

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Art of Keeping Cool, Day 1



Key Passage, p. 8

There are people in this world who are naturally open and easy to know, and there are difficult people, the ones who put up barricades and expect you to climb over them” (p. 8).

Writing Prompt

In today’s reading we are introduced to Elliot, Robert’s cousin, who is hard to get to know and “registers things too deep” (p. 4). **Write 1 explanatory paragraph that explains how you would feel if you had a cousin like Elliot to deal with daily. How would you react to his behavior? Be sure to provide an introduction that presents your feelings, followed by several sentences that present your ideas clearly. Incorporate quotes or details from the text in your writing. Provide a concluding sentence that supports your explanation. In an explanatory paragraph, describe whether Grandpa Saunders is or is not leading with engagement. Be sure to include examples from the text to support your claim. Maintain a formal tone in your writing and provide a concluding sentence for your paragraph that supports your explanation.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Art of Keeping Cool, Day 2



Key Passage, p. 20

“That’s what I said!” Grandpa roared. He cut me off so fast I felt embarrassed and felt the blood come up in my face” (p. 20).

Writing Prompt

From today’s reading, it is clear that Grandpa Saunders is the leader of the family. He sits at the head of the table and becomes loud and angry if anyone disagrees with him. The CBL theme of this novel is Leadership Requires Engagement: “Leaders develop and dedicate their talents to promote the common good...It is making sure that the communities I am a part of are better because I am a part of them.” Do you think that Grandpa Saunders is reflecting this theme?

In an explanatory paragraph, describe whether Grandpa Saunders is or is not leading with engagement. Be sure to include examples from the text to support your claim. Maintain a formal tone in your writing and provide a concluding sentence for your paragraph that supports your explanation.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Art of Keeping Cool, Day 3



Key Passage, p. 25

“Another maddening thing was his fake manners with grown-ups. I couldn’t stand all the ‘pleases’ and ‘thank yous’ he was always pouring on with them, or the way he’d get out of doing chores by making Grandma feel guilty. He’d pretend he wasn’t feeling well, or that his knees were bothering him, some little thing. Then she’d ask me if I minded doing his jobs for him, which I did but what could I say?” (p. 25).

Writing Prompt

In today’s reading, Robert shows frustration when Elliot takes a long time to do something or lies to get out of chores. Pretend you are Robert. **Write 1-2 explanatory paragraphs in a letter to a relative or close friend explaining why Elliot’s actions are sometimes unfair. Use details from today’s reading to present your topic, and use precise language to convey your feelings. Provide a few sentences comparing Robert and Elliot and their style of leadership. Which character shows more concern for the common good? Maintain a formal tone in the letter, and be sure to conclude with a summary that explains your feelings.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Art of Keeping Cool, Day 4



Key Passage

“Suddenly you couldn’t be sure. No one knew what the Germans were thinking or what they might be planning. If they were crazy enough to be invading everywhere else, why not here too?”

Writing Prompt

In today’s reading, Robert meets Abel Hoffman, the famous painter. His reaction to the artist is very different than his cousin’s. Create a 2-column table that covers the way that Robert and Elliot react to meeting Abel Hoffman. **After describing the way that they behaved, provide 1-2 explanatory sentences about why you believe each boy acted the way they did. You may use details and quotations from the text to clarify your ideas. Who was the better leader in the situation? Remember leadership requires engagement and promoting the common good. Be sure to provide a title and headings for each column of your table.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Art of Keeping Cool, Day 5



Key Passage, p. 50

“That set me straight fast. I was sorry I’d ever brought the subject up. From then on, I didn’t talk about Dad. I still wondered about him, though, and kept my eyes and ears open around the house for stray pieces of information that might solve the puzzle” (p. 50).

Writing Prompt

In today’s reading, Robert meets Abel Hoffman, the famous painter. His reaction to the artist is very different than his cousin’s. Create a 2-column table that covers the way that Robert and Elliot react to meeting Abel Hoffman. **After describing the way that they behaved, provide 1-2 explanatory sentences about why you believe each boy acted the way they did. You may use details and quotations from the text to clarify your ideas. Who was the better leader in the situation? Remember leadership requires engagement and promoting the common good. Be sure to provide a title and headings for each column of your table.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Art of Keeping Cool, Day 6



Key Passage, p. 60

“He was right about this brush. Underneath, we found a long slit that had been cut in the fence. Someone had been going in and out. We checked around to see if anyone was watching, then went through ourselves, pulling the brush over it again. We kept walking, staying close to the embankment so we couldn’t be seen from above. After a while, I told Elliot to wait a minute. I wanted to check where we were” (p. 60).

Writing Prompt

In today’s reading, the boys explore an area that is off-limits to residents of Sachem’s Head. They disregard a sign explaining that entry is forbidden and climb under the fence anyway. Are Robert and Elliot being leaders when they disobey the military signs, or are they being careless? Will they get caught?

In 1 explanatory paragraph, explain whether or not the boys are leaders who promote the common good and civil engagement. Refer to details from the text to support your explanation. Maintain a formal tone in your writing, and use precise language to explain your ideas. Conclude your writing with a summary of your explanation.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Art of Keeping Cool, Day 7



Key Passage, p. 66

“‘Holy smoke, he knew it was there!’ Elliot said. ‘He must have been here before.’ ‘Maybe he made it,’ I said” (p. 66).

Writing Prompt

The boys see Abel Hoffman go through the cut in the fence to enter the military fort. What do you think Abel is doing in the restricted area? Is Robert too quick to judge Abel’s actions? Or do you think he has a reason to be concerned?

In 1-2 explanatory paragraphs, describe Robert’s concern with Abel sneaking around the fort. Is he thinking this way out of fear? Do his concerns have to do with Abel’s German roots? Be sure to use details and quotes from the text to support your explanations. Use transition words (first, next, then, last, also, however, etc.) to link your thoughts together. Be sure to provide a conclusion that summarizes Robert’s concern with Abel Hoffman’s behavior.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Art of Keeping Cool, Day 8



Key Passage, p. 80

“That made me mad. It made me furious. I didn’t say anything though. Everybody was so determined to pretend that nothing had happened. Somehow they decided, without even talking to each other, to forget the whole thing. A scared feeling came into me when I saw it. I had the idea there might be something going on that I didn’t know about” (p. 80).

Writing Prompt

In today’s reading Robert infuriates Grandpa Saunders with his questions about his father. Think of a time when you felt angry but decided not to act on your emotions. When is it a good time to control your anger? Is it ever appropriate to express your anger with your family and friends?

In 1-2 explanatory paragraphs, explain Robert’s relationship with his Grandfather at this point in the novel. Compare his relationship with Grandpa Saunders to his relationship with other characters in the book. Do you think Robert will ever be able to talk about his father with Grandpa Saunders? Why or why not? Provide details from the text to support your ideas. Be sure to present your ideas clearly, and maintain a formal tone in your writing. Conclude your paragraph(s) with a summary of your topic.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Art of Keeping Cool, Day 9



Key Passage, p. 90

“Now that we got this blasted shelter, you can bet we’ll never use it,’ Grandpa said. He was as glad to have it as we were, though, and he began to be in favor of other security measures around our two houses” (p. 90).

Writing Prompt

In today’s reading, Grandpa Saunders makes decisions to increase the family’s safety, like making a bomb shelter and blacking out his headlights. Despite the rough ways he deals with others, do you think Grandpa Saunders is a leader in the family? Is he a leader who shows respect for the common good? Refer to the CBL theme for this novel: Leadership Requires Engagement. Does Grandpa Saunders show engagement in the way he leads his family?

In 1-2 explanatory paragraphs, describe Grandpa Saunders’ leadership style. Refer to details and quotations from the text to help support your ideas. Maintain a formal tone in your writing, and be sure to include transitions such as “first,” “next,” “then,” “last,” and “also” to help strengthen the clarity of your writing. Be sure to conclude with a summary of your explanation.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Art of Keeping Cool, Day 10



Key Passage, p. 95

“‘He was giving you the big sell,’ Elliot said. ‘He wants everyone to be a doctor. Watch out. When he starts on that it means trouble. You had better go see his office, or he’ll be yelling and insulting you next’” (p. 95).

Writing Prompt

Grandpa Saunders takes care of Abel Hoffman when he gets beaten up. He also tries to convince Robert to become a doctor. Are doctors leaders who promote the common good? Do they lead with engagement? Refer to the CBL theme for this novel: Leadership Requires Engagement. **Write 1-2 explanatory paragraphs about how doctors can promote the common good through their actions. Why are they important to the communities they are part of? Use details and quotations from the text as well as the CBL theme to support your ideas. Use precise language in your writing, and be sure to introduce your topic clearly. Maintain a formal tone throughout your explanatory paragraph(s).**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Art of Keeping Cool, Day 11



Key Passage, p. 110

“It’s not the outer world but the inner world he paints. That’s why you don’t always recognize real things. He is painting his feelings” (p. 110).

Writing Prompt

Robert’s father and mother exchange letters about their lives while they are separated. Pretend you are Robert. **Write 1-3 explanatory paragraphs in a letter to your father that explains Abel Hoffman’s new home in the woods, as well as his art. Be sure to maintain a formal tone in your letter. Include facts and details from the text to support the information you discuss in your letter. Be sure to provide a clear introduction to your letter, and end with a conclusion that summarizes the information you present.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Art of Keeping Cool, Day 12



Key Passage, p. 116

“Everyone does their part in this house, whether they like it or not,’ I hear Grandpa roar at him more than once. ‘I’m not in the habit of housing freeloaders’” (p. 116).

Writing Prompt

A freeloader is someone who takes advantage of a situation without giving anything in return. Do you agree that people should do their part in the house? Do freeloaders lead with engagement and promote the common good? **In an explanatory paragraph, explain your opinion about freeloaders. Introduce your writing with a definition of freeloaders. Then, use details from the text as well as the CBL theme to explain whether or not freeloaders contribute positively to the communities they are part of. Be sure to maintain a formal tone in your writing, and use transitions (first, then, next, last, also, however) to create clear, unified writing. Provide a conclusion that summarizes your explanation of freeloaders.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Art of Keeping Cool, Day 13



Key Passage, p. 126

“But it’s strange! Why did he never tell me? He never seemed angry at them. How was I to know? And now here we are in the last place in the world he would wish us to be, I suppose” (p. 126).

Writing Prompt

In today’s reading, Robert chooses to disobey his mother twice: he sneaks into her room and reads her letters, and he decides to see the big guns instead of staying home and caring for his sister. Is Robert choosing to serve the common good in his actions? Or is he a leader that cares only for himself? **In 1-2 explanatory paragraphs, explain Robert’s decisions and the impact they could have on others. Is he making choices that will benefit the community? Or is he putting himself and others in danger? Does a good leader need to break the rules sometimes? Be sure to use details and quotations from the novel to support your topic. Use precise language in your writing, and provide a conclusion that summarizes your explanation of Robert’s leadership choices.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Art of Keeping Cool, Day 14



Key Passage, p. 139

"I kept checking on Abel. He was looking at the guns through binoculars now, arms held taut. His plaster cast was gone. He shifted his weight, made a quarter turn to the right, and stared through the binoculars out to sea. I pulled Carolyn down. She'd been standing up, trying to see better" (p. 139).

Writing Prompt

Robert sees Abel Hoffman looking at the guns with binoculars. From what you have read about Abel so far, do you think he is spying? Or is he getting inspiration for his art? Create a 2-column chart: provide a heading on one side that says 'Spying' and a heading on the other side that says 'Art.' On the 'Spying' side, provide evidence and ideas from the text that support Abel spying on the guns for the Germans. On the other side, provide reasons from the text that he is looking at the guns for inspiration for his art. **Below the chart, write 1-2 explanatory paragraphs that explain your own thoughts about Abel. Which side do you think he is on? Is he at the wrong place at the wrong time? Or is he betraying the secrets at the fort? Be sure to use the evidence from your chart to support your explanation. Be sure to maintain a formal tone in your writing.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Art of Keeping Cool, Day 15



Key Passage, p. 150

“The lieutenant said the interrogation would be confidential but somehow, in the next twenty-four hours almost everyone in town heard about it” (p. 150).

Writing Prompt

Robert was honest with the officer who asked him questions about Abel Hoffman. However, he feels somewhat guilty about providing information that turned Abel in to the FBI. **Answer the following questions in 1-2 explanatory paragraphs: is honesty always the best policy? When does honesty hurt more than it helps? Did Robert make the right choice in turning Abel in for questioning? What would you have done if you were in Robert’s situation? Would lying to the officer have gotten Robert into more trouble? Be sure to use details and quotations from the text as well as the CBL theme in your writing. Use precise language to convey your ideas, and maintain a formal tone in your writing. Include a heading when introducing new or different topics.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Art of Keeping Cool, Day 16



Key Passage, p. 147

“He says they’re going to make his name over here. Listen, Robert, you should come look. Abel’s been really good lately. No drinking, just work. He’s a really nice man underneath. If people knew him, they’d love him. That’s why all this is so stupid” (p. 147).

Writing Prompt

In today’s reading Elliot says, “He’s a really nice man underneath. If people knew [Abel] they’d love him.” Do you agree with Elliot’s opinion towards Abel? Is he promoting the common good in his choice to defend Abel? Or is he being too nice to him?

Write 1-2 explanatory paragraphs about Elliot’s views towards Abel Hoffman. Is Elliot being a leader in the community by defending him? Or is he acting crazy? Explain Elliot’s relationship with Abel and be sure to include details and quotations from the text as well as the CBL theme, “Leadership Requires Engagement”. Maintain a formal tone in your writing, and be sure to conclude your thoughts with a summary of your ideas.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Art of Keeping Cool, Day 17



Key Passage, p. 170

“‘Bomb, here’ He made a movement with his brush that put an explosion of paint on the painting. ‘And here!’ Another paint explosion. ‘And here, here, here’” (p. 170).

Writing Prompt

Abel Hoffman is a character that we are learning more and more about as the novel progresses. **In 1-3 explanatory paragraphs, explain how his character has changed. What have you learned about Abel? How has your initial impression of the character changed? How have his relationships with the people of Sachem’s Head (Robert, Elliot, the townspeople) changed? Be sure to use details and quotations from the text to support your explanations. Be sure to use headings to introduce new ideas in your writing. Use precise, descriptive vocabulary when explaining the ways Abel’s character has changed. Provide a conclusion that summarizes the main points of your writing.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Art of Keeping Cool, Day 18



Key Passage, p. 180

“Two well-known Expressionist artists, friends of his, have committed suicide, he hears. Another has been deported to a concentration camp. The daily outrages committed against the Jews sicken him. A friend tells him: Leave Germany before it is too late. Worse is coming. We are going to war” (p. 180).

Writing Prompt

Even though Abel came to the US to escape persecution in Germany, he is still being treated unfairly by the people in Sachem’s head.

Pretend you are the mayor of Sachem’s Head. **Create a flyer that includes at least one explanatory paragraph. In your paragraph, explain Abel Hoffman’s situation and the ways you feel he has been wrongly treated by the people of Sachem’s Head. What have they done that is unfair? As a leader of the community, explain 1-2 new laws or ideas that you will enact to promote the common good and end discrimination against Abel. Be sure to maintain a formal tone in your writing. Include graphics and multimedia to add to the ideas presented on your flyer. Be sure to include transitions in your writing (first, next, then, last, also, however), and maintain a formal tone in your writing.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Art of Keeping Cool, Day 19



Key Passage, p. 187

"I shook my head. I did want him to leave, but not like everyone else. I'd changed my mind this afternoon. 'Abel doesn't fit in here, people are afraid of him,' I told Elliot" (p. 187).

Writing Prompt

Robert is speaking his mind, even though he knows Elliot disagrees with him. He is being a leader, who is concerned about Abel, and about the common good.

In 1-2 explanatory paragraphs, explain how Robert is showing Leadership and Engagement. Remember, Leadership is "making sure that the communities I am part of are better because I am in them. And that I am better because of the communities I choose to be part of." What actions has Robert taken to show leadership? How has he worked to improve the community he belongs to? Be sure to maintain a formal tone in your writing. Use precise vocabulary, and be sure to use transitions such as "first," "next," "then," "last," and "also" to create cohesion in your writing.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Art of Keeping Cool, Day 20



Key Passage, p. 196

“Then I looked up again and knew I couldn’t say that. The reason was, it was unfair what was happening to the man. However stupid he was to be living in our woods, however German he was, he was no spy. He didn’t deserve to be arrested. Somebody had to stand up for him. Somebody had to take the heat, or we might as well be living in Nazi Germany. ‘Okay,’ I said to Elliot, ‘Let’s go’” (p. 196).

Writing Prompt

In today’s reading Robert decides to stand up for Abel. This was a difficult choice for him to make. How does Robert’s choice display the CBL theme for this novel: Leadership Requires Engagement? **In 1-2 explanatory paragraphs, explain how Robert is promoting the common good in his choice to stand up for Abel. Refer to the CBL theme, as well as details and quotations from the text to help support your ideas. Be sure to maintain a formal tone in your writing, as well as transitions (first, next, then, last, also, however). Provide a conclusion that summarizes your topic.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Art of Keeping Cool, Day 21



Key Passage, p. 210

“What Abel Hoffman had done and what he had deserved were questions most people didn’t choose to think about very deeply or for very long. Whether this was due to shame, or shock, or a general nervousness brought on by the war, who knows, but within days of his death, Abel was buried history” (p. 210).

Writing Prompt

Why do you think people were so quick to forget Abel once he died? Do you think people were ashamed of the way they treated him? **Write an explanatory paragraph in which you describe the way the residents of Sachem’s Head reacted to Abel’s death and the fire in the woods. Provide details and quotations from the text to support your explanation. Use transition words such as “first,” “next,” “then,” “last,” and “also.” Maintain a formal tone in your writing, and conclude with a summary of your ideas.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Art of Keeping Cool, Day 22



Key Passage, p. 220

“We all wanted to talk about him, I think. His name had been outlawed for so long. Now, with his incredible return, everyone was thinking of him and, at the supper table, behind Grandpa’s back, we began for the first time to speak about him as a family” (p. 220).

Writing Prompt

In today’s reading, Robert learns about his father’s relationship with Grandpa Saunders. He discovers more about his father’s personality and his past.

Pretend you are Robert. **In a journal entry, write 1-2 explanatory paragraphs that explain your father’s past, his relationship with his family, and your feelings about him returning home safely. Be sure to use details from today’s readings to support your ideas. Use precise language to aid your explanations, and be sure to use transitions in your writing (first, next, then, last, also, however, etc.). Also, conclude your writing with a summary of your topic.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Art of Keeping Cool, Day 23



Key Passage, p. 230

“Grandpa was furious. Flying was a madman’s game. He knew what was best. My father should go into medicine, become a doctor, aim for the things in life that were of known value, which had already been achieved by Grandpa, no less, and proven solid” (p. 230).

Writing Prompt

In today’s reading, we learn the truth behind Robert’s father’s injury. Another dark side of Grandpa Saunders is also revealed.

Pretend you have the chance to re-write history. Instead of becoming enraged and resorting to violence, what could Grandpa Saunders have done to be a good leader and good father to his son? How could he have promoted the common good in his actions? Remember, Leadership Requires Engagement.

In 2-3 explanatory paragraphs, explain how Grandpa Saunders could have responded to Robert’s father without resorting to violence. Refer to details and quotations from the text as well as the CBL theme for this novel. Use precise vocabulary to explain what he could have done step by step. Use transitions (first, then, next, last, also, however, finally, etc.) to create cohesion in your writing. Conclude your paragraphs with a summary that restates your explanation.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Art of Keeping Cool, Day 24



Key Passage, p. 235

“Dad didn’t answer for a while. He was so quiet I thought he might never answer, but finally he said, ‘You tell Elliot to come visit us on the farm. Tell him that he can come stay with us after we settle back there, look into art schools in Cincinnati if he wants. He’ll need to get out of Sachem’s Head if he’s going to do something with that talent. He’ll need to get away before it’s too late’” (p. 235).

Writing Prompt

Even though Elliot and Robert spent a lot of time together during their adolescence, they grow up to lead very different lives and choose different professions. Despite these differences, they are both leaders. Robert is a leader in the way he expresses his concerns and stands up for what he believes is right. Elliot displays his emotions and feelings in art. Using details from the text, compare Elliot and Robert’s leadership styles.

In 3 explanatory paragraphs, explain the similarities and differences between the two characters. Dedicate one paragraph to introducing the two characters and explaining their relationship. Next, use one paragraph to explain similarities between the two: focus on their roles as leaders in their communities. Then, write one paragraph that examines the differences between the two: how do they deal with their feelings? How does each character respond to conflict? What differences exist in each character’s leadership style? Be sure to maintain a formal tone in your writing. Use headings to separate and label each paragraph. Use details and quotations from the text, as well as the CBL theme Leadership Requires Engagement, to support the explanations you present.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Art of Keeping Cool, Day 25



Key Passage, p. 242

“Don’t let it bother you,’ he said. ‘That’s the trick.’
 ‘What trick?’
 ‘The one that works against everything.’
 ‘Well, it bothers me. I can’t help it’
 ‘You can help it,’ said Elliot. ‘You just have got to figure out how’” (p. 242).

Writing Prompt

At the close of the novel, Elliot offers advice to Robert: control your anger and don’t let things bother you. Do you think it is necessary for good leaders to be able to stay focused and control their anger? Do you know of any leaders who promote engagement and promote the common good?

Think of someone who is a good leader. It could be a president, historical figure, author, inventor, teacher, or family member. Once you pick a leader to focus on, use reliable online or print resources to research their lives and their actions. What qualities do they have? What actions do they take to promote the common good? How do they work to improve their communities?

Write 3-4 explanatory paragraphs about the leader you have chosen. Focus on their qualities, their leadership style, the things they accomplished, their attitude, and any famous quotes or details from their lives. Be sure to refer to the CBL theme for this novel: Leadership Requires Engagement. How did the leader you picked promote the common good? Did they work towards improving their community? Maintain a formal tone in your writing, use transitions to clarify your thoughts, and be sure to conclude your writing with a summary of the importance of your leader.