

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Phantom Tollbooth, Day 1*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 9

“When he was in school he longed to be out, and when he was out he longed to be in. On the way he thought about coming home and coming home he thought about going. Wherever he was he wished he were somewhere else, and when he got there he wondered why he’s bothered. Nothing really interested him—least of all the things that should have” (p. 9).

#### Writing Task

Milo is bored with everything in his life. He always wants to be somewhere else. Think of times that you have been bored or wanted to BE somewhere else? Where were you? What was happening? Where did you want to be? Why?

**In a narrative paragraph of no less than 7 sentences describe a situation when you found yourself somewhere you didn’t want to be or doing something you didn’t want to do. Where did you want to be instead/what did you want to be doing instead and why?**

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Phantom Tollbooth, Day 2*



#### Key Paragraph p. 19

“‘Good question, good question’, he exclaimed. ‘Expectation’s is the place you must always go before you get to where you are going. Of course some people never go beyond Expectations’” (p. 19).

#### Writing Task

It is important for us to have expectations before we do anything. They can be positive or negative. How do expectations help us and protect us? Why is it important to go beyond our expectations and actually go do something? Do you sometimes let other people’s expectations influence you to do something either good or bad?

**In a narrative paragraph of no less than seven sentences tell a story about a time where you had expectations about something, whether it was good or bad. What were your expectations? Did you let them stop you from doing something that could have been really awesome? What did you learn from going Beyond your Expectations?**

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Phantom Tollbooth, Day 3*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 34

“...When they began to count all of the time that was available, what with 60 seconds in a minute and 60 minutes in a hour and 24 hours in a day and 365 days in a year; it seems as if there was much more than could ever be used. ‘If there’s so much of it, it couldn’t be very valuable,’ was the general opinion, and it soon fell into disrepute. People wasted it and even gave it away. Then we were given the job of seeing that no one wasted time again. . .It’s hard work but a noble calling. . .it is our most valuable possession, more precious than diamonds. It marches on, it and tide wait for no man” (p. 34).

#### Writing Task

Tock is explaining the importance of time to Milo. He says that time is our most valuable possession, even more precious than diamonds. Do you agree with Tock? Why is time important? Have you ever had time run out on an opportunity or wanted more time for something? What was the situation? What would you do or say differently to not waste time with your next opportunity or relationship?

**In an narrative paragraph of no less than seven sentences, create an argument for whether time is valuable or not. Use examples from your life to support your statements.**

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Phantom Tollbooth, Day 4*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 47

"Milo had never thought much about words before, but they looked so good that he longed to have some.

'Look Tock aren't they wonderful?'

'They're fine if you have something to say,' replied Tock...'Maybe if I buy some I'll learn how to use them'" (p. 47).

#### Writing Task

Milo is on his journey and for the first time is interested in words. Tock just wants to make sure that Milo has something to say if he is going to use them. Why is it important for people to make sure they can use the words they have wisely? Have you ever accidentally used the wrong words and gotten into trouble over it? What kinds of consequences can come from using the wrong words? Can someone get hurt physically or emotionally?

**In a narrative paragraph of no less than seven sentences tell a story about a time when you were misunderstood because you didn't choose the right words to say what you meant to. Were there consequences? What did you learn from the experience?**

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Phantom Tollbooth, Day 5*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 68

“...And that explains why today people use as many words as they can and think themselves very wise for doing so. For always remember that while it is wrong to use too few, it is often far worse to use too many” (p. 68).

#### Writing Task

“The pen is mightier than the sword” ~Lytton

Throughout history man have been able to do amazing things by being able to use their words. They have started wars, they have ended wars, they have freed people, and they have given people their rights by using their words. For it is important not only to know what the words you use mean, but also to make sure you’re using them correctly.

**In a narrative paragraph of no fewer than seven sentences about a situation when using too many words or using too few words caused a problem. Think of a time that you needed to say something that you couldn’t or you said something you shouldn’t have.**

What was the situation?

Who was involved?

What was said?

How could you have changed your words to have had a better outcome?

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Phantom Tollbooth, Day 6*



#### **Key Paragraph, p. 75-76**

“Everyone loved the princesses because of their great beauty, their gentle ways, and their ability to settle all controversies fairly and reasonably. People with problems or grievances or arguments came from all over the land to seek advice. It was said by everyone that Rhyme and Reason answer all problems” (p. 75-76).

#### **Writing Task**

Have you ever met someone that was extremely fair and wise. A person that you went to for advice or who acted as a sounding board for you. They never interjected their opinion just listened and helped you solve your problems. That person may be your parent, mentor, friend, neighbor, or teacher.

Think about this person. What kind of qualities do they need to possess in order to be fair and wise? What is the difference between being smart and wise? Can anyone be wise?

**In a narrative paragraph of no less than seven sentences, describe someone in your life who is wise and fair. Describe their qualities? Describe what it take to be wise?**

**How has this person helped you? Does this person protect you from everything or let you make your own mistakes? Does this person help you with dignity or say, “I told you so.”**

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Phantom Tollbooth, Day 7*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 91

“‘I wouldn’t eat too many of those if I were you,’ advised Tock. ‘They may look good, but you can get terribly sick of them.’

‘Don’t worry,’ Milo replied; ‘I’ll just wrap one up for later,’ and he folded his napkin around ‘EVERYTHING HAPPENS FOR THE BEST’” (p. 91).

#### Writing Task

We have all eaten our words - said something that was hurtful or ill-timed as a consequence of misspeaking, saying too much, or too little. Milo knows that he may have to eat his words later and he chooses “Everything happens for the best.” He is on his journey, why would he take that with him?

Think about a time when something bad happened and you needed to believe that everything happens for the best. A time that things were hard and you needed a reason to keep going and doing what you needed to do to get by.

**In a narrative paragraph of no less than seven sentences, describe a time when you needed to believe that everything happens for the best. What was the situation? What had happened? Why did you need a little bit of hope to keep going? What was the end result? Did things turn out for the best? How?**

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Phantom Tollbooth, Day 8*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 99

“‘In this box are all of the words I know,’ he said. ‘Most of them you will never need, some you will use constantly, but with them you may ask all of the questions which have never been answered and answer all of the questions that have ever been asked. All of the great books of the past and the ones yet to come are made with these words. With them there is no obstacle you cannot overcome. All you must learn to do is use them well and in the right places’” (p. 99).

#### Writing Task

The king gives Milo the most valuable gift he can think of giving. Words. He says, “with them there is no obstacle you cannot overcome. All you must learn to do is use them well and in the right places.”

Do you agree or disagree with the king. Are words the most valuable gift? Is he right can you overcome anything if you use the right words at the right time?

**In two narrative paragraphs no less than five sentences each, tell a first-hand account of a time when you used words to change a course of events. What was happening? How did you use words effectively? Did you change someone’s mind? Did you help someone? Are words a powerful gift? If not, what could be more powerful? Why?**

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Phantom Tollbooth, Day 9*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 105

“‘What a silly system,’ The boy laughed. ‘Then your head keeps changing its height and you always see things in a different way. Why when you are fifteen things won’t look the same as they did when you were ten, and at twenty everything will change again’” (p. 105).

#### Writing Task

The boy in the forest never changes his point of view, he always sees things the same way. However, he is the one who teaches Milo about seeing things from a different perspective. Is it possible to see something from another person’s perspective without ever having to be in the same situation as them?

How has your point of view changed as you’ve gotten older? Do you still like the same things you did last year? Five years ago? Ten years ago? Why? Do you think the things you like will change as you get older? **In a narrative paragraph no less than seven sentences in length, pretend you are five years older. Do you still like the same games? Books? Movies? Sports? Are you still friends with the same people? How will your point of view change?**

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Phantom Tollbooth, Day 10*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 114

"Pulling Milo to him.

'Do you want to ruin everything? You see, to tall men I am a midget, and to short men I'm a giant; to the skinny ones I am a fat man, and to fat ones I am a thin man. That way I can hold four jobs at once. As you can see, though, I'm neither tall nor short nor fat nor thin. In fact I am quite ordinary, but there are so many ordinary men that no one asks their opinion about anything'" (p. 114).

#### Writing Task

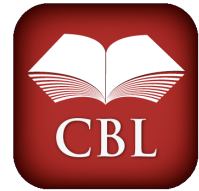
"If you can't be a forest be a tree; but be the best tree you can be,  
If you can't be an ocean be a drop of rain; but be the best drop of rain you can be.  
You see it doesn't matter if you are small or grand you just have to do your best at  
everything you do to count."

The man Milo meets feels he is ordinary so he sees himself as four different but unique people to set himself apart.

**In a narrative paragraph of no less than seven sentences, pick a positive quality that makes you unique or special. Why is it special to you? How does it make you unique? Can it help make you the best you can be? How?**

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Phantom Tollbooth, Day 11*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 118

“No one paid any attention to how things looked, and they moved faster and faster everything grew uglier and dirtier, and as everything grew uglier and dirtier people moved faster and faster, and at last a very strange thing began to happen. Because nobody cared, the city slowly began to disappear” (p. 118).

#### Writing Task

Think about those things that surround you: your class, your home, your community. Do you work to keep those places looking nice? Do you work to contribute to the color? If people stop taking care of things around them what happens?

**Write a narrative paragraph of no less than seven sentences about a place you used to love to go to that slowly started not being cared for. What happened? Was that place a safe place to be anymore? Did it ever get cared for again? How did you contribute to making it nice again?**

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Phantom Tollbooth, Day 12*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 132

“They walked slowly to the car, all silent in their thoughts. Alec drew a fine telescope from his shirt and handed it to Milo.

‘Carry this with you on your journey,’ he said softly. ‘For there is much worth noticing that often escapes the eye. Through it you can see everything from the tender moss in a sidewalk crack to the glow of the farthest star—and most important of all, you can see things as they really are, not just as they seem to be, It’s my gift to you’” (p. 132).

#### Writing Task

“For there is much worth noticing that often escapes the eye.”

--Page 132 The Phantom Tollbooth

What kind of things do you think Alec is speaking of when he tells Milo, “There is much worth noticing that often escapes the eye”? Make a list of things that you may notice but often cannot see. . . maybe a smell of fresh baked cookies, the sound of children laughing, the feel of a new sweatshirt.

**In a narrative paragraph of no less than seven sentences describe something that cannot be experienced only with sight. Why do you appreciate that thing more when you experience it with another sense besides sight?**

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Phantom Tollbooth, Day 13*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 148

“People laughed less and grumbled more, sang less and shouted more, and the sounds they made grew louder and uglier. It became difficult to hear even the birds or the breeze, and soon everyone stopped listening for them” (p. 148).

#### Writing Task

The people of the village start to hear noise more and sounds less. They stop appreciating the sounds the sound keeper gives to them. Why does that anger the sound keeper?

Think about something you do for someone else or someone does for you. What is that thing? Do you feel appreciated? Do you feel you appreciate what the person who does for you? When you don't feel appreciated, what is your reaction? When you do feel appreciated, what is your reaction? What are ways you can show appreciation to those who help you?

**In a narrative paragraph of no less than seven sentences, describe a time when you felt particularly appreciated or unappreciated. Describe in detail what the situation was, how it made you feel, and what you learned.**

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Phantom Tollbooth, Day 14*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 170

“‘I am sure you will,’ gasped Milo. ‘But from now on I am going to have a very good reason before I make up my mind about anything. You can lose too much time jumping to Conclusions’” (p. 170).

#### Writing Task

Milo learned a valuable lesson by jumping to Conclusions. He learned that it is a waste of time. It is also a waste of energy and can sometimes cost you relationships and friendships. It is important to have all of the facts before you make decisions or judgments on things and people.

**In a narrative paragraph of no less than seven sentences, write about a time when you jumped to a conclusion without knowing all the facts and details. What happened? Did you lose time? Energy? Did it cost you any friendships? What did you learn?**

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Phantom Tollbooth, Day 15*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 175-176

“‘Certainly not!’ he shouted, glaring from his most upset face. ‘They’re all the wrong way. Just because you have a choice doesn’t mean that any of them has to be right’” (p. 175-176).

#### Writing Task

Milo learns that just because you have a choice doesn’t mean that it has to be right. There are certain choices that people should make just because it is the human and right thing to do. Read the poem The Bridge Builder by Will Allen Dromgoole attached. Think of choices that you have to make. Have you ever had to make a choice and none of your options seemed like it was the right thing to do?

**In a narrative paragraph of no less than seven sentences, describe what was the situation in the poem? What were your choices? Was one choice better than the others? Were people at risk of getting hurt? How? What did you decide to do? How did that affect others?**

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Phantom Tollbooth, Day 16*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 188

“‘But it is only a big pencil,’ the humbug objected, tapping it with his cane.  
 ‘True enough,’ agreed the Mathemagician; ‘but once you learn how to use it, there’s no end to what you can do’” (p. 188).

#### Writing Task

The Mathemagician is convinced that a pencil is a very powerful tool.  
 Do you agree, ‘that once you learn how to use it there’s no end to what you can do?’  
 Why do you think a pen or pencil have so much power?  
 What do you think that learning symbolizes?

**In a narrative paragraph no less than seven sentences, describe what what you could do with a pencil? How can it be a magical tool? How can it help you?**

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Phantom Tollbooth, Day 17*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 197

“...he went on, ‘it’s very much like you’re trying to reach infinity. You know it is there, but you just don’t know where—but just because you can never reach it doesn’t mean it’s not worth looking for’” (p. 197).

#### Writing Task

.58 of a child is doing his best to help Milo. Even though Milo is discouraged .58 is trying to give him hope and understanding.

**In a narrative paragraph of no less than seven sentences, write about a time that you were discouraged from doing something. What was it? A project? An unpleasant conversation? Did you avoid doing something because of your discouragement? Did you have anyone’s help? What did they do to help? Why is hope important when you are in trouble?**

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Phantom Tollbooth, Day 18*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 217

“‘I’m the demon of insincerity,’ he sobbed. ‘I don’t mean what I say, I don’t mean what I do, and I don’t mean what I am. Most people believe what I tell them and go the wrong way, and stay there, but you and your awful telescope have spoiled everything. I’m going home.’ And crying hysterically, he stamped off in a huff.

‘It certainly pays to have a good look at things,’ observed Milo as he wrapped up the great telescope with great care” (p. 217).

#### Writing Task

Think about insincere people you may know. What do you think they have to gain by being insincere? Are there things you do to protect yourself from people who are two faced? How do you think insincere people benefit by having you stay in a bad place? Milo is able to escape by having a good look at things. Is it worthwhile to make sure you know who you surround yourself with to stay away from insincere people? What are ways to surround yourself with positive people and to weed out those who don’t have your best interests in mind?

**In a narrative paragraph no less than seven sentences write about a time when you or someone you know was in trouble because you/they believed someone insincere. What happened? What did you learn?**

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Phantom Tollbooth, Day 19*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 233

“You must never feel bad about making mistakes,’ explained Reason quietly, ‘as long as you take the trouble to learn from them. For you often learn more from being wrong for the right reasons than right for the wrong reasons.’

‘...Yes that is true,’ admitted Rhyme; ‘But it’s not just learning things that’s important. It’s learning what to do with what you learn and learning why you learn things that’s important’” (p. 233).

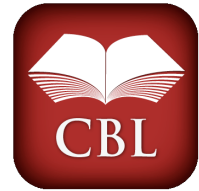
#### Writing Task

Read *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstien, Rhyme and Reason explain to Milo how important it is to learn new things and to learn them for the right reasons. That is how people gain wisdom.

**In a narrative paragraph no less than seven sentences long, write about the difference between wisdom and knowledge. How are they described in *The Phantom Tollbooth*? *The Giving Tree*? How do you become a wise person? Can anyone be wise or do you have to be old before you gain wisdom? How can wisdom help you in your future?**

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Phantom Tollbooth, Day 20*



#### **Key Paragraph, p. 247**

“‘But I never could have done it without everyone else’s help,’ he objected.

‘That may be true,’ said Reason gravely, ‘but you had the courage to try; and what you can do is often simply a matter of what you will do’” (p. 247).

#### **Writing Task**

Milo learns that courage is just taking the step to taking a risk and trying. Having courage is sometimes just being willing to show up and do your best.

**Construct a 5 paragraph narrative essay in which you discuss the three most important attributes that helped Milo complete his journey. Why did these traits help him? Did Milo always possess these attributes or did he learn them along the way? Which characters helped Milo learn or discover each attribute?**