

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Wringer, Day 1



Key Paragraph – Chapter 1, Page 5

“Sometimes he wished it would come after him, chase him, this thing he did not want to be. Then at least he could run from it, he could hide. But the thing never moved. It merely waited. Waited for him to come to it.

And he would. He would come to it as surely as nine follows eight and ten follows nine. He would come to it without having to pedal or run or walk or even move a muscle. He would fall smack into the lap of it without doing anything but breath. In the end he would get there simply by growing one day older.”

Writing Task

Think back to an experience that changed the your life.

- What was the experience?
- Why was this experience so life changing for you?
- What were the circumstances that brought about this change of view?

Write a narrative paragraph describing this life changing experience.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Wringer, Day 2



Key Paragraph - Chapter 4, Page 17

"Palmer tried to hold the moment there, but it would not stay. It tunneled back through time and burst up onto this same field three years before, the first Saturday in August, when the grass was streaked with red and guns were booming and birds were falling. From the treetops, from the clouds they plunged to earth, thumped to the ground, sometimes with a bounce. And still some of them lived, flopping drunkenly across the grass until a wringer grabbed one by the neck and twisted and that was that."

Writing Task

The moment Palmer went to the soccer field with the boys, he was immediately transported in his mind to the moment three years before when he was traumatized by the pigeon shoot and by the wringers.

- Have you ever had an experience where just by walking into a particular place (a room, a park, building, etc.) you felt like you were reliving a scary moment in your life?

Write a narrative paragraph that describes the feelings, emotions, sights, smells, etc. that you experienced.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Wringer, Day 3



Key Paragraph - Chapter 7, Page 37

"As he kicked his checkered soccer ball along the streets, he could feel it lurking in shadowy doorways, behind shaded windows. He would not look. He felt it come out of the shadows, and the sunlight on the back of his neck turned to frost. It was behind him. He picked up his ball and ran.

But he could not run from time. It was the first week in August.
Family Fest had arrived"

Writing Task

Everyone has a fear of something in the back of their minds. For some, it is the fear of drowning; for others, it may be of being bitten by a snake or a dog. Write a narrative paragraph about your fear.

- How did you develop this fear?
- What happens to you when you are faced with the thing you are afraid of?
- Give an example of when you were faced with your biggest fear.
- Did you overcome it, or did it overwhelm you?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Wringer, Day 4



Key Paragraph - Chapter 8, Page 42-43

"But the questions did not stop. Killing the pigeons and putting them out of their misery stubbornly refused to mean the same thing. Palmer thought about misery, and it seemed to him that a shotgun was not the only way to end it. When Palmer was miserable, for example, his mother or father would hold him close and wipe his tears. When Palmers mother or father put him out of his misery, they did not shoot him, they offered him a cookie. Why then on Pigeon Day did the people bring guns instead of cookies? It was confusing."

Writing Task

In young Palmer's naive view, the pigeons do not seem miserable, and he reasons that when he feels bad, his parents provide comfort in many ways far less extreme than shooting. Has anyone ever comforted you when you were upset? Have you ever helped or comforted someone who was miserable or upset? Write a narrative paragraph telling how you were comforted when you were miserable or how you comforted someone else who was miserable or upset.

If you are writing about being comforted by someone:

- Why were you upset?
- Where were you and when did this happen?
- Who helped you?
- What did they do to help you feel better?

If you are writing about comforting another person:

- Who was this person?
- Why were they upset?
- Where were you? When did you help this person?
- How did you help this person? What did you do to make them feel better?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Wringer, Day 5



Key Paragraph - Chapter 10, Page 53

“There, standing before the golden pigeon, the odor of gunsmoke came to him, and he understood that his father was a shooter.

It was about then that Palmer began to feel a certain tilt to his life. Time became a sliding board, at the bottom of which awaited his tenth birthday.”

Writing Task

At this point in the book, Palmer is faced with the idea of death for the first time when he realizes that his own father was a shooter of pigeons, animals that Palmer sees to be totally innocent. Palmer feels overwhelmed by the inevitability of his tenth birthday and the day he will be forced to be a wringer.

Think about a time in your own life when you could have faced your fear, but hid from it. Write a narrative paragraph about this experience.

- How old were you?
- Where were you?
- What was the fear?
- How did you hide from it?
- What was the outcome? What finally happened?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Wringer, Day 6



Key Paragraph - Chapter 12, Page 61

“But the thrill of it, the honor of it all swept all other feelings away. Jogging through the dark and sleeping alleyways, skirting pools of streetlight, he imagined he was a toy lead soldier come to life, following Sergeant Beans and Private Mutto on a mission behind enemy lines. He loved these guys. He would follow them anywhere. He wondered what adventures awaited him in the days and years ahead.”

Writing Task

Palmer is beginning to feel like he finally is one of the guys when they sneak into his room at night to get him to sneak out of the house to go on an adventure. Write a narrative paragraph about a time when you finally felt like you were accepted by your friends.

- When did this happen
- Where did it happen
- How old were you?
- Who was with you?
- What happened?
- Why do you think you were finally accepted?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Wringer, Day 7



Key Paragraph - Chapter 13, Page 73

“Palmer fired without restraint. Since summer he had hardly spoken to her He had found out there just wasn’t room in his life for Dorothy and the guys. Like peanut butter and pickles, they don’t mix.”

Writing Task

Part of growing up is going through a stage in childhood where boys don’t like the girls and vice-versa. Write a narrative paragraph about a friend you may have had of the opposite sex when you were younger that you grew apart from? Why did you grow apart?

- Where did you live?
- How old were you?
- Who was the friend?
- Why were you friends? What did you like about this person?
- What happened that made you grow apart?
- What finally happened?
- How do you feel about this now?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Wringer, Day 8



Remember to ask literal, structural, idea, craft, author, literature, life, evaluate, and inference questions every day.

Key Paragraph - Chapter 15, page 77

Palmer was afraid he knew the answer. He knew that food was a powerful persuader of animals. Even his mother had told him once about the stray cat: "Don't feed him, or he'll keep coming back. "If he fed the pigeon, it would be like sending it an invitation to return, an invitation to disaster.

That's why Palmer was surprised to find himself carrying a handful of Franken Puffs up the stairs. And opening up the window. And tossing the Puffs onto the snow, now crusted and gleaming with sun melt.

Writing Task

Palmer had decided to feed the stray pigeon. He knows what will happen. The bird will stay. Have you ever fed a stray animal? What happened? Write a narrative paragraph telling what happened when you fed the stay animal.

- What kind of animal was it? What did it look like?
- Where was the animal?
- When did this happen? How old were you?
- Did anyone tell you not to feed this animal? Who?
- What did you feed the animal? Did they eat the food?
- Why did you feed the animal?
- What happened as a result of you feeding this animal?
- Would you ever feed another stray animal? Why or why not?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Wringer, Day 9



Key Paragraph - Chapter 18, Page 94

“Act normal.

In his room, in the streets, at school, seven days a week he whispered to himself “Act normal...act normal...”

But how could he act normal knowing there was a second pigeon right here in the house, a golden one that never took wing from the mantel in the den? Knowing that in this house, in this town, only the golden pigeon is allowed to roost. Knowing that he was holding inside himself such stupendous news.

Act normal.”

Writing Task

Palmer is really struggling trying to act normal while he is keeping Nipper in his room. Write a narrative paragraph about a time that you had a secret so good that you were just dying to tell somebody, but you were afraid to tell anyone.

- What happened?
- What was the secret?
- Did you keep the secret?
- When the secret finally came out, were the consequences as bad as you thought they would be?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Wringer, Day 10



Key Paragraph - Chapter 20, Page 104

“None of them saw what happened next, but there was really no need to see. The scream came as they huddled against the tires of the car. Palmer had thought he knew screams. He had heard plenty of them in the movies and on T.V. and at sporting events. But what he heard now was something else - it was real - and it sent icy buckshot through his body”

Writing Task

Palmer feels guilty, because this time he senses that maybe the prank of nailing the dead muskrat to Dorothy's door may have gone too far. Write 2 narrative paragraphs about a time when either you played a prank on someone else or someone played one on you that somehow 'crossed the line'.

The first paragraph will describe the prank and tell who was involved in the prank. The second paragraph will describe exactly what happened and how the line was crossed. You will end with what you learned from this experience.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Wringer, Day 11



Key Paragraph - Chapter 22, Page 116

“He dashed down the stairs, out the door and across the street, coatless, not feeling the cold. He knocked on her door. He pressed the doorbell. Inside he heard her footsteps, her voice calling, “I’ll get it!”

The door opened Warmth and light washed over him. She smiled. She was glad to see him. He did not wait another moment. He said, I have a pigeon.”

Writing Task

Palmer has finally reached the point that he cannot keep his secret for one more minute, and has finally worked up the courage to share with someone else (Dorothy) about Nipper. Have you ever had a secret that was so good that you couldn’t keep it any longer and had to share it with someone? Write a narrative paragraph about the experience?

- What was the secret?
- Who did you finally tell?
- How did they respond?
- How did you feel once your secret was out?
- Did anything change once your secret was out?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Wringer, Day 12



Key Paragraph - Chapter 24, Page 129

"Tears filled his eyes. He let go. 'I don't want to be a wringer. But everyone else is a wringer when they're ten, and I'm going to be ten in seventy-one days, and then I'm going to have to be a wringer too but I don't want to. So what kind of a kid am I? Everybody wants to kill pigeons but me. What's the matter with me?'"

Key Paragraph - Chapter 24, Page 130

"Dorothy hopped down from the desk. She walked across the room and stood before Palmer and looked straight into his eyes. 'Then don't,' she said. She made it sound so simple."

Writing Task

Dorothy seems to cut through all of the emotions and fears Palmer has about being a wringer and make the solution seem so simple. Everyone has had someone that they felt like they could go to with their problems and have that person be able to give them good advice. Maybe it was a parent, grandparent, teacher, or clergyman. Write a narrative paragraph about that person and how that special person helps you to see things more clearly.

- Who was this person?
- How old were you?
- What problem did you bring to this person?
- What advice did they give you or how did it help you?
- Were you able to see things more clearly? Why or why not?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Wringer, Day 13



Remember to ask literal, structural, idea, craft, author, literature, life, evaluate, and inference questions every day.

Key Paragraph - Chapter 25, Page 132

“They came to the corner of Maple and Kane and stopped. A decision had to be made which way to go. Palmer was about to throw his vote to baseball when suddenly the sunlight was briefly snipped, as if a page had been turned in front of a lightbulb. This was followed in turn by a flapping sound, the feel of four-toed feet in his hair, and the deep-throated treble of a familiar voice. Palmer’s mind riffled through a thousand answers to account for all this, but only one made sense. Nipper had just landed on his head.”

Writing Task

One of Palmer’s biggest fears actually comes true when as he is hanging out with the guys, Nipper lands right on top of his head. Write a narrative paragraph about a time when your worst fear actually happened, and how you responded to it.

- What was your fear and why was this a fear?
- How did your fear come true?
- Where were you?
- Who were you with?
- What happened?
- Did you panic, or did you keep a cool head?
- Was the aftermath as bad as you imagined, or were you worried about nothing?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Wringer, Day 14



Key Paragraph - Chapter 27, Page 149

"Lightly, lazily they tickled Nipper's feathers. Their fingers mingled.

"Know what?" said Dorothy.

"What."

"You're a hero."

"Huh?"

"All this stuff you're doing. You're probably the naughtiest student there's ever been in our school. And you're doing it all to save him."

Palmer frowned. "That's no hero. I just live in the wrong town, that's all."

Writing Task

Dorothy tells Palmer that she thinks that he is a hero. Do you think Palmer is a hero? Have you ever been a hero or witnessed someone else being a hero or acting heroic? Write a narrative paragraph explaining why you were a hero or why someone else was a hero.

- What did they(you) do?
- Why did they (you) do this?
- Where were they (you)?
- Who else was there?
- What finally happened?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Wringer, Day 15



Key Paragraph - Chapter 28, Page 158

"Palmer had half expected the sock to sprout pink feet and glossy feathers. It did not. He wanted to call out to all the wringers-in-training: *Hey, who are we trying to kid? This is no pigeon. You want to know what a real pigeon feels like - ask me. This is nothing but a sock.*

"Let's go, son," said the man. "Hard and quick."

Palmer wrung its neck, hard and quick. He dashed it to the ground at the man's feet and marched off.

The man said nothing."

Writing Task

Everyone has seen traffic slow down to look at the scene of an accident on the freeway. When there is a fire, people will often rush to the scene to watch the fireman. Write a narrative paragraph about a time when you either saw people do this, or you did it yourself. Why do you think people have the need to see things like that?

- Where were you?
- When was this?
- Why did you watch?
- Who was with you?
- What had happened?
- Would you do this again?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Wringer, Day 16



Key Paragraph - Chapter 29, Pages 161

"It was becoming harder and harder to do, for in these recent weeks Palmer had come to realize that, with the possible exception of Henry, the guys whose company he had once craved he now feared. If they ever found out for sure that he was a traitor, Farquar's Treatment would feel like babies play compared to what they could do. He imagined them torturing him until he led them to his forbidden pet. At that point Nipper was as good as dead."

Writing Task

As he gets older, Palmer feels like he has less and less in common with the guys, and even begins to fear them. Think about friends that you had when you were younger that you are no longer friends with because you have changed. Write a narrative paragraph describing how you or your former friends have changed and why the friendship ended.

- Who were your friends?
- How old were you? How old were your friends?
- How did you know each other?
- What did you have in common or what did you like to do together?
- What changed?
- Why did things change?
- How did things change?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Wringer, Day 17



Key Paragraph - Chapter 32, Pages 178-179

“They stared at him, waiting. He saw the foot grinding the ball, the name into the sidewalk. He heard the scream, heard it coming a split second before the others heard it, the scream that he knew now had been growing inside him for a long time. He planted his feet and bent his knees and balled his fists and let it come all the way out: “No nothing! No! No Treatment! No wringer! No Snots!” He thrust his scream at Beans. “I’m not Snots! My name is Palmer! My name is Palmer!” He stepped back, he hunkered down. “No!”
Then he ran.”

Writing Task

Palmer finally makes a stand for his beliefs when he refuses “The Treatment.” Write a narrative paragraph about a time when you stood up for something you believed in, even though there might be physical consequences as a result. Did you do the right thing?

- Who was there?
- Where did this happen?
- When did this happen?
- How old were you?
- Why did you stand up on this occasion?
- What finally happened?
- Would you do it again?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Wringer, Day 18



Key Paragraph - Chapter 34, Page 188

“Dorothy waited as long as she could before becoming impatient, then worried. She could not see an inch into the dense treeline. The sun was directly overhead, making a shadowless desert of the meadow. The handlebars of the bicycle were hot. Then, there he was, popping from the woods, pedaling furiously straight at her, the donut box flying in the basket. As he came closer, she could see that his face was red and wet, his mouth twisted. The shoebox was empty. He did not stop nor look at her, but charged with a clatter onto the road.”

Writing Task

Palmer knows he must let Nipper go even though he loves the bird. Palmer does this in order to keep Nipper safe. Have you ever let someone or something dear to you go in order to keep them safe? Write a narrative paragraph explaining what happened.

Remember to include:

- Who
- What
- Where
- When
- How
- Why

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Wringer, Day 19



Key Paragraph - Chapter 35, Page 194

"They talked through much of the morning. Palmer told her everything. Nipper's arrival after the snowstorm. The daily wake-up ear peck. The guys and their growing suspicions. Treestumping Dorothy. Spitting on the classroom floor. (He wished he had a camera to preserve the look on her face.) Refusing The Treatment. When he told her of his lifelong fear, that he dreaded the day he would become ten and a wringer, his lip quivered and she made a sound of pain and squeezed him tight to her and stroked his head and his back."

Writing Task

Palmer's mother finally lets him off the hook and lets him know that she and his father have known about Nipper for quite some time. Palmer then proceeds to tell his mother the whole story.

Write two narrative paragraphs about a time when you kept a secret from someone that you didn't want to keep, but were relieved when it was finally out. Did you then go back and tell them the whole story the way Palmer did? Would you?

In the first paragraph tell about the secret. In the second paragraph explain what happened you shared the secret. Did you share the whole story?

Remember to include:

- Who
- What
- Where
- When
- How
- Why

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Wringer, Day 20



Key Paragraph - Chapter 38, Page 205

" The price for peace had been high: expelling himself from the gang, proclaiming himself a traitor, banishing his beloved pet. For such a price, a peace should be excellent. Yet when Palmer reaches for it, tried to taste it, it was not there. Instead he found only his blizzard-blown friend-images and memories and dreams.

Writing Task

Even though Palmer has released Nipper for his own safety, he is still dreading the upcoming pigeon shoot. Everywhere he goes, even by just hearing the pop of cap guns, he was transported to the shooting field in his mind. He has not found the peace he thought he would find even though he has tried very hard and given up much to find it.

Has this ever happened to you? You worked so hard to attain something but you just could not attain it? Write a narrative paragraph telling about a time when you were trying very hard to find something or attain something in your life.

- What was the thing you were trying very hard to find or attain?
- What did you try to do to find/attain it?
- How did you try to find/attain this?
- Why were you trying to find/attain it?
- Was it what you thought it would be when you finally found it or attained it?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Wringer, Day 21



Key Paragraph - Chapter 38, Page 204

"Dorothy" – he was screeching—"you let him out at the *railroad yards*."

Dorothy threw up her hands. "So?"

"So? The *railroad yards* are where they go to trap *pigeons* and bring them *here*. Why did you have to let him go *there*?"

A boom was followed by a second, louder explosion of cheers and howling laughter. Something outrageous had happened.

Dorothy stared, stunned, at Palmer. Her lips quivered. "We don't know about that stuff. Nobody ever told *us* that. Nobody in *my* family shoots pigeons!" She was screaming."

Writing Task

It appears that contrary to Palmer's best efforts to try and save Nipper that Dorothy unwittingly takes Nipper to the one place where he is certain to be caught. The Scottish poet Robert Burns once wrote that "the best laid plans of mice and men oft go awry."

Write a narrative paragraph for two about a time that it seemed like no matter what you did to try and avoid something, it happened anyway.

Remember to include:

- Who
- What
- Where
- When
- How
- Why

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Wringer, Day 22



Key Paragraph - Chapter 40, Page 228

"Standing there in feathers up to his sneaker knots, Palmer felt a peace, a lightness that he had never known before, as if restraining straps had snapped, setting him free to float upward. For a moment, feeling in his fingertips the quick beating of Nipper's acorn-size heart, he believed he could fly. Through a pigeon's eye he looked down from the sky upon the field, the thousands of upturned faces, and saw nothing at all to fear."

Writing Task

FINAL WRITING PRODUCT

The author, Jerry Spinelli, has written a very dramatic ending. Palmer's relief gives way to panic and sorrow and finally joy and unconditional love as he rescues Nipper from the shooting field. Was this a satisfying ending to the story? Write a narrative alternative ending to the story, summarizing it in three paragraphs. How might your ending be different?

OR

What might a sequel to *Wringer* look like? Imagine that you are writing a sequel to this book, using the same characters, but about five years later. What kinds of adventures and/or problems might teenage Palmer go through? Or Dorothy? Or Beans, Mutto, and Henry? Write a narrative three paragraph essay in which you lay out the plot for your sequel. What larger lesson (moral) might you want your readers to take away from it?