

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The House on Mango Street, Day 1



Key Passage, p. 5

"I knew then I had to have a house. A real house. One I could point to. But this isn't it. The house on Mango Street isn't it. For the time being, Mama says. Temporary, says Papa. But I know how those things go" (p. 5).

Writing Prompt

What makes a place you live a home? Does a home feel safe? Do you think families in bigger homes (with separate bedrooms) are closer versus a smaller house/apartment/home where rooms are shared? Does having extended family in the home offer increased safety? How can a solid home help build a person's fortitude? Does it guarantee it?

Referring to the Common Core standards, **write a narrative paragraph describing what a home means to you.** (Bonus: incorporate a word wall word effectively and accurately.)

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The House on Mango Street, Day 2



Key Passage, p. 20

“Nenny who thinks she is smart and talks to any old man, asks a lot of questions. Me, I never said nothing to him except once when I bought the statue of liberty for a dime” (p. 20).

Writing Prompt

To speak your mind or not to speak your mind. Think about a time you were faced with a moral dilemma. Depending on the situation it may require us to exercise moral courage to speak our mind (ex: someone is being mistreated and you are a bystander) or to “hold our tongue” (ex: you are being accused of something by an authority figure).

In a narrative paragraph, write about an act that required moral courage. Describe a situation you experienced that helped you build strength and courage. It may be that you didn’t like how you handled the situation; how could you have handled it differently? How can experiencing adversity help build a person’s character and fortitude? Do you think someone who has never faced hardships can have courage—how so?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The House on Mango Street, Day 3



Key Passage, p. 27

“Marin, under the streetlight, dancing by herself, is singing the same song somewhere. I know. Is waiting for a car to stop, a star to fall, someone to change her life” (p. 27).

Writing Prompt

Think of an area in your city with families living in poverty; also identify an area in your community known for being affluent. How do these two areas differ? In appearance? Services offered? House sizes? Visible homeless individuals? Discuss the reasons why. Do we have a responsibility to all members of our community (such as the homeless, veterans, children, individuals with disabilities)?

In a narrative paragraph you will take on the role of a member of the community—the bus driver, a home-owner, a shop owner, or resident. As that person you will describe what you would like to do to improve the conditions of poverty in your community. Remember to tie into the theme of the unit: Courage Requires Fortitude.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The House on Mango Street, Day 4



Key Passage, p. 33

"You can never have too much sky. You can fall asleep and wake up drunk on sky, and sky can keep you safe when you are sad. Here there is too much sadness and not enough sky. Butterflies too are few and so are flowers and most things that are beautiful. Still, we take what we can get and make the best of it" (p. 33).

Writing Prompt

The girls argue in today's reading. Think of how many friendships are lost due to arguments and stubbornness. How can apologizing be an act of courage? It takes courage to admit when we are wrong.

Create a dialogue between you and a younger person. You must explain what you do to feel safe, to relax, and how you demonstrate courage. Anticipate what questions a younger less experienced person may ask you or say. Include that in the dialogue. The dialogue must illustrate the theme: Courage Requires Fortitude. Be sure the dialogue is punctuated correctly.

Share with a partner, and have each take a role and speak dialogue aloud.

Sample:

You: "Hey little cousin; how was your day today?"

Little Cousin: "At school..."

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The House on Mango Street, Day 5



Key Passage, p. 45

“In the canteen, which was nothing special, lots of boys and girls watched while I cried and ate my sandwich, the bread already greasy and the rice cold” (p. 45).

Writing Prompt

In today’s reading, the girls dress up in more grown-up clothes. During this coming-of-age time in our life we often do things to try to be older or speed the process along. What stage in the life cycle do you believe requires the most courage and fortitude—childhood, teenage years, or adulthood?

In a narrative paragraph write about a time you did something to “try to be older.” What did you do? How did you feel? What stage in the life cycle do you believe requires the most courage and fortitude—childhood, teenage years, adulthood?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The House on Mango Street, Day 6



Key Passage, p. 57

“And I think if my own Papa died, what would I do. I hold my Papa in my arms. I hold and hold and hold him” (p. 57).

Writing Prompt

Sticking up for yourself can take courage! Especially when we are young, in the face of a violation or threat, one can become “frozen in fear”, embarrassed, scared and many other factors that can make such a situation leaving one feeling helpless. Think of Esperanza’s situation when the man violated her—would it take courage to tell someone?

In a narrative paragraph describe a time your strength and courage got you through a difficult time. How did it help you build courage and fortitude? Was there anything you would or could have done differently?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The House on Mango Street, Day 7



Key Passage, p. 68-69

“There were many things Ruthie could have been if she wanted to. Not only is she a good whistler, but she can sing and dance too. She had lots of job offers when she was young, but never took them. She got married instead and moved away to a pretty house outside the city. Only thing I can’t understand is why Ruthie is living on Mango Street if she doesn’t have to, why is she sleeping on a couch in her mother’s living room when she has a real house all her own, but she says she’s just visiting and next week her husband’s going to take her home. But the weekends come and go and Ruthie stays. No matter. We are glad because Ruthie is our friend” (p. 68-69).

Writing Prompt

What archetype does Ruthie fit? **In a narrative paragraph write about her fate. What happened to Ruthie in your vision?**

Or, It’s the first day of school; **write a narrative paragraph as an assigned archetype.**

Or, select a character from today’s reading who embodies courage. **Write a narrative story continuing where the story left off.**

Reiterate.

W3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well- structured event sequences.

- a.) Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.
- b.) Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
- c.) Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole.
- d.) Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
- e.) Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The House on Mango Street, Day 8



Key Passage, p. 72 and 78

“I don’t cross the street like other girls. Straight ahead, straight eyes.” (p. 72)

“And then to break her heart forever, the baby boy, who has begun to talk, starts to sing the Pepsi commercial he heard on T.V.” (p. 78)

Writing Prompt

Re-read the selected passage (p. 72). Is this an act of courage as we have defined for the class theme? Is this a dangerous choice Esperanza is making? What does this act tell you about Esperanza’s character? Does it take courage to face fear? **In a narrative paragraph describe how this act is or is not a courageous act and infer the reasoning behind her decision. Can you relate?**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The House on Mango Street, Day 9



Key Passage, p. 85

"One day, she is through and lets him know enough is enough. Out the door he goes. Clothes, records, shoes. Out the window and the door locked. But that night he comes back and sends a big rock through the window. Then he is sorry and she opens the door again. Same story.

Next week she comes over black and blue and asks what can she do? Minerva. I don't know which way she'll go. There is nothing I can do" (p. 85).

Writing Prompt

Does it take courage to "close the door permanently"? Think of Minerva, and in a **narrative paragraph continue the story by writing a paragraph in which Minerva takes the courageous step to close the door permanently. Be specific. What does she do? Where does she go? Use your imagination, resources, and be brave in your response.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The House on Mango Street, Day 10



Key Passage, p. 91

“Shame is a bad thing, you know. It keeps you down. You want to know why I quit school? Because I didn’t have nice clothes. No clothes, but I had brains” (p. 91).

Writing Prompt

In a narrative paragraph describe the similarities and differences of the two pieces of literature: Kate Chopin’s “The Story of an Hour” with *The House on Mango Street*. What do they have in common? What are their differences? Use the Venn diagram and class discussion.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The House on Mango Street, Day 11



Key Passage, p. 101

"She say's she is in love, but I think she did it to escape" (p. 101).

Writing Prompt

As individuals, we want to make good choices and decisions. **In a narrative paragraph write about a time that you made a good decision. What did you have to decide? What process did you go through to make your decision? How did you feel once you made a good decision?**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The House on Mango Street, Day 12



Key Passage, p. 107

“No, Alicia says. Like it or not you are Mango Street, and one day you’ll come back too. Not me. Not until somebody makes it better. Who’s going to do it? The Mayor? And the thought of the Mayor coming to Mango Street makes me laugh out loud. Who’s going to do it? Not the Mayor” (p. 107).

Writing Prompt

In a narrative paragraph write a political address: Pretend you are the mayor visiting the area where Mango Street is located. What promises do you make? What impressions do you have of the community? Be sure to use courage and fortitude in your address. View a few political campaign speeches for motivation and tone.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
The House on Mango Street, Day 13



Key Passage, p. 109-110

“...What I remember most is Mango Street, sad red house, the house I belong but I do not belong to...One day I will say good-bye to Mango. I am too strong for her to keep me here forever. One day I will go away” (p. 109-110).

Writing Prompt

Many people stay in the same state, same county, same neighborhood the majority of their lives. Why do you think that is? Think of your own life and family—have you branched out to new communities? Do you see yourself moving to an entirely new state, new county, or new neighborhood? Does it take courage to venture out to new areas? Does it take courage to move away from family? What are the benefits of going “abroad”?

In a narrative paragraph describe a time you ventured out to somewhere new. Perhaps you moved or perhaps you spent an afternoon somewhere out of your comfort zone. You choose. Share with great detail and appeal to all the senses. Did it take courage to venture out of your comfort zone?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The House on Mango Street, Day 14



Review the writing process: prewrite, first draft, 2nd draft, editing revising, peer revising, and final copy.

Terms to know: prewriting, draft, introduction, body paragraphs, conclusion, editing and revising, and peer edit.

The Final Writing Assignment: An autobiographical narrative.

(This activity may need to be split into two days depending on your class.)

An autobiographical narrative is the true story of your life from your point of view. The requirement for this autobiographical narrative is to focus on acts of courage and fortitude. It will be helpful to use any of your previous paragraphs to help build your essay. You must cover all parts of the writing process. This is your chance to demonstrate the Common Core Standards.

PREWRITE: Create a Graphic Timeline with your students. As a class, brainstorm life's moments that should go on the graph. This timeline will be in the form of a (horizontal) line graph. The high points of your life should be on the positive side and the bad times should be on the negative side. OR Use the autobiographical timeline created on Day 4. For every moment that is on the graph, add a graphic with it. For example, on the first day of school you could have a picture of a school building. The graphics will help students recall significant moments in their lives.

WRITING A DRAFT:

Introduction paragraph: Have students write an "I Am" Poem (lesson plan structure is attached).

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

Have students use this format to help them construct their introductory paragraph.

Body Paragraphs: Have students review their previous writing assignments.

Select at least three of the previous writing assignments where they discussed their memorable and courageous acts. These three entries should be three significant moments from their life. Students need to pick their moments, put them in a logical order, and edit and revise them. Students may need to add connecting sentences to help the paragraph flow.

Conclusion Paragraph: Students should conclude their narrative with their future plans and goals.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The House on Mango Street, Day 15



Review the writing process: prewrite, first draft, revising, 2nd draft, editing, peer revising, and final copy.

The Final Writing Assignment—Continued:

REVISE: Read your first draft of your essay from start to finish. Make changes according to this checklist:

The following guidelines are designed to give students a checklist to use, whether they are revising individually or as part of a peer review team.

Organization

- ✓ Is there a clear introduction, body, and conclusion?
- ✓ Does the introduction provide sufficient background for the reader? Are the "who," "where," "why," "what," and "how" questions addressed?
- ✓ Is there a thesis sentence? Is the purpose of the essay clear? Do you mention courage and fortitude in your introduction?
- ✓ Does the essay move from general to specific?
- ✓ Are there sufficient transitions (furthermore, in addition to, lastly, also) between related ideas?
- ✓ Is the overall organization murky or clean? In other words, do you avoid introducing new material in the conclusion or switching subjects in the middle of a paragraph in the body?
- ✓ Does every paragraph address the subject matter (courage and fortitude) of the thesis in some way?

Content and Style

- ✓ Does the essay show that you have a knowledge of the audience?
- ✓ Is the length appropriate and adequate?
- ✓ Have you used sufficient examples and detail to make his or her points clearly?
- ✓ Has the assignment been addressed?
- ✓ Is the tone of the essay appropriate?
- ✓ Have you avoided insulting the reader?
- ✓ Is the tone of the essay professional and appropriate?
- ✓ Is the language convincing, clear, and concise?
- ✓ Have you used fresh language and a creative approach?

WRITE A SECOND DRAFT

Peer edit and revise: Work with a partner to finalize your essay. Exchange papers. Revise and edit using the previous checklist.

Final checklist:

Proofreading

- ✓ Has the writer checked grammar and punctuation?
- ✓ Has the writer spell checked the essay?
- ✓ Has the writer checked for his or her particular pattern of error?
- ✓ Are the page numbers correct?
- ✓ Is the title capitalized correctly?
- ✓ Has the writer used the correct margin and font?

FINAL Essay: Pair and Share.

Type and make any final revisions and editing. Final essay should be typed using Times New Roman 12 pt font. Pair and share. Each of you present your essay to each other. Listen for content (no more revising and editing at this time). Focus on the theme of the unit. Discuss it. Compare and contrast life experiences using a Venn diagram. Present to the class together.