners writing and yours.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Jungle, Day 14



Key paragraph, p. 220

“She said not a word of reproach—she and Marija had chosen that course before; she would only plead with him, here by the corps of his dead wife. Already Elzbieta had choked down her tears, grief being crowded out of her soul by fear. She had to bury one of her children—but then she had done it three times before, and each time risen up and gone back to take up the battle for the rest. Elzbieta was one of the primitive creatures: like the angleworm, which goes on living though cut in half; like a hen, which, deprived of her chickens one by one, will mother the last that is left her. She did this because of her nature—she asked no questions about the justice of it, nor the worthiness of life in which destruction and death ran riot” (p. 220).

Writing Prompt

The description of Elzbieta is very telling. She has lost a tremendous amount and buried three children. She never complains she focuses on those who are left and does her best to continue to survive and continue to help the others survive. She is a silent warrior.

Write 1 descriptive paragraph about Elzbieta’s character. Use the information from today’s reading and other facts you have learned about her.

Write a 2-3 paragraph argument in which you analyze her ability to trudge forward after tragedy, is that sign of responsibility? Give details to support your reasons and the counterclaim, why are each significant? Be organized, logical, and sequential.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Jungle, Day 15



Key paragraph, p. 238

“He would sit down and listen and stare at him and give vent to delighted exclamations—“*Palauk! Muma! Tu mano szirdele!*” The little fellow was now really the one delight that Jurgis had in the world—his one hope, his one victory. Thank God, Antanas was a boy!” (p. 238)

Writing Prompt

Antanas is described as Jurgis’s one hope and victory. His son is his hope and dream for the future. What do you consider your victory? Why is it important to have a victory?

Write 1 paragraph in which you describe your best victory. In another paragraph write an argument in which you defend the need to have one victory to hold on to. Give evidence from the text and experiences that support your logic and reasoning. Make sure you close with a strong statement that supports your claim.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Jungle, Day 16



Key paragraph, p. 261

“They were trying to save their souls—and who but a fool could fail to see that all that was the matter with their souls was that they had not been able to get a decent existence for their bodies” (p. 261).

Writing Prompt

Jurgis’s view of their situation was pretty simple. His soul was fine. It could be saved but because he was being denied his basic needs to survive he struggled. Do you think that Jurgis’s would be better off if he had his basic needs met? Do you think it is possible for a person to worry about their spiritual needs and existence if they don’t get enough to eat?

Do you agree or disagree with this statement, “People have to have their basic needs met before they can move on to help others and themselves.” Write a 3-4 paragraph argument to in which you state your viewpoint giving evidence to support your claim and the counterclaim fairly, giving evidence for both. What are the strengths and limitations only focusing on only one need at a time for Jurgis? Close with a strong statement that supports your claim. Use this as an opportunity to call people to action to meet the basic needs of the people of Packingtown.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Jungle, Day 17



Key paragraph, p. 290

“...strange as it may seem, he did a great deal less drinking than he had as a working-man. He had not the same provocations of exhaustion and hopelessness; he had now something to work for, to struggle for. He soon found that is he kept his wits about him, he would come upon new opportunities” (p. 290)...

Writing Prompt

Jurgis has learned that he can be more successful when he has a purpose. He has found a cause that gives him value. He is part of something. Why is it important to be part of something bigger than yourself?

Explain why being a contributing member (of something) is important. Give examples that support your opinion—either from the text or your life. Write 1-2 paragraphs that give support to your thesis. Be logical in your writing. In another 1-2 paragraphs share with the reader the opposing viewpoint based on the text. What can happen if you are not part of something bigger than yourself?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Jungle, Day 18



Key paragraph, p. 310

“We all go back or none of us do!” cried a hundred voices. And the other shook his fist at them, and shouted, “You went out of here like cattle, and like cattle you’ll come back!” (p. 310)

Writing Prompt

There is anger between the two sides of the strike. The union leaders expect all of the workers to be reemployed. The packinghouse is angered that hundreds of workers “stampeded” out. Do you think that the majority of workers know what the strike is really about? Do you think they know the details of the negotiations? Or do you think they are acting as followers? How can a mob mentality affect the outcome of the negotiations? Why does the union want all of the members to act and not question what is happening? Why is it imperative to know the facts before you act with others?

Write 2-3 paragraphs in which you evaluate both sides of the strike based on evidence you gather from the text. In your final paragraph state which side you agree or disagree with. Give facts from the reading. Try to convince your reader that your side is correct based on evidence and reason.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Jungle, Day 19



Key paragraph, p. 319

“Poor Jurgis was now an outcast and a tramp once more. He was crippled—he was literally crippled as any wild animal which lost its claws, or been torn out of its shell. He had been shorn, at one cut, of all those mysterious weapons whereby he had been able to make a living easily and to escape the consequences of his actions. He could no longer command a job when he wanted it; he could no longer seal with immunity—he must take chances with the common herd” (p. 319).

Writing Prompt

Jurgis has been protected for so long. He has spent much of his time breaking the law or at least bending it to fit his needs. Instead of building relationships he has burnt bridges. He no longer has a support system. He is once again alone and poor. Jurgis continues to make poor decisions and never really come up with a concrete plan. He is happy “getting by”. However, he also wants to be taken care of and have his needs met. Can you have both? Is there a point in time where you have to become a contributing member of a community before you can take from it? What do you think is a leader’s role in a community? What are the roles of community members? Should there only be one leader?

Write a 2-3 paragraph paper in which you define the role of a community leader and a community member. Explain how a leader should lead and if there should only be one?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Jungle, Day 20



Key paragraph, p. 345

“I have known what it is to dare and to aspire, to dream mighty dreams and to see them perish—to see all the fair flowers of my spirit trampled into the mire by the wild beast powers of life” (p. 345).

Writing Prompt

The speaker is trying to relate his life experience to that of the members of the audience. He talks about his dreams and how they have perished. He talks about his spirit being trampled. Is there any guarantee that your dreams are supposed to be fulfilled by society? Is there a point in time in which you have to work, work, and work a little more in order to have your dreams come true? Or are dreams, just that, dreams. Does it mean you are not successful if your dreams don't work out the way you want them too? Does a society owe you?

Define the following terms dream, change (as listed above), and “social justice”. Write a paragraph in which you introduce the three concepts above. How are they related and interdependent on one another?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Jungle, Day 21



Key paragraph, p. 352

“He would be a man, with a will and a purpose; he would have something to fight for, something to die for, if need be! Here were men how would show him and help him; and he would have friends and allies, he would dwell in the sight of justice, and walk arm in arm with power” (p. 352).

Writing Prompt

Jurgis is able to stand up and be a man. He has something he believes in. Do you think he had a similar passion when he was married or when he immigrated. Do you think his fate would have been different if he was filled with the same sort of passion?

Describe in 2-3 paragraphs how you think Jurgis’s fate would have been different if he put the same sort of passion and energy into everything that they stumbled on, his marriage, investigating their home, investigating the wages and cost of living prior to leaving.

In addition start research for your final writing product:

Research social movements of the 19th and 20th century. Some examples are: YMCA, suffrage, farm worker’s rights, civil rights. List 5-7 ideas or things your movement responded to and what change occurred as a result of that movement. What tactics did they use to gain support? Was it effective or not?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Jungle, Day 22



Key Passage, pg. 370

“Some of them drank and some of them swore, and some of them ate pie with their knives; there was only one difference between them and all of the rest of the populace—that they were men with a hope, with a cause to fight for and suffer for” (p. 370).

Writing Prompt

Jurgis is convinced that the men of the socialist party are the only men with hope and who are willing to fight for. Based on your experiences do you think that is fact?

Using the social change movement you chose yesterday. Write 2-3 paragraphs in which you discuss your beliefs on the issue, why is it important to you. Argue that the movement was a value to society. Include the counterclaims. Using reason and logic support each side of the argument with facts.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Jungle, Day 23



Key paragraph, p. 390

"I live on the same earth as the majority, I wear the same shoes and sleep in the same kind of bed; but I do not think the same thoughts, and I do not wish to pay for such thinkers as the majority selects. I wish such things to be left free effort, as at present" (p. 390).

Writing Prompt

The author in this discussion has a strong viewpoint on the ability to have free thoughts. He feels that as a movement socialism controls the thoughts for the majority and the majority has to view things the same way. He feels that although he is similar to the majority of people his thoughts are different and independent and he values that freedom. He goes on to state that if people want to listen to a certain preacher they are free to do so . . . but he has the freedom to choose not to. This is a main difference between capitalism and socialism. Think about the novel and the characters you have met. Would you be willing to relinquish your intellectual property to the majority? Would you be willing to have someone else dictate your thoughts?

Write 2-3 paragraphs in which you explain if you would be willing to give up your ability to think and create (your dreams and ability to change). Explain using examples from the novel to support your opinion.

