

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Boy on the Wooden Box, Day 1



Key Paragraph, p. 14

“Though his visits were only for a few days, my father always made a special time for me. Nothing gave me more joy than walking with him to his parents’ house, with his friends greeting him along the way. He always held my hand in his, playing with my fingers. It was like a secret signal between us of how much he loved me, his youngest child.” (p. 14).

Writing Prompt

Leon describes fond memories and special moments with his mother, father, siblings, and grandparents. In an explanatory paragraph, describe a happy memory you have of a family member or friend. Think of a specific moment and include as many details as possible. When did this memory take place? How old were you? What were you doing? What was the weather like? What smells or tastes do you remember? Why was this moment so special to you? **In a second explanatory paragraph, describe how your happy memory of your childhood is similar to Leon’s happy memories.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Boy on the Wooden Box, Day 2



Key Paragraph, p. 18-19

“All in all, Narewka in the 1930s was a pretty idyllic place to grow up. From sunset Friday to sunset Saturday, the Jews of Narewka observed the Sabbath. I loved the quietness that fell as the shops and businesses closed, a welcome respite from the weekday routines. After services in the Synagogue, people would sit on their porches, chatting and chewing pumping seeds” (p.18-19).

Writing Prompt

In today’s reading, Leon describes or references the Sabbath, Yiddish, Passover, Zionism, and pogrom. Of the five topics, select one and write an explanatory paragraph describing this topic. Use today’s reading information to explain your chosen topic. If you have access to the Internet follow the reference link to research more information to include in your explanatory paragraph.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Boy on the Wooden Box, Day 3



Key Paragraph, p. 44

“During the summer of 1939, all of Krakow began to prepare for war in earnest.... I began to feel more nervous excitement than fear during all the preparations and the making of emergency plans. Unlike my parents, I had no concept of what war was actually like” (p. 44).

Writing Prompt

After the Night of Broken Glass, Krakow and Leon’s family prepares for war. Pretend you are Leon’s mother. Write a letter to your parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins about the possibility of Poland going into war. In an explanatory paragraph, ease the worry of your family by describing how your family is preparing for war. How are you preparing the house? Explain how your husband and eldest son are preparing for the possibility of war with Germany?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Boy on the Wooden Box, Day 4



Key Paragraph, p. 58

“Because both my brother and I could speak German and because the full villainy of the Germans was not yet evident, we brazenly questioned every German we thought might know something. Only now do I realize what we did was quite simply crazy. With every German we approached, we put our lives in danger” (p. 58).

Writing Prompt

Pretend you are Leon. Write a letter to your older brother Hershel describing the events that led to your father’s arrest and imprisonment. **In an informative paragraph, describe how the Gestapo found out where you live. Explain how your father tried to reason with the soldiers. Describe how you used your time and talent to find your father. Finally, explain how your father home from prison and how prison changed him.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Boy on the Wooden Box, Day 5



Key Paragraph, p. 77

"In early March 1941, we piled our belongings onto a wagon we'd scrounged for the move and said good-bye to our apartment, the last tie to our once promising life in the big city. Unlike our first trip through Krakow over two and a half years ago, when we had ridden through the streets on the horse-drawn cart with a sense of excitement and anticipation, this time we felt only dread. As we approached the gates of the ghetto, I was seized by panic" (p. 77).

Writing Prompt

As Leon and his family move into the Podgorze ghetto, he reflects on his family's excitement as they arrived to move to Krakow only two and a half years before. So much has changed between now and then.

Pretend you are Leon. Write a journal entry about why your family is moving from Krakow to the Podgorze ghetto. In two informative paragraphs explain what has happened to Poland? What happened to all the Jews? Why did Leon and his family get to stay in Krakow longer than most Jews? Why were they leaving to the ghetto? In a final paragraph, explain how you, as Leon, feel about what is happening. How is your move to the ghetto affecting you?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The Boy on the Wooden Box, Day 6



Key Paragraph, p. 83

“Despite everything against us, we remained determined to show respect and decency toward one another. Retaining our humanity, cherishing our heritage, we fought the depravity of the Nazis with subtle forms of resistance” (p. 83).

Writing Prompt

In the ghetto, many Jews demonstrate subtle forms of resistance. In an informative paragraph describe how Leon, Tsalig, and other Jews resist Nazi control.

Describe the three examples and use quotes from today’s reading to help describe the three forms of resistance

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Boy on the Wooden Box, Day 7



Key Paragraph, p. 111

“As I walked out of the ghetto with its tombstone-crowned walls and along the streets of Krakow, I was dumbfounded to see that life seemed just as it had been before I entered the ghetto. It was if I were in a time warp... or as if the ghetto were on another planet. I started at the clean, well-dressed people, busily moving from place to place. They seemed so normal, so happy. Had they not know what we had been suffering just a few blocks away?” (p. 111)

Writing Prompt

Leon with a group of workers were transported through the streets of Krakow where life was normal and no one paid any attention to them as they travelled through town. Leon questions whether or not the civilians were aware of the suffering that was taken place just blocks away. **Write a letter to the people of Krakow that explains the suffering Leon and his family has endured just blocks away from the normal life in Krakow. In an informative paragraph, describe the poor living conditions in the ghetto. Explain why people in the ghetto are living in fear. Finally, explain what the people of Krakow could do to help.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Boy on the Wooden Box, Day 8



Key Paragraph, p. 113

“My first impression of Plaszow as hell on earth never changed. I only needed one look to see that this was an entirely foreign place. No matter how difficult life had been in the ghetto, at least outwardly it had appeared a familiar world. Yes, we were packed like sardines into too few rooms, but those rooms were in normal apartment buildings. There were streets and sidewalks and the sounds of a city beyond the walls” (p. 113).

Writing Prompt

Leon and his family are transported to Plaszow; which Leon describes as “hell on earth.” **In an informative paragraph, describe Plaszow. Where is it located? What does it look like? Who lives there? What type of work are people doing? Describe the living conditions. Include a quote from today’s reading to support your description.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Boy on the Wooden Box, Day 9



Key Paragraph, p. 129

“The day the new “Schindler Jews” were to leave for the sub-camp, I sneaked away from my job at the brush factory to see my mother off. It was a miracle that nobody stopped me as I walked across the camp toward the gates where those who were going to the sub-camp had assembled. I moved closer, telling myself I had to act. I couldn’t let this last opportunity disappear. I had no future in Plaszow. I might as well die attempting to be with my mother” (p. 129).

Writing Prompt

Pretend you are Leon and write a journal entry that explain how you successfully convinced the German guard to let you join your mother to work in Schindler’s factory. **In an explanatory entry, describe the series of events that took place. What happened first, second, and third? Explain how you felt as you spoke to the guard. How did you feel when you were finally reunited with your mother? Finally end your journal entry with your hopes for what is your new life will be like in Schindler’s factory.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Boy on the Wooden Box, Day 10



Key paragraph p. 141

“Such acts may seem insignificant given the scale of evil in those years, but, in fact, they were anything but. Schindler dared to rebel against the law of the land, which was to torture and exterminate Jews, not to treat us as fellow human beings. To do that was to risk imprisonment in a labor or concentration camp of execution. Even referring to us by name rather than with a grunt and a curse was punishable. By treating us with respect, Schindler was resisting the Nazi racist ideology that constructed a hierarchy of humanity in which Jews were at the very bottom” (p. 141).

Writing Prompt

Schindler did little things to rebel against the inhuman treatment of Jews and show his workers dignity; which put himself at risk. Leadership is about making your community better. **In an explanatory paragraph, describe Schindler’s acts of humanity by describing three ways Schindler specifically helped Leon and his family in today’s reading. How did he make his community better? Describe what would happen to Schindler if he were caught treating his Jewish workers with respect.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Boy on the Wooden Box, Day 11



Key Paragraph, p. 147

“Schindler not only saved our lives, he did something more. After left us, Schindler went to find my mother in the factory. He told her that there had been a mix-up and that we were staying. My mother later told me that at first she hadn’t believed him. She didn’t think he even knew who she was, but it turned out he did. When I think of all his many actions as a rescuer, big and small, it is this one act that comes to mind; I think perhaps because it demonstrates such extraordinary compassion. He knew my mother would be distraught, and he knew that only he could confront her” (p. 147).

Writing Prompt

Knowing that Leon’s mother would be distraught about her family being sent to Plaszow, Schindler found her in the Emalia factory and told her the good news that her family was now on the list to stay in Emalia. Leon was felt that this action was a true example of Schindler’s “extraordinary compassion.”

In an explanatory paragraph, describe a time when someone did something extraordinary ordinary to help you. Explain what they did. How did this make you feel? In a second explanatory paragraph, describe a time when you did something extra extraordinary ordinary to help someone else. What did you do? How did this person respond?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Boy on the Wooden Box, Day 12



Key Paragraph, p. 165

“Despite impossible odds, we had made it. Miraculously, Oskar Schindler, this complex man of many contradictions- Nazi opportunist, schemer, courageous maverick, rescuer, hero- had saved nearly 1,200 Jews from almost certain death” (p. 165).

Writing Prompt

Leon refers to Schindler as a hero. **In an informative paragraph, explain whether or not you believe Schindler is a hero. Provide three reasons to support your answer. In a second informative paragraph explain how a hero demonstrates *Leadership requires Engagement*. Give an example of a hero you know that uses their time and talent to promote the common good and better their community.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Boy on the Wooden Box, Day 13



Key Paragraph, p. 173

“On August 11, 1945, rioting broke out when a gentile boy claimed that Jews were trying to kill him. Hooligans attacked our building, again pelting the windows with rocks, pulling people from the first floor to beat them with their bare hands. We scrambled from our room to the safety of a higher floor” (p. 173).

Writing Prompt

Violent attacks happened all over the city against the Jews returning from the concentration camps. Pretend you are a newspaper reporter. **Write an informative news article about the violence against the returning Jews. Describe the types of violent events taking place. Who is involved? What are they doing? When are these attacks taking place? Why are they doing this? Finish your news article by inspiring your readers to use their time and talent to help the returning Jews, better their communities, and promote the common good among all people.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Boy on the Wooden Box, Day 14



Key Paragraph, p. 181

“At last, in May 1949, after nearly three years in the displaced person camp, we received word that our immigration request had been approved. Almost beyond belief, we really were going to the United States of America! We took the train to Bremerhaven, Germany, and then traveled on a former troopship for nine days across the Atlantic Ocean to Boston, Massachusetts. I spent all the time I could on deck, watching the ocean stretching in all directions. Something about its majesty, its vastness, brought me a peace I had not known before” (p. 181).

Writing Prompt

In order to arrive in their new home in California, Leon and his parents travel from Wetzler, Germany to Bremerhaven, Germany, to Boston Massachusetts, to the Midwest, through the Southwest to finally reach Los Angeles. Pretend you are Leon. **In an explanatory letter to David and Pesza describe each step of your journey. What does each place look like? How do you feel? What are you excited about? What are you nervous about? What predictions do you have about the future?**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Boy on the Wooden Box, Day 15



Key Paragraph, p. 199

“After the article appeared, my students and fellow teachers mobbed me at school. One young man who had not done particular well in my class came running up to me on campus. He grabbed my hand, shook it, and said ‘Mr. Leyson, I’m so glad you made it” (p. 199).

Writing Prompt

After World War II, Leon lived the rest of his life as an average American citizen. It wasn’t until the end of his life that he shared his story of how he survived the war. In an informative paragraph, explain how Leon lived his life as an average citizen to promote the common good. Describe three examples of how Leon used his time and talent to better his community?