

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Cay, Day 1*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 16

"My mother, I knew, had not wanted to come to Curacao in late 1939, but my father had argued that he was needed for the war effort even though the United States was not at war then. Royal Dutch Shell had borrowed him from his American company because he was an expert in refineries and gasoline production. But the moment she saw it, my mother decided she didn't like Curacao and she often complained about the smell of gas and oil whenever the trade winds died down" (p. 16).

#### Writing Prompt

Even before they moved to Curacao, Phillip's parents had different opinions of the move. **Write an argumentative paragraph in which you answer all of the following questions. Be sure to support your claims with clear reasons.**

- Based on what you know so far, do you think moving was the right thing to do? Why or why not?
- What was Phillip's father's view of the move? Why did he think they should move to Curacao?
- What was Phillip's mom's view of the move? Why did she feel this way?
- Do you think Phillip wanted to move? Why?
- Should his parents have taken his opinion into account? Why or why not?
- Should one person's view count more than the others? Tell why or why not and defend your opinion.
- Do you think this family is acting with justice while making this decision to move? Why?

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Cay, Day 2*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 24

“Suddenly, I felt hollow inside. Then I became angry and accused her of being a coward. She told me to go off to school. I said I hated her” (p. 24).

#### Writing Prompt

Justice Requires Restraint. **Write an argumentative paragraph responding to the above paragraph. Be sure to answer the following questions and support your claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence. Write a concluding statement.**

- Is Phillip showing justice *or* restraint toward his mother in this chapter?
- Do you believe his mother is a coward? Why?
- Why is she forcing Phillip to leave Curacao against his will?
- Is this the right thing to do? Why or why not?

#### Paragraph Template

|                                                                                                                            |                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Is Phillip showing justice or restraint toward his mother in this chapter? Give at least 2 examples to support your claim. |                        |
| Do you believe his mother is a coward? Why?                                                                                |                        |
| Why is she forcing Phillip to leave Curacao against his will?                                                              |                        |
| Is this the right or just thing to do? Why or why not?                                                                     |                        |
| What is your concluding statement?                                                                                         | For these reasons..... |

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Cay, Day 3*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 36-37

“Although I hadn’t thought so before, I was now beginning to believe that my mother was right. She didn’t like them. She didn’t like it when Henrik and I would go down to St. Anna Bay and play near the schooners. But it was always fun. The black people would laugh at us and toss us bananas or papayas.

She’d say, when she knew where we’d been, ‘They are not the same as you, Phillip. They are different and they live differently. That’s the way it must be.’ Henrik, who’d grown up in Curacao with them, couldn’t understand why my mother felt this way” (p. 36-37).

#### Writing Prompt

**Write an argumentative paragraph explaining how Phillip feels about people of color, and how you believe he should treat Timothy in this situation. Support your ideas with clear reasons and relevant evidence. Make sure you end your paragraph with a concluding statement. Remember: Justice Requires Restraint. Be sure to address the following:**

- What would be the *just* way for Phillip to behave?
- What did Phillip’s mother mean by the statement above? Why would she feel that way?
- What kind of relationship did she want her son to have with people of different races?
- What was Phillip’s original opinion on the issue? Why?
- How has that changed now that he’s with Timothy?

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Cay, Day 4*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 46

"I remember that at one point my fear turned to anger. Anger at Timothy for not letting me stay in the water with my mother, and anger at her because I was on the raft. I began hitting him and I remember him saying, 'If dat will make you bettah, go 'ead' (p. 46).

#### Writing Prompt

At the end of the reading, Phillip becomes very angry. **Write an argumentative paragraph with clear reasons and relevant evidence answering the following questions:**

- Why is Phillip angry? Give clear reasons.
- Who is he *really* angry with? Why?
- Does Phillip have a right to be angry?
- Is it ever ok to be angry with another person because of your life circumstances? Why?
- Is he treating Timothy with justice or restraint in this case? Give evidence.
- Why does Timothy respond to Phillip the way he does?
- Why is this a good way to treat Phillip right now?

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Cay, Day 5*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 49

“But the long, hot day was passing without sight of anything. I knew Timothy was constantly scanning the sea. It was all so calm now that the raft didn’t even seem to be drifting. Once, I crawled over to the edge to touch the warm water and felt Timothy right behind me” (p. 49).

#### Writing Prompt

Now that he is blind, Phillip is beginning to depend almost completely on Timothy for survival.

**Write an argument in which you answer the following question and you support your claims with logical reasoning and relevant evidence. If your teacher allows your access use the Internet to develop your claims and reasoning. Make sure you conclude with a statement or two that follows and supports the argument you present.**

- Does our society treat individuals with disabilities differently than people without disabilities?
- In which ways do you believe it is okay or respectful to treat people with disabilities differently?
- In which way do you believe it is disrespectful to treat people with disabilities differently?

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Cay, Day 6*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 55

"I said, 'I don't want to go on that island.'

I don't think there was anyone on earth as stubborn as old Timothy. There was steel in his voice when he answered, 'We be goin' on dat islan', young bahss. Dat be true'" (p. 55).

#### Writing Prompt

Both Phillip's father and mother ignored Phillip's opinion about whether or not the family should stay on Curacao at the beginning of the book. Now, Timothy also ignores his opinion. **Write an argumentative paragraph addressing the following:**

- At twelve, do you think a boy like Phillip is old enough to have input in important decisions that will affect his future?
- Describe a time in your life that a decision was made about your life by someone else.
  - Who made the decision for you?
  - What was the decision?
  - Why did they make the decision? What factors were considered in making the decision?
  - How did it make you feel?
  - Was it the best thing for you?
  - Would you do something differently? Why? Give clear reasons.
  - How did you feel about the person making the decision? Do you think they treated you justly? Support your claims.

#### Paragraph Template

|                                                                                                    |  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| Who made the decision?                                                                             |  |
| What was the decision?                                                                             |  |
| Why did they make the decision? What factors were considered in making the decision?               |  |
| How did it make you feel?                                                                          |  |
| Was it the best thing for you?                                                                     |  |
| Would you do something differently?                                                                |  |
| How did you feel about the person making the decision? Did you respect them and treat them justly? |  |
| Did they treat you justly?                                                                         |  |

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Cay, Day 7*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 59

“Of course, both times happened when I was younger. Now, my father was always honest with me, I thought, because he said that in the end that was better. I wished Timothy would be honest with me” (p. 59).

#### Writing Prompt

Do you agree with Phillip? Is honesty always the best policy? Does dishonesty ever serve justice?

**Write at least a two paragraph argument about a time when you weren't sure whether being honest was the right choice.**

- How old were you?
- Where were you?
- Who were you with?
- What was the situation?
- Did you choose to tell the truth? Why or why not?
- What was the result?
- Do you feel you acted with justice on that occasion?

#### Paragraph template

|                                                                                                 |  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| How old were you?<br>Where were you?<br>Who was with you?                                       |  |
| What was the situation?                                                                         |  |
| Did you choose to tell the truth?<br>Why or why not?                                            |  |
| What was the result?                                                                            |  |
| Do you feel like you acted with justice on the occasion? Why or why not? Support your argument. |  |

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Cay, Day 8*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 65

"My mother was right, I thought. They had their place and we had ours. He did not really like me, or he would have taken me along. He was different" (p. 65).

#### Writing Prompt

Phillip does not treat Timothy with justice. Despite all the things Timothy helps him with, Phillip continues to feel and act like he is inherently better than the old man. Phillip assumes that because Timothy is different, he is not smart or caring.

**Write at least two argumentative paragraphs, which support the claim that we should never judge someone because of their background or appearance. Support your claims with clear and relevant evidence, acknowledge opposing claims and conclude with support for your argument.**

#### Paragraph Template

|                                                                                                     |  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| List reasons why we should never judge someone by their background or appearance.                   |  |
| List some evidence for your claims.... or what could happen?                                        |  |
| Why do some people believe it is a good practice to judge others by their background or appearance? |  |
| Tell why their beliefs are not justified.                                                           |  |
| Support your argument. This is why...                                                               |  |

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Cay, Day 9*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 70

“The rope was for me. If he happened to be out on the reef, and I heard a plane, I could take a light from our campfire, follow the rope down, and touch off the big fire. The vine rope would also serve to get me safely down to the beach” (p. 70).

#### Writing Prompt

Timothy constantly encourages and pushes Phillip to help on the island. Slowly, Phillip realizes that Timothy is trying to help Phillip, not merely bully him.

Think about a time when someone – a friend, parent, teacher, or other adult – motivated you to do something good for yourself or another person. **Write an argumentative paragraph or two about the situation, explaining why this was good for you. Make sure to answer all of the following questions and end your writing with a concluding statement.**

- Who was the person?
- What did he or she try to get you to do? Why?
- What was that person’s reason for pushing you?
- Why did you resist doing this thing at first?
- Did you do it? Why or why not?
- Would you change the situation if you could go back? Why or why not?
- Was this in your best interest? Would you do the same for someone else?

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Cay, Day 10*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 74

"I liked the rain because it was something I could hear and feel; not something I must see. It peppered in bursts against the frond roof, and I could hear the drips as it leaked through. The squall wind was in the tops of the palms and I could imagine how they looked in the night sky, thrashing against each other high over our little cay" (p. 74).

#### Writing Prompt

Throughout their time on the cay, the weather plays a central role in Phillip and Timothy's life. **Write at least two argumentative paragraphs where you answer the following:**

- Should all people be required to be prepared for natural disasters such as severe storms and earthquakes?
- How should people prepare for a severe storm or earthquake? (use internet to search if this is okay for your students)
- What would you do if a natural disaster occurred and your family was prepared for a natural disaster but your neighbors were not?
- Would you help your neighbors? What if it meant you might be putting your family at risk?
- To what extent would you be willing to help others?
- Would you be justified in your decisions?

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Cay, Day 11*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 81

“I was starting to be less dependent on the vine rope, and sometimes it seemed to me that Timothy was trying hard to make me independent of him. I thought I knew why, but I did not talk to him about it. I did not want to think about the possibility of Timothy dying and leaving me alone on the cay” (p. 81).

#### Writing Prompt

Phillip is faced with the prospect of being completely alone on the cay. Even though he knows it is a real possibility, he doesn't want to think about it, and never discusses it with Timothy.

**Write a paragraph detailing when parents or guardians should begin teaching children to be independent? Give a specific age and defend your position with clear reasons and evidence-based logic. Use a computer research your evidence and reasoning.** Here are some things to consider:

- Taking care of a pet
- Staying home alone
- Staying overnight at a friends house
- Completing homework
- Choosing friends
- Going to the movies with friends
- Owning a cell phone
- Walking alone to a destination
- Having a job
- Going on a date

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Cay, Day 12*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 92

"I helped him to his feet, and we went up the hill together, Timothy leaning on me for support for the first time. He never really regained his strength" (92.)

#### Writing Prompt

Up until now, Timothy has been the one taking care of Phillip. Now, Phillip finds himself in a reversed role; he must now care for the old man.

**Write an argumentative paragraph about the time when you first realized that another human being depended on you. Do you think you were ready and capable to care for this person? Tell why and defend your position. Include the following information:**

- Who was this person?
- Where were you?
- How old were you?
- Why was he or she depending on you?
- What did you have to do for this person?
- How did you react?
- Did you treat the other person with justice?
- How did it make you feel to be the caretaker in the relationship?

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Cay, Day 13*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 100

“It rained that night, a very soft rain. Not even enough to drip through the palm frond roof. Timothy breathed softly beside me. I had now been with him every moment of the day and night for two months, but I had not seen him. I remembered that ugly welted face. But now, in my memory, it did not seem ugly at all. It seemed only kind and strong” (p. 100).

#### Writing Prompt

If Phillip and Timothy had not been stranded together, they most likely never would have become friends. In fact, meeting Timothy has completely changed Phillip’s attitudes toward race. Phillip at first judged Timothy “by his cover.” Now, he thinks of Timothy as a wonderful person instead of an ugly face.

**Write an argumentative paragraph about prejudice that agrees or disagrees with the following: “Prejudice keeps people from fully experiencing life.” Think about this:**

- Has prejudice ever kept you from doing something or being with a particular person?
  - Why or why not?
  - How did this make you feel?
  - Did you treat others with justice at the time?
  - Can someone be prejudice and show respect for the rights of all?

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Cay, Day 14*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 103

"I realized then why he had used our rope sparingly; why he had made my guideline down to east beach from vines instead of rope. Everyday, I learned of something new that Timothy had done so we could survive" (p. 103.)

#### Writing Prompt

Timothy has gone to great lengths to prepare their island for a storm. He's planned and worked since their first day on the island to make sure that he and Phillip would be safe during an emergency. **Write two argumentative paragraphs and answer all of following questions:**

- Why would Timothy prepare for an emergency?
- What do you think has motivated Timothy to work so hard to protect Phillip even though Phillip has treated Timothy with little or no respect?
- Do you think Timothy is responsible for Phillip's well being? Why or why not?
- Do you think Phillip should be responsible for Timothy's well being? Why or why not?
- If you were Timothy how would you have treated Phillip?
- Would you have worked as hard to protect Phillip? Why?
- What would be the best way to show justice in this situation?

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Cay, Day 15*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 112

“Old Timothy, of Charlotte Amalie, was dead.

I stayed there beside him for a long time, very tired, thinking that he should have taken me with him wherever he had gone. I did not cry then. There are times when you are beyond tears” (p. 112).

#### Writing Prompt

At first, Phillip is unable to deal with Timothy’s death. This was the first time he had ever experienced grief, and he doesn’t know what to do. Everyone has lost someone or something important in your life. You may have grieved over the loss of a family member, the death of a pet, or a close friend moving away.

**Write a paragraph about how you believe we should show respect and remembrance for our pets, friends and family members when they pass away. Please include how you would want to be respected and remembered if you passed away. Defend your position and remember to end with a concluding statement. Think about the following as you write:**

- How should we show respect for our loved ones and those close when dealing with loss and death?
- Is it okay to show emotion and grieve? Why?
- What has been your response to grief in the past?
  - Did you act with restraint, or did you treat anyone unjustly?

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Cay, Day 16*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 119

“Wondering what had caused the birds to attack me, I felt around in the sand. Soon, my hand touched a warm shell. I couldn’t blame the birds very much. I’d accidentally walked into their new nesting ground.

They were fighting for survival, after the storm, just as I was. I left Stew Cat to his unexpected meal and made my way slowly back to camp” (p. 119.)

#### Writing Prompt

Yesterday, Phillip wished he had died along with Timothy. In today’s reading, Phillip decides to continue to try to survive on the island, even though he is now alone. If you were in Phillip’s situation, what would you do? Would you try to survive, or would you give up?

**Write at least 2 argumentative paragraphs detailing how you could best live out the ideal of Justice Requires Restraint while living alone on the cay. Make sure you support your claims with clear and relevant evidence.**

- Think about how you would treat yourself.
- Think about how you would treat the other living things on the cay.

Remember the definition: *There are things I cannot say or do to myself, any other person or the planet because justice demands it. The actions I take and the decisions I make must respect the rights of all.*

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Cay, Day 17*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 120

“Ten pebbles had gone into my ‘time’ can when I decided to do something Timothy had told me never to do. I was tired of eating fish and sea-grape leaves, and I wanted to save the few green coconuts I’d managed to find on the ground. There were none left in the trees” (p. 120).

#### Writing Prompt

Because he was tired of eating the same food every day, Phillip went against Timothy’s advice, and chose to risk his life to find some lobster.

**Write a two paragraph argument about a time when you were acting with justice and restraint or not acting with justice and restraint and you made a decision that resulted in you or someone else being injured physically, or emotionally.**

- What was the decision?
- Why did you make this decision?
- Did you think before you acted?
- Where were you and how old were you?
- Who did it hurt?
- How did they get hurt?
- Were you acting with justice and restraint at the time? Why or why not?
- What, if anything, would you change about the decision if you could relive it?

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Cay, Day 18*



#### Key Passage, p. 131

"Feeling very ill, I climbed the slope again, throwing myself down on the mat in the hut. I didn't cry. There was no use in doing that.

I wanted to die.

After a while, I looked over toward Timothy's grave. I said, 'Why didn't you take us with you?'" (p. 131).

#### Writing Prompt

Phillip believes at this point that he will never be rescued. He completely gives up hope.

Pretend you are Timothy. **From the afterlife, write an argument in a letter to Phillip encouraging him to continue to have hope of rescue. Give him at least 3 clear reasons why he should not give up. Provide a concluding statement that summarizes your reasons and supports the arguments in your letter.**

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Cay, Day 19*



#### Key Paragraph, p. 136

"I saw Henrik van Boven occasionally, but it wasn't the same as when we'd played the Dutch or the British. He seemed very young. So I spent a lot of time along St. Anna Bay, and at the Ruyterkade market talking to the black people. I liked the sound of their voices. Some of them had known old Timothy from Charlotte Amalie. I felt close to them" (p. 136).

#### Writing Prompt

Phillip's experience on the cay changed him forever. Although he recovered his sight, he was never again the person he had been the night the *Hato* was sunk. Pretend you are Phillip's biographer. **Write an argumentative essay with three to five paragraphs stating how Phillip acted with Justice for the rest of his life because he was forever changed due to his experiences on the cay with Timothy. He went home to the United States after World War II. Remember to use a concluding sentence at the end of your writing. Keep in mind Phillip would have become an adult in the early 1950s.**

- What kind of education and career do you think Phillip chose due to his experience with Timothy on the cay?
- Did he have a family? What do you think he taught his children about people of different ethnicity? Why?
- How do you think he treated people on a day-to-day basis? Why?
- What did he do for fun?
- Did he participate in politics or the struggle for civil rights? Why or why not?
- How would Timothy's treatment and care of him during their time together contribute to Phillip living a just and respectful life?