

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, Day 1



Key Paragraph, p. 14

“Jeremy was a strange boy. Ever since I had begun school, he had walked with us as far as the crossroads every morning and met us there in the afternoon. He was often ridiculed by the other children at his school and had shown up more than once with wide red welts on his arms, which Lillian Jean, his older sister, had revealed with satisfaction were the result of his associating with us.”

Writing Task

Jeremy chose to associate with the Logan kids. He risked his friends and family members teasing him and also being beaten. Why would he choose to endure that kind of suffering to befriend the Logan's?

Write a one-paragraph narrative in which you describe a time you decided to be teased for the sake of doing the right thing. It can be a time you decided not to go and do what others were doing, a time you stood up for someone, or a time you choose to practice or study instead of be with your friends. Introduce your reader to the situation and to the characters. Using vivid details and words “show” your reader what happened. Tell your story in a logical order. Close by explaining how the situation affected you.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, Day 2



Key Paragraph, p. 30

“Well, I just think that you are spoiling those children sometime, Mary. They’ve got to learn how things are sometime.’

‘Maybe so, but it does not mean that they have to accept them...and maybe we don’t either’” (p. 30).

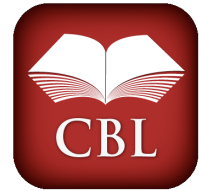
Writing Task

Miss Crocker feels that the kids and Mama are wrong for not wanting to accept the world the way it is. Miss Crocker and many others feel that they should accept things the way they are. Mama realizes that the kids are right and they do not have to like or accept their situation. Her support and actions are very empowering.

Write a narrative paragraph about a time that you were empowered to change your situation. Introduce your situation and describe the characters that made you believe something could be different. Use dialog and details to show how they empowered you to be better or do better.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, Day 3



Key Paragraph, p. 37

“Mama stared at Mr. Morrison’s deep eyes. ‘Whose fault was it?’

Mr. Morrison stared back. ‘I’d say theirs.’

‘Did the other men get fired?’

‘No, ma’am,’ answered Mr. Morrison, ‘they was white.’

Mama nodded and stood. ‘Thank you for telling me, Mr. Morrison. You’re lucky that no worse happened and we’re glad to have you here’” (p. 37).

Writing Task

Mr. Morrison is compelled to tell Mama his story and was honest about what happened at work. He is a man of integrity.

Write a one-paragraph narrative in which you tell about a time that you were honest about a situation. Give a few details about the situation but focus on the point that you honestly told your side of the story. Use details and dialog to describe the scene. Place your details in order. Write one sentence that tells your reader the end result of your conversation. This situation can be real or made-up.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, Day 4



Key Paragraph, p. 45

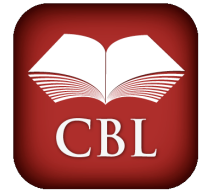
“...One day you’ll have a plenty of clothes and maybe even a car of yo’ own to ride ‘round in, so don’t you pay no mind to them ignorant white folks. You ‘jus keep on studyin’ and get yo’self a good education and you’ll be all right” (p. 45).

Writing Task

In today’s reading Big Ma tells Little Man that one day his life will be better and in order to do that he has to have an education. In what ways/forms does education come? **Write a narrative paragraph in which you tell about the education that you have gotten? How does schooling open doors for people? Explain your value using a lesson that you have learned either in formal school or the school of life.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, Day 5



Key Paragraph, p. 67

“Jason began barking now that danger had passed, but he did not come out. As I reached for the porch to steady myself, there was a sense of quick movement in the darkness. The moon slid from its dark covers, cloaking the earth in its shadowy white light, and I could see Mr. Morrison clearly, moving silently, like a jungle cat, from the side of the house, to the road. With a shotgun in his hand” (p. 67).

Writing Task

Mr. Morrison, Mama, and Big Ma all responded to the news of the ride by choosing to protect the kids. They protected them from information and from the threat if the men would have done something at the house.

Write a narrative about something or someone you would protect. Who is that person or what is that thing? Using describing tones and language tell why you value them to want to protect them. Focus on one snippet of what makes them awesome.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, Day 6



Key Paragraph, p. 76

“‘Well I don’t,’ declared Christopher John. ‘In fact, I wish I’d never heard of no night men or busses or secrets, or holes in the road!’” (p. 76).

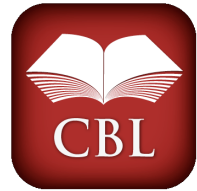
Writing Task

The kid’s knowledge of the night men, their involvement with the bus, and knowing about the happenings around them are stripping them of their innocence. Think about a time that you learned about a significant event that changed you forever. It could be a world event, the loss of a loved one, a new birth, a move, or taking the winning shot in a game.

Write a narrative paragraph in which you share that event. Describe the event. What happened? Who was involved? Share the sights and sounds that you remember. Write in a logical order. Close by sharing with the reader one aspect of the event that changed you most.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, Day 7



Key Paragraph, p. 87

“Sometimes a person’s gotta fight,’ he said slowly. ‘But that store ain’t the place for doing it. From what I hear, folks like them Wallace’s got no respect at all for colored folks and they just think it’s funny when we fight each other” (p. 87).

Writing Task

Mr. Morrison acknowledges the need to fight and for Stacey to get justice from T.J. but he also knows that doing it front of the Wallace’s and fighting amongst themselves is the worst thing they could be doing? Think about a time in your life that you wanted to fight for yourself, for an idea, or an ideal (real or imagined).

Write a one-paragraph narrative in which you tell about your personal fight. Who was involved? Describe with details and dialog what happened. Use descriptive details and language. What was the end result? How did this event change you?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, Day 8



Key Paragraph, p. 100

“‘Mr. Turner,’ said Mama in a whisper, ‘what if someone backed your signature? Would you shop in Vicksburg then?’” (p. 100).

Writing Task

Mama is trying to solve a problem. Get the families to start shopping in Vicksburg where they are treated better and hurt the Wallace’s economically. She is using a very passive yet strong form of protest to stand up for what she believes in and is trying to teach her children that they can make a difference in the process.

Think of a time that you used a passive form of “protest” to get what you wanted (real or made up). **Write a one-paragraph narrative that shares with your reader how using passive forms of protest were more effective than being loud and vocal. What was the situation? What happened? Based on your actions, what was the end result?**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, Day 9



Key Paragraph, p. 112

“What’s the matter with you? You know he was wrong!”

Stacey swallowed to flush his anger, then said gruffly, ‘I know it and you know it, but he don’t know it, and that’s where the trouble is’” (p. 112).

Writing Task

In Cassie’s case, it is understandable why she would be so upset, and at the same time, she has other options. She could have walked away, knowing that things were not going to change. Think back to your own life. Has there ever been a time you reacted in a situation and later you wished you had handled it differently or with more self-control? The people who have the most courage are those that exercise appropriate self-control and remove themselves from volatile situations.

Write a narrative paragraph about a time that you either did exercise self-control or were proud of it, or a time when you could have chosen to exercise more self-control. What are the benefits to exercising self-control? Relate them to having courage. Be detailed in your response. Give an accurately description of what happened with a logical timeline. Tell who was involved and what the end result was.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, Day 10



Key Paragraph, p. 129

“Of course they aren’t,’ Mama said. ‘White people may demand our respect, but what we give them is not respect but fear. What we give to our own people is far more important because it is given freely’” (p. 129).

Writing Task

You can replace the word white in this passage with any color or ethnic group. Think about respect and fear. How can one be mistaken for another? Why is it important to give of yourself freely to others?

Write a one-paragraph narrative describing a time you were given the opportunity to share of yourself freely. It could be assisting someone else, helping at home, school, volunteering your time willingly. Sharing a talent, with someone else with no strings attached. Describe the situation. What did you do? Who was involved? Use dialog and details to convey emotion and the situation. End your paragraph by telling your reader the end result. How did it change you?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, Day 11



Key Paragraph, p. 132

“‘That’ll be a few years yet,’ she answered, readjusting the cardboard lining she had placed in her shoes to protect her feet from the dirt and gravel which could easily seep through the large holes in the soles. She set the shoes facing downward and Mama’s feet in them, no one could tell what the shiny exteriors hid” (p. 132).

Writing Task

Think about a time that you had to do everything in your power to preserve yourself and your dignity and no one knew. They thought that like mama’s shoes everything was shiny and new on the outside.

Write a one-paragraph narrative in which you detail the situation. What happened? Where did it occur? Who was involved? Give evidence and convey emotion to your reader. How did the situation resolve itself? This can be real or imagined.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, Day 12



Key Paragraph, p. 142-143

“If you ain’t got the brains of a flea to see that this T.J. fellow made a fool of you, then you’ll never get anywhere in this world. It’s tough out there, boy, and as long as there are people, there’s gonna be somebody trying to drag you down. It’s up to you whether you let them or not...Then if you want something and it’s a good thing and you got it in the right way, you better hang on to it and don’t let nobody talk you out of it. You care what a lot of useless people say ‘bout you you’ll never get anywhere, ‘cause there’s a lotta folks don’t want you to make it. You understand what I’m telling you?” (p. 142-143).

Writing Task

What is Uncle Hammer’s message to T.J.? Make a list on the board. What could Stacey have done instead of giving away his coat? How could Stacey respond to T.J. in general so that he had more power and control in a positive way?

Has anyone ever tried to get you down? Has anyone ever said something about you that was not true? Survival takes courage and determination not to let other people’s false opinions of you get you down.

Write a narrative paragraph in which you detail and experience where a person was doing everything in their power to bring you down (or a time where you refused to let them). Explain the situation. What tactics did they use to get you to make poor choices? Use a logical chronological order to tell your story. Use vivid details to explain who was involved and what the situation was. Tell your reader what you learned from the experience.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, Day 13



Key Paragraph, p. 161

“I am a southerner, born and bred, but that doesn’t mean I approve of all that goes on here, and there are a lot of other white people who feel the same way” (p. 161).

Writing Task

Mr. Jamison offers to back the Logan plan to shop in Vicksburg with his credit. He offers because he does not agree with the way things are. The family is trying to find a solution and he is willing to help them.

Write a 1-2 paragraph narrative about a time that someone (who you least expected) offered to help you. What was the situation? Who was involved? Why were they willing to assist? Explain with details, your feelings, and reservations about the situation.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, Day 14



Key Paragraph, p. 164

“Mr. Jamison picked up his briefcase. ‘...The sad thing is, you know in the end you can’t beat him or the Wallace’s.’ Papa looked down at the boys and me awaiting his reply, and then nodded slightly, as if he agreed. ‘Still,’ he said, ‘I want these children to know we tried, and what we can’t do now, maybe one day they will’” (p. 164).

Writing Task

Mr. Jamison talks of beating the Wallace’s and the Grangers. Do you think that the family has to beat them in order to make change or can they be laying the groundwork? Think about a hope you have to make the world better for the next generation.

Write a one-paragraph narrative in which you tell your reader about a change you want to make for the future. Be very specific. Tell your reader what the change is and why it matters. Who will benefit from your work? How do you see that change benefiting others? (Later this will lead to the letter to the editor.)

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, Day 15



Key Paragraph, p. 176

“There are things you can’t back down on, things you gotta take a stand on. But it’s up to you to decide what them things are. You have to demand respect in this world, ain’t nobody gonna hand it to you. How you carry yourself, what you stand for—that’s how you gain respect. But, little one, ain’t nobody’s respect worth more than your own. You understand that?” (p. 176).

Writing Task

Think about a time that you had to stand up for an issue, real or imagined. You had to demand respect from someone.

Write a one-paragraph narrative in which you describe the situation. Who was involved? What was the situation? What was your desired outcome? Use dialog and vivid details to describe the scene. What was the end result and what did you learn?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, Day 16



Key Paragraph, p. 187

“Mr. Morrison said softly, ‘I got me a nice house to live in, the best cooking a man could want, and for the first time in a long time I got me a family. That’s right good pay, I’d say’” (p. 187).

Writing Task

“You can choose your friends but you sho' can't choose your family, an' they're still kin to you no matter whether you acknowledge 'em or not, and it makes you look right silly when you don't.”
Harper Lee.

Mr. Morrison has value in the friends/family he has joined. This time he gets to choose whom he surrounds himself with and he is willing to do whatever he can for them. Think of your family and your friends.

Write a one paragraph about one member of your family or your circle of friends that you value most. What did this person do to earn that value from you? Be specific and show with details what you gain from your relationship with them.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, Day 17



Key Paragraph pg. 205-206

“You see that old fig tree over yonder, Cassie? Them other trees all around...that oak and walnut, they’re a lot bigger and they take up more room and give so much shade. They almost overshadow the little ole fig. But that fig tree’s got roots that run deep, and it belongs in the yard as much as the oak and the walnut...Just keeps on growing and doing what it gotta do. It don’t give up. It give up, it’ll die. There’s a lesson to be learned from that little tree, Cassie girl, ‘cause were like it. We keep doing what we gotta, and we don’t give up. We can’t” (p. 205-206).

Writing Task

Papa gives Cassie a lesson in not giving up. He is honest and he knows that they are the underdogs and that they cannot give up. Think about a time in your life where you had to try with your heart and soul to succeed (it can be real or made up). It could be trying out for a sports team, passing a class, getting a job, etc.

Write a one-paragraph narrative about the situation. Who was involved? Use good flow and provide details to give a logical telling of the event. How did it end up? How did the end result affect you?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, Day 18



Key Paragraph, p. 207

“He’ll be thirteen next month, honey, and he needs to be with me more. I can’t take him with me on the railroad, but I can take him with me where I go ‘round here. Ana I want him to know business...how to take care of it, how to take care of things when I am not around” (p. 207).

Writing Task

Think about the role of men and women in society. In some cultures that are strict rites of passage. You are a man/woman....when. In others there is not. How do you know when you become a man or a woman? What has to happen in order for that change to occur? Do you think it is chronological or an event?

Write a narrative paragraph in which you detail how you or your family determine if a person has become a “man or a woman”. Be very specific with your details.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, Day 19



Key Paragraph, p. 225

“Mr. Morrison climbed out of the wagon. Mr. Morrison’s long shadow fell over him and for a breathless second, Mr. Morrison towered dangerously near him. But as the fear grew white on Kaleb Wallace’s face, Mr. Morrison turned without a word and peered into the truck” (p. 225).

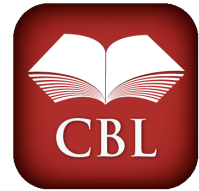
Writing Task

Mr. Morrison does nothing more than get down from the wagon. His sheer presence is intimidating to Kaleb Wallace. Think about a time that didn’t have to say anything or do anything just your presence was enough to be calming, comforting, or intimidating. This could also be a time that someone else’s presence affected you.

Write a one-paragraph narrative in which you describe that snippet in time. What was the situation? Who was involved? What had happened? What did that presence do to help or hinder the situation? Be detailed in your description and use a logical flow of order.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, Day 20



Key Paragraph, p. 241

“But T.J. did not follow immediately. He remained standing in the middle of the compound, his face puzzled and undecided. I had never seen him look more desolately alone, and for a fleeting second I felt almost sorry for him” (p. 241).

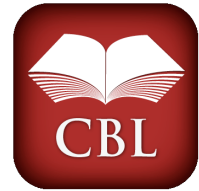
Writing Task

T.J. is stuck in the middle of two worlds. His black friends have lost what little respect for him that they had. His new white friends are using him and mean. He is lost and struggling to find a place to belong. Think about a time that you didn't seem to fit in (real or imagined) or about a time you went out of your way to help someone belong. It may be a time you moved, were new to a school or job, or new on a team or group.

Write a one-paragraph narrative in which you describe in detail the situation. Use dialog to assist in the telling of your story. Who was involved and what happened? Tell how the situation affected you.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, Day 21



Key Paragraph, p. 249

“As far back as I could remember, Stacey had felt a responsibility for T.J. I had never really understood why. Perhaps he felt that even a person as despicable as T.J. needed someone he could call “friend”, or perhaps he sensed T.J.’s vulnerability better than T.J. did himself” (p. 249).

Writing Task

Think about people you know who might be considered an under-dog or friendless. Why do people like Stacey befriend them? What are things that we all can give to those who are “hard to love”?

Write a one-paragraph narrative in which you describe a time that you were a friend to someone who was friendless (real or imagined) or you could have been a better friend to them. Describe the situation and who was involved. Include dialog to help your reader better grasp the situation. Conclude by telling the reader how that one snippet in time affected you.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, Day 22



Key Paragraph, p. 276

"I had never liked T.J., but he had always been there, a part of me, a part of my life, just like the mud and the rain, and I had thought that he would always be. Yet the mud and the rain and the dust would all pass. I knew and understood that. What had happened to T.J. in the night I did not understand, but I knew it would not pass. And I cried for those things which happened in the night and would not pass" (p. 276).

Writing Task

Cassie talks about all of the things that are a part of her, her fabric, all of the good and all of the bad. She knows that the bad will pass and things will change. She also realizes that what happened to T.J. would be with her forever. She would forever be changed by it.

Think of an event that occurred in your life that changed you for the good or the bad (it can be real or imagined). **Write a one-paragraph narrative in which you share with the reader what happened. Introduce the topic and characters. Use good details and vivid language. If the event involved someone else, use dialog. Be clear and concise and use a logical flow and order to your topic.**