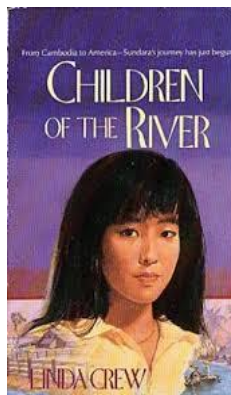


Children of the River



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Genre Fiction, Children's literature

Synopsis At thirteen, Sundara fled Cambodia with her aunt's family to escape the Khmer Rouge army, leaving her parents, two siblings and the boy she had loved since childhood behind. Now at seventeen she is trying to fit in at her Oregon high school and be "a good Cambodian girl" at home. A good Cambodian girl never dates; she waits for her family to arrange her marriage to a Cambodian boy. But what about Jonathan, an extraordinary American boy that she is drawn to?

Themes Refugees, families, race, families

Protagonist Female, Refugee

Note Over the years, these books have been published in multiple editions. The page numbers in your book may be different than the ones on the lesson plan.

More Information www.scu.edu/character



Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Children of the River, Day 1



Prompt 1. Sundara 's Courage

Because of the war's effects on the city where she was living, at age 13 Sundara comes to stay with her sister Soka to help with her children. As she holds and cares for the new infant, she "whispered to the baby, whom she had already grown to love, 'I'll take care of you [p. 2].'" When caring for the baby aboard ship her thoughts are reported through the narrator: "This baby couldn't die. She wouldn't let her. She would do anything [p. 6]."

What did Sundara do to take care of the infant? How was this courageous? What did Sundara do to take care of the infant that was courageous? Before you begin writing your paragraph, prewrite a few ideas you have come up with after brainstorming with the questions (above).

Write an informative paragraph about what Sundara did that was courageous. Describe in detail exactly what she did and what made it courageous. How do you define courage? What obstacles or emotions did she have to overcome? Or what risks did she have to take? What was difficult that she continued to do anyway? Because this is an informative paragraph, details are important. Be sure to provide details about exactly what she did and exactly what the obstacles, emotions and difficulties in the way were. Also, include direct quotes to support your explanation of Sundara's courage.

Prompt 2: Biography of Courage

Sundara demonstrated courage in her actions and decisions to overcome the obstacles in her way, and the emotions that might have caused her to give up. Think of a person you know who is an example of courage. This can be a person you know, or a person you know about. Can you think of an example of courage where someone was able to overcome obstacles and emotions in order to achieve or accomplish something important? In order to achieve or accomplish something important, a person usually has to demonstrate courage by overcoming obstacles and emotions repeatedly. This is why courage is considered a good habit: it has to be done again and again to get anywhere. How was this person able to accomplish what they did? How was courage a habit for them? How did they overcome obstacles and emotions many times?

Write an explanatory paragraph about this person, explaining the different ways in which they show courage. Be sure to explain what obstacles were in their way, and how they overcame them. Also, be sure to explain how they overcome emotions that got in the way of their dreams. This might be as simple as how they learned to not just do what they wanted to. Explain what they accomplished. When you have finished writing your paragraph, edit your work and revise your paragraph; make sure your ideas and writing are clear. Maintain a formal style of writing in your paragraph.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Children of the River, Day 2



Prompt 1 - Soka

Sundara lives with her aunt Soka. Much of her life, and the life of the family, is related to Soka's actions and decisions. As they are working together on the Bonner farm,

Sundara was already at the truck when Soka picked her way, barefoot, out of the tangled rows, weighed down by a stack of three flats. She set them on the wooden pallet with a grunt and straightened up, bracing her back, rubbing her dirty sleeve across her forehead. Strands of black hair had escaped from the knot at the back of her neck and were sticking to her cheeks. She sighed deeply. Then, noticing Sundara watching her, she returned one of those long, searching looks that always made Sundara uneasy.

"What do you think, Niece? Would your mother call me 'little pampered lady' as she used to?" [pp 18-19]

What is Soka like? What kind of person is she? Do you imagine her as a "pampered lady?" as her sister must have once described her? What is Soka trying to say to Sundara by repeating that remark now? How does Soka act? How does Soka act for the good of her family? Do you think Soka is showing courage or does she have other motivations [she could have courage and other motivations]?

After thinking about these questions, prewrite the ideas you brainstormed. Then, write an explanatory paragraph describing who Soka is and the ways that Soka acts for the good of her family. Explain who her character is, and be sure to maintain a formal tone throughout your paragraph. How do her traits impact those around her? Be sure to provide specific details, use specific references from the text, and be sure to use what Soka says about herself as well as what others have said about her.

Prompt 2 – Important Memory

The poem that Sundara wrote for her English class talks about her important memories of Cambodia when she grew up, that are intertwined [all linked together with] her family, culture and language. She speaks of her anger at the violence in the Cambodia that the Khmer Rouge call Kampuchea. She also speaks of her distance and loneliness at being so far away:

"We are the lost, we are the lonely
So far from our beloved land [p.10]

And she speaks of holding onto her memories of Cambodia in both emotional [love] and thinking terms.

But the love of the ancient Khmers
Will live in our hearts
We will not forget you
Even from this new place [p. 11]

Do you think this helps Sundara to cope with being away from her homeland and in a new country? Can you think of times when memories have helped you to cope with a difficult situation? Sundara thought of a place and time that was valuable and important to her, in which she had strong relationships, and felt successful and supported. It was a place in which she had a history and could remember herself positively. Perhaps it was a place where she could remember being courageous, like the strong Khmer civilization Cambodia, and Sundara, grew out of. Can you think of a memory that has some of these qualities? A memory you could think back on at difficult times.

Write an explanatory paragraph about what makes this memory special and how it would help you get through difficult times. It can be done in a paragraph or in a poem; whatever method you choose, make sure your ideas are expressed clearly. Maintain a formal style and be sure to conclude with a reiteration of your explanation. Be as informative as possible in your writing.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Children of the River, Day 3



Prompt 1. Rules for Sundara

Sundara lives with her Aunt Soka and Uncle Naro under expectations drawn from their life experience in Cambodia, while slowly adapting to the United States. Sundara goes to high school, but at home operates with rules somewhat different from most of her peers. What are they? Sundara had been offered a separate job on the Bonner farm, which Soka opposed:

But Soka and Naro thought the family should work together. “A bundle of chopsticks cannot be broken like one alone,” Naro reminded her, and Soka added that even at the piecework rate Sundara might earn more by picking. “Work more hours and help watch little Pon at the same time.” Still, the idea of guaranteed work had its appeal. [p. 23]

Sundara takes care of little Pon, whom she clearly loves. Sundara has some money of her own, but she also listens to Soka’s ideas. For example, when they are at the Farmers Market, early in the morning and little Pon wants a cinnamon roll:

Soka wouldn’t like it if she knew. *Save*, she always reminded them. *Don’t spend*. But today Sundara could take the money from her own portion, the money Soka allowed her to keep. [p. 25]

Living with Soka entails a variety of rules, which do not appear to bother Sundara, at least yet. When Jonathan approaches the stand at the market one of the rules comes into question:

She glanced at Ravy again. He knew perfectly well she wasn’t supposed to talk to boys. Hadn’t he heard Soka say it often enough? Strange. That rule never bothered her before. [p. 32]

Write an informative paragraph that conveys the rules by which Sundara is required to live while she is part of Soka’s household. This includes her behavior at home, at school and in the community – and this includes jobs and boys. Be sure to be specific and make detailed references to the text. Also, be sure to trace Soka’s control over Sundara to Sundara’s cautious behavior; do you agree or disagree with this? How would you suggest Soka act towards her niece? Maintain a formal style throughout your writing, and be sure to include a conclusion at the end of your work.

Prompt 2 – Courage Under Pressure

While working in the Farmer's Market, Sundara and Mrs. Lam end up in an exchange over the price of the bok choy:

The Chinese woman picked up a bok choy and regarded it disdainfully. Then she poked a finger at the snow peas. "How much?" she asked in English, the only language she and Sundara had in common. When Sundara told her, she said, "Too much. Not so fresh."

"I promise you, very fresh." Sundara was polite but firm, playing along.

"I give you one dollar a pound." [p. 26]

Both Sundara and Mrs. Lam know that Sundara cannot change the price. So this is really a test of whether and how Sundara will react,. Will she react emotionally to this taunt, or find some other way to handle this situation.

Sundara clenched her teeth behind her fixed smile. Chun-Ling's mother knew very well she was not free to bargain with Mr. Bonner's produce. The Americans usually preferred to set their prices and stick to them. The woman just liked to make things difficult, Sundara thought, because her own daughter had not been offered this job. [p.26]

How does Sundara use her smile to stick to the price? How does thinking about Mrs. Lam's daughter not getting the job, help her cope with the situation. How does thinking through the reasons the person is behaving the way they are, help someone cope with a problem situation? How does thinking through the reasons why Mrs. Lam is behaving the way she is, help Sundara to cope with her? What would she say if she didn't make any effort to cope? Telling Mrs. Lam she can go choke on the bok choy would not help to keep Sundara employed.

After brainstorming with the questions write a paragraph explaining courage under pressure. Write a clear description of Sundara dealing with Mrs. Lam at the produce stand as though it were a news account and you were detailing this in a blow by blow account, fill in what each person is thinking. Make sure you provide details, and be sure that Sundara's courage in coping under pressure is obvious. When you have finished writing, be sure to go over your work and revise it.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Children of the River, Day 4



Prompt 1 – The Courage to Stay and Play

Sundara arrives at the first football game she has ever attended, expecting to sit with Ravi, who disappears immediately to sit with his friends. She is not expecting to deal with this crowd and

For a panicky moment Sundara thought of leaving. She'd looked forward to the game; she hadn't planned on being alone. But she'd have to stay. Ravi would need a ride home, and that had been the only reason Soka allowed her to come. Taking a deep breath, she went over to the stands. Most of the seats were filled, and to find an empty one a person had to walk along in front of those rally girls, craning, searching while everyone in the stands looked down and thought, who is that person in the horrid green jacket? [pp. 34-35]

Sundara does stay for the game and ends up sitting with Kelly and other girls she knows from school. She watches the games and notice two groups in particular: the football players and the rally girls. She doesn't really understand the game until Jonathan makes a touchdown at the end:

Sundara found herself on her feet, jumping and clapping with the crowd. She did not understand the game, but she understood speed, she understood grace. She understood why everyone thought Jonathan McKinnon was wonderful. [p. 39]

Sundara wanted to leave the game but could not. How did it take courage for Sundara to stay for the game instead of leaving as soon as Ravi deserted her. How did it take courage to socialize with a whole group of girls, some of whom weren't all that well known to her? And enjoy the football game? Jonathan had to play the football game. How did it take courage show up, to practice, to prepare, and to overcome the obstacles that got him to the game, and got him through the game? Both speed and grace are enhanced by practice; how does that take courage?

Write an explanatory paragraph in which you clearly describe the ways that Sundara shows courage in this situation. Define courage using your own words; explain how Sundara is courageous in today's reading. Make sure you maintain a formal tone throughout your work and be sure to conclude with a re-statement of your explanation.

Prompt 2 – An Unexpected Situation

Sundara finds herself in completely new situations frequently as a result of living in the United States as a refugee from Cambodia. Attending a football game for the first time is a completely new situation. She finds it can be both scary and interesting, both puzzling and fascinating. Think of a time when you were in a completely new situation. A situation that was completely foreign to you: unlike any situation you had been in before. What made this situation so different for you? Where were you? What setting

variables about the time, place, weather or location were foreign or unsettling to you? Who was there with you? Were you alone? Were there other people you knew or could depend on there? Were you dealing with people who were new to you? What were you doing there? What was happening? What was scary? Interesting? Puzzling? Fascinating? Why was the situation so different for you? What made it so different from other situations you have been in?

Write an informative paragraph that describes a situation that was completely new for you. This might have been traveling somewhere, attending an event in a different language or culture, going to a new school, visiting a different library, or going to an event that is completely unlike anything you have ever experienced. Describe in detail the situation you were in: where were you? When were you there? Who were you with? What were you doing? Why were you there? How did you get there? How did you leave? Why did you go there? Why did you leave? Explain whether you knew the rules, or specific language, or roles that people play in this situation and whether this made you more or less comfortable. Explain whether you knew many or any people there, and whether this made you more or less comfortable. Explain how the surroundings might have been like, or different from, those you are used to, and whether this made you more or less comfortable. Be as specific and clear with your details as possible. Also, when you have completed your writing, be sure to go over your work and edit it.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Children of the River, Day 5



Prompt 1 –Airport Scene from Sundara’s Father’s Point of View

Sundara described the scene at the airport in which she last saw her father to Jonathan, with the final note that she has heard nothing from or about him since.

“Yes! My father throw me on the pavement. My chest burn, I’m so scared. I feel the hot ground shake my face. Then he yank me up, drag me to the plane step. By now I don’t want to go at all, just want to stay with my family. I’m crying, but he doesn’t listen. I tell him, look, my elbow bleeding and his glasses have a crack, but he just shove me up with the people.” [p.48]

In the text the scene at the airport is described as Sundara remembers it. Describe the scene as her father might have seen it. Be sure to include the details that would have been important to him. Before writing what you think about his point of view, brainstorm what you think is going on. What was important to him? Why was he rushing his daughter to the airport. Why was he trying to get her out in spite of the obstacles? What obstacles were in his way? What was he thinking and feeling as he tried to get his daughter on that plane? Do you think he has courage? Why or why not? If so, how did he show it?

Write a paragraph from the point of view of a father rushing his daughter off to the airport. Be informative in your writing; for instance, include details such as setting, your personal feelings, the obstacles that face your family/country, and the sense of urgency you must have felt. When you have completed writing, be sure to go over your work and edit it.

Prompt 2 – Description of the Boat Going Nowhere

When the Khmer Rouge came to power and those who were in danger left immediately, Sundara tells how they boarded a boat that left hoping that after a few days things would cool down. The boat did not have a planned destination, and certainly didn’t have enough food or medicine or all those aboard. As the boat continued on, the passengers realized, as did Sundara:

“Oh, we not heading *for* anyplace. We just getting away from the killing. First we go Thailand, then Malaysia, Indonesia... We don’t know *where* we gonna end up. We just floating around like that for six, seven week. Finally the American let us come to a camp in the Philippine. We stay there awhile, then they bring us to California.” [p. 51]

Imagine that you were on that boat. Write an informative letter describing the conditions on the boat. Many details were provided in chapter 1 as well as chapter 5; use the information in these chapter to help you describe the boat. Also describe what you imagine it would be like to be on a boat when you do not know where you are going, when you will get there, and you cannot go back to where you came from. How might you feel? What might you be thinking?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
Children of the River, Day 6



Prompt – Imagine that you are escaping the Khmer Rouge with a newborn infant

“Not knowing which direction to walk, the city dwellers had been herded around the countryside by the dead-eyed, black-garbed soldiers. But Moni plodded steadily north toward her parents’ rice –farming village, baby tied to her *karma*. She ate whatever she could find, even tree bark, when she came across some that was free of the Americans’ leaf-killing poison spray. At her parents’ she recovered, but soon learned her husband would have been one of the first executed when the Khmer Rouge began their purge. And the new Kampuchea had no place for the widows of anti-Communist soldiers. She, too, was marked for death. “(pg. 55)

Write an informative description of your imagined escape with a newborn baby. Use your imagination, and paint a picture with words. What are you feeling? What event or situation is forcing you to flee? You can approach this scenario as a mother or father. Illustrate the episode if applicable.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Children of the River, Day 7



Prompt 1 – Family First?

Last paragraph on page 71: Sundara nodded grimly. Perhaps it was as Soka said. There was an order to things. Family must come first. Blood lines must not be broken. Destroy the order and it will destroy you. She'd opened her heart just the tiniest bit to an American boy, and already this had given Cathy's words the power to tear her apart. She resumed buttoning her blouse.

In this story, there is a cultural discrepancy between Cambodia and the U.S. regarding the custom of dating, (as we've been exploring), and also, fundamentally, there is a big difference in the structure of the family unit. In Cambodia, the family ties are very strong. Elders run the household in terms of power/position, and cultural norms are strictly adhered to; such as doing the right, honorable thing, according to custom. Working hard, keeping face, bettering oneself and the family, holding to tradition- these are some of the main priorities. Specifically, it is understood that a Cambodian girl is not to date an American (white) boy- she should date, and eventually marry a "chosen" boy of her country. The girl's individual wants and needs must conform to this principle.

Write an explanatory surrounding the philosophy that family should come first. What does this mean in terms of controlling the direction, the decision making that you do regarding the issues of your life? Should family and customary expectations override a person's feelings for another? How do you feel personally? Why do you feel this way? Explain your reasoning. When you have finished writing, go over your work and revise it.

Prompt 2 –A Special, (Yet Risky) Relationship

Pg 73: In spite of her fears, Sundara found herself letting Jonathan fall in step beside her every day after international relations. Then she would follow him with her lunch tray to their special place on the patio. She watched herself doing this, day after day, almost as if she were watching someone else. So daring! Yet somehow the risk made her moments with Jonathan all the sweeter.

Have you ever had a special friend that you've risked public scrutiny over? Did the risk involved somehow make your relationship seem all the more special? Write an informational paragraph describing your experience.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Children of the River, Day 8



Key Paragraph

Only later did Sundara think of a good reply. She imagined herself holding up her head, looking Cathy straight in the eye. “It’s a free country,” she should have said, “And I can have any boy I want!”

Prompt 1 – (See key paragraph above) **Do We Live In A Free Country?**

Example: 1. Cambodia has also been overpowered by Viet Nam, and by the United States as a result of the Vietnam War. The country has subsequently suffered a complete political takeover by the Khmer Rouge regime. These takeovers have robbed Cambodians of the freedoms that they once knew. They live completely different lives than we do in the U.S. How have we provided freedom here, in ways that the Cambodian government has not? Refer to the reference material provided at the beginning of this unit. How do the fictional account of the Khmer Rouge and actual historical account differ?

Before you write, brainstorm what freedom means to you. Then, write an explanatory paragraph about the difference between the US government and the Cambodian government. How does the definition of ‘freedom’ change from one culture to the next? What is your definition of freedom? Explain your reasoning. Be sure to maintain a formal tone throughout the paragraph.

Prompt 2–Wishing that You’d Said Something Else

Example: 2. In the U.S., our technology allows us many things- particularly the power of information access. This reality does pose a problem, in that our personal information is now under close scrutiny, and monitoring, due to computer technology. Is this an invasion of our personal freedom? There are also more and more laws being written that are supposed to protect the public, but also, result in more and more restrictions on our behaviors. What does it mean to live in a free country? Do we really live in a free country?

Write a paragraph explaining why or why not you believe we live in a free country. What is the ‘price’ that people pay for freedom? What does freedom mean to you? Be sure to provide descriptive examples to explain your point of view. Maintain a formal tone throughout your paragraph, and be sure to conclude with a reiteration of your claim. When you have finished writing, go over your work and edit it.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Children of the River, Day 9



Key Paragraph

“Like the story about the lady who cried Buddha because of her bad luck. You know this one? He tell her that her trouble will go away if she bring a seed from a house that has never known sorrow. Then next week he find her singing so happy. When the Enlightened One ask if she find the Seed of Happiness, she say, ‘No, Enlightened One. At every house I find trouble worse than my one. So I now believe I am truly quite fortunate.’”

Prompt 1 – Parable: A short allegorical story designed to teach a fundamental truth.

1. (See key paragraph above): What personal meaning does the above story hold for you? Can you give an example from your life of how this story might ring true? Brainstorm a specific event or lesson you learned. What was it? Who was involved? How has this experience changed you? Write an explanatory paragraph about your experience. Describe the situation or event in detail, using a formal tone. Be sure to go back and revise your work when you have finished writing.
2. (See key paragraph above): The above paragraph from the story illustrates one parable. Can you think of a parable from your experience that has provided meaning for you? Write one or more paragraphs explaining your personal parable. Be sure to conclude your writing with a reiteration of your claim. Why is this story important to you? What lesson does it teach others?

Prompt 2 – Your Ideal Career Goal in Life

In chapter 9, the McKinnons reminisce about their youthful career goals (pg. 103). Do you think that one should follow one’s idealized goals, no matter how “unrealistic”? What are your ideal goals in life, career or otherwise? What steps can you take now to edge yourself nearer to those goals?

Brainstorm your dream job: what is it? Are you in an office? A classroom? A hospital? An airplane? What tasks do you perform on a daily basis? Why would you love to have this job? Having brainstormed, write an informative paragraph describing your dream job. You may wish to use literary or informational texts to gather more information about the career you chose. When you have completed writing your paragraph, go back and revise your work to make sure your ideas and information are clearly expressed.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
Children of the River, Day 10



Prompt 1 – Do well intentioned desires override traditional customs?

1. Brainstorm: What is your opinion regarding Jonathan's behavior as described in this chapter? Write a persuasive paragraph supporting your view of his actions. Did he act in a courageous manner? Was he being inconsiderate of the feelings of the family in this case? Write a first, explanatory paragraph that describes and explains your opinion of Johnathon's behavior in this chapter. Be sure to revise your work before you move on to the second question.

2. Brainstorm: If you were actively pursuing a love interest that had different cultural norms, how would you approach that person? Write an informational paragraph that provides the details and steps you would take to approach your love interest. What actions would you take? Why? Maintain a formal style of writing throughout your paragraph, and conclude with a reiteration of your opinion.

Prompt 2 – Predict what you think might happen as a result of the events described in this chapter.

There is a recurring theme presented in chapter 10- that of Cambodian customs conflicting with American customs as personified by the main characters. How might this discrepancy play itself out in the story? Write an explanatory paragraph that predicts events that could happen as a result of this chapter. Explain your reasoning – why do you think these events will happen?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Children of the River, Day 11



Prompt 1. Motivation

The characters in this story are strongly motivated to act in the manner that they do. What are some of those motivations? Before you begin writing, take some time to brainstorm and write down what motivates you.

Write an explanatory paragraph on each character: Soka, Sundara, Moni. Write from each character's point of view and be sure to explain why they behave the way that they do –what motivates them? What inspires them? If you were in their situation, how would you act?

Prompt 2: Courage

As this is a unit which focuses on the Big Idea of Courage, and what it entails, let's revisit this concept: the main character Sundara has many obstacles and emotions to overcome, to achieve her dreams. What are the heartfelt hopes and dreams (goals) that Sundara has for her life? What are some of the obstacles and emotions that have gotten in the way of her goals? What are some of the ways that she has displayed courage in pursuing these goals? In what ways has Sundara displayed a lack of courage, in your opinion?

Write an informative paragraph about the issues stated above, as an analysis of Sundara's character. What is really going on in this situation? Do you agree with her way of handling her challenges? What might you learn from the way that she is behaving? Be sure to include details from the text. When you have finished writing, be sure to go back and edit your work.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
Children of the River, Day 12



Prompt 1. Racial tension in the story

“Mostly it’s just because I’m white, right? Your aunt would like me better with black hair and brown eyes.”

“It’s not just the color. You see, if you are Khmer, you would not ask me to go out with you in the first place.”

Write an explanatory paragraph describing your belief regarding the possible issue of racism as addressed in this story. You may need to conduct research using informative or literary texts in order to aid research to provide a context of the incident that occurs in the novel. Be sure to explain your thoughts concisely. When you have finished your assignment, be sure to revise and edit your work.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Children of the River, Day 13



Prompt 1. Media Images Compared to Reality

“It had been hard, these last weeks, seeing the American girl walking the halls with Jonathan once again. Cathy seemed to have everything. This was her country, her language, and most of all, Jonathan was *her* boyfriend. She always looked like a girl in one of those Coke ads on television.” [p.133]

In this passage, Sundara appears isolated from the image of the American girl in the Coke ads. Write a paragraph in which you explain your thoughts and feelings regarding the images you see in the media (television) that may differ from the reality of your own life. In what ways do certain images affect you? Are you attracted to them, angered by them, compare yourself to them, envy them? Explain. Make sure to use concrete examples; you may find that research or an internet search for images from the media that influence your self-perception may be helpful. Bring in these images to class with your assignment.

Prompt 2: Affirmation of One’s Worth by Others

(This paragraph directly follows the one above.)

“But Sundara could tell Jonathan wasn’t so satisfied.

Once, in the hall at school, their eyes had met. Before she glanced away, she caught the flicker of embarrassment in his, an apology. Another time he’d followed her, tried to talk.” [p. 133]

In this exchange, Sundara is reaffirmed, though in a subtle manner, of Jonathan’s interest, despite Cathy’s allure. Before you begin writing, brainstorm a time when you were reaffirmed yourself. As an adjunct to Prompt 1., write an informational account of a time when your worth was acknowledged, no matter how slightly, in spite of the presence of a person that you had deemed to be more favorable than you. Be sure to be clear and precise in your writing. Make sure to edit and revise your work when you are done.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
Children of the River, Day 14



Prompt 1. Excessive Guilt, or Guilty as Charged?

“You too nice to me. *Brave* is a word for Moni. Not me. You don’t understand. I make a promise to my mother . . .” Should she tell? Could she risk it? No, for what if he began to hate her too? “Oh, I am nothing but trouble since the day I step on the boat. So why does God spare me?” She searched his face. “You think he spare to punish?” [p. 145]

1. In this passage, Sundara feels responsible for letting her mother down by not saving Soka’s baby. Because of this, she feels that she deserves to be punished by God. Do you think that Sundara should feel guilty for the fact that the baby died? Does she deserve to be punished in such a way? What might be the outcome for her if she continues to feel this way? Write an informative paragraph that clearly states your opinion; provide at least three reasons that support your opinions. When you have completed your assignment, be sure to revise and edit your work.

2. Brainstorm a time when you felt responsible for an experience from your own life in which something bad happened. This should be an example that you feel comfortable writing about. Write an informational, autobiographical paragraph. What happened, and how did you feel? Did you deserve punishment for this? If so, what kind of punishment, and for how long? Do you deserve to continue to feel bad about this incident indefinitely? Why or why not? If, on the other hand, you feel that your actions did not deserve punishment, why not? Be clear in your writing and provide all the details necessary for your reader to comprehend the full situation and your feelings. When you have finished with your assignment, be sure to go over your work; revise and edit it.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
Children of the River, Day 15



Prompt 1. Albert Schweitzer Inscription

HERE,
 “AT WHATEVER HOUR YOU COME YOU WILL FIND LIGHT AND HELP AND
 HUMAN KINDNESS”
 ALBERT SCHWEITZER [p. 152]

1. Sundara is comforted by reading this inscription at the hospital. It gives her a sense of hope and peace. Also, it inspires her dream of becoming a doctor. Later, she shares with Jonathan that it reminded her of his father’s kindness. In a previous chapter, another inscription had been provocative as well- the inscription on the bench: “*Smile! God Loves Us!*” Brainsotrm: has there been a particular quote or phrase that has helped you get through a difficult time? What does the Albert Schweitzer quote mean to you? Write an explanatory paragraph that explores what this inscription might mean to you personally. Be clear in conveying your ideas and concepts. When you have finished your assignment, be sure to go over your work; edit and revise your paragraph.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
Children of the River, Day 16



Prompt 1: Love Requires Courage

During the beginning of this chapter, Sundara is dazed by Jonathan's declaration of love. She thinks about how she cannot do that because she is a Cambodian woman. Think about this. What would you do if you were Sundara? Would you respect your culture or assimilate to the new one? Why? Does it take courage to do this? Write a informative paragraph explaining what you would do and why. Be sure to provide step-by-step explanations of your actions and responses. What would motivate your actions if you were in this situation? Make sure to go over your work and revise it when you have completed your writing.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
Children of the River, Day 17



Prompt 1: Integrity Requires Wholeness

“Integrity requires that the way I live my life is whole, entire, undivided, sound, coherent and principled. Integrity moves me to do difficult and new things not just easy and accustomed things.” This explanation comes from the theme for this novel, Integrity Requires Wholeness. How might these conditions be represented in the story? What characters exhibit them?

Brainstorm before you write: When you think of integrity and wholeness, what comes to mind? A situation with a friend or relative? A historical figure? Write an explanatory paragraph that concisely describes your views. After you have completed your paragraph, be sure to go over your work and revise it.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Children of the River, Day 18



Prompt 1. Attitude Shift

I'm only taking your advice, Naro. I've thought about what you said the other day and you're right. What do I care what they think? We are the ones who have been here almost the required five years." She turned to Sundara. "Do you know what that means, Niece? We will become *American Citizens*, and American citizens don't have to make themselves low to anybody! Why, we could even go rescue our relatives in Kampuchea and nobody would dare touch us! Not when we told them we are citizens of the United States of America. [p. 188]

Write an informative paragraph describing the change of attitude that Soka experiences, from her negative comments in past chapters about American customs, to the attitude displayed in the above paragraph. What emotion best describes Soka's feeling about America now? Why? Use specific details from the text as evidence of these changes.

Prompt 2:

The kitchen was warm as she and Soka worked together, the quiet between them easy. What a Thanksgiving this turned out to be! The clinking of the dishes wound to Sundara like sweet, peaceful music. Temple bells. [p. 193]

Brainstorm a time in which you were accused or blamed for something that you did not actually do. How did you feel? Now, write an explanatory paragraph relating an experience that you've had when you have been released from guilt over some perceived offence. How did you feel as a result of been exonerated? Be descriptive in your writing. Be sure to go over your work and edit it when you have completed the assignment.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
Children of the River, Day 19



Prompt 1. A Gift with a Special Message

Dr. McKinnon is about to leave his family for a 2 month stay in Thailand. His trip is not without danger. In this chapter, Sundara presents Dr. McKinnon with a gift; a plaque that she's inscribed with the saying by Albert Schweitzer, as described on page 152 in chapter 15. She tells him: "You will honor me if you hang this where you work at the camp. I'm thinking some people might be fear of your white face, and you so big, so I make this to help them know you are a good man, one who see not only with his eyes." [p. 196]

Before you write, Brainstorm: What kind of vision might Sundara be referring to?

Write an explanatory paragraph in which you explain the significance of her comment, in terms of what you know about the characters, and their circumstances. Provide specific details that will help explain the significance of her words. When you have finished writing, be sure to provide a conclusion that summarizes your views. After you have completed the assignment, go back over your work and edit it.

Prompt 2: Courage in the midst of Fear

Jonathan grew to feel badly about the argument that he'd had with his parents as told in chapter

Dr. McKinnon's choice to minister to the people of Thailand inspired his son Jonathan to see him in a new light. He admitted this to Sundara: "Yeah," He leaned on the open car door. "You know, I always thought people who did this sort of thing just went off, all brave and full of conviction. It never occurred to me that they might have mixed feelings. Now I see there's a lot more to it. It's not that my dad's so brave, see. Actually he's scared. But he's going anyway. That's what gets me. He's scared but he's psyched up too. [p. 197]

How might you analyze the dilemma that Dr. McKinnon faced in terms of the definition of courage as presented in this unit? Write an informative paragraph that provides information that helps explain how his situation fits this definition. Be clear and concise in your writing. If it will help aid your work, you may conduct research using informational or textual sources.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Children of the River, Day 20



Prompt 1. Moni's Courage

We found out in this chapter that Moni is not motivated by convention, as she declared: "I think I must learn to steer my own boat down this river, Little Sister. I must take care of myself now, I cannot worry so much what the others say." Later on Moni explained to Sundara that she had found out that her husband Chen Seng's first wife and two children were still alive in Cambodia. Instead of insisting on remaining married, as Soka had advised, she agreed to divorce, as her husband wished. She had several reasons, for example: "But she is his number one wife. I am only wife number two. Of course Soka tells me not to divorce him. You are his number one wife in America," she says. A man cannot have two wives here, so unless I agree to a divorce, the Immigration people cannot help him." [p. 203] She also explained: "But he cannot just close his eyes to his first wife, can he? She writes to him that she will wait forever for him to rescue her."

Before you begin writing, brainstorm: Are Moni's actions characteristic of courageous behavior? In what way (s) is she being courageous? Whose interests does she have in mind?

Write an explanatory paragraph that supports and explains Moni's behavior. What would you do if you were in her situation? How does she display integrity? Wholeness? When you have finished writing, be sure to go over your work and edit it.

Prompt 2: Reconciliation

Soka has been very critical of Sundara in previous chapters. Here, she seems to have developed a change of heart. When Sundara told her of the baby's fate, and of how she prayed, Soka said: "That's better than nothing." She sniffed and looked at Sundara. "You know, you really are a good girl." What do you think are some of the reasons that Soka has changed her attitude concerning Sundara. Write an informative paragraph in which you explore actions on both their parts, as described in the book, that you feel may have contributed to their developing closeness. What situations helped them to become close? Have you ever had a similar experience in your own life?

Prompt 3: Courageous Relationship

At the end of the chapter, Jonathan and Sundara hold hands signifying their love, devotion, and courage into the unknown. Throughout the text, both of them have been struggling with hostile cultural situations and customs. What has changed now? Write a paragraph describing how the miracle that Sundara's sister is alive gives Sundara the courage to tell Jonathan how she feels. You may want to use yourself as inspiration. Before you begin writing, Brainstorm:

What would you do? Why? What would motivate you to be courageous and go against what other people say to do what is right?

Now, write an explanatory paragraph that provides reasons that support Sundara's decision at the close of the novel. How does her choice display wholeness? Integrity? When you have finished the assignment, go over your work and edit it.