

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Nelson Mandela, Day 1



Key Paragraph, p. 2

“South Africa has become known as the home of the world’s most famous former political prisoner. A prisoner who emerged to become an internationally respected statesman. This is his story and the story of his country” (p. 2).

Writing Prompt

If you were able to have Nelson for your friend what advice would you give him? Explain your answer using details from the book. What characteristics does he have that are attractive to have in a friend? Is there anything you find unattractive and why?

Write an argumentative paragraph telling in what ways you think Nelson should have or could have handled his situation differently to be more effective.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Nelson Mandela, Day 2



Key Paragraph, p. 16

“Mandela and Oliver Tambo also had their own problems with South Africa’s race prejudice. Unlike white attorneys, they had to apply for permission to open an office in the city—permission that was never granted...they decided to keep their office anyway, knowing that they were risking eviction or worse” (p. 16).

Writing Prompt

Simulated journal: Keep in mind you are writing an argumentative essay. Put yourself in Nelson’s position. You will be writing a letter to a friend in another country where racism is not such a prevalent issue.

Describe the situation in your town in regard to the racial segregation. Explain how and why you have been taking the action you have been. Explain why you are going to continue to disobey the law for what you believe is right.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Nelson Mandela, Day 3



Key Paragraph, p. 23

“Zulu means ‘the heavens,’ and the Zulu are the ‘people of the heavens.’ The Zulu kingdom had been greatly expanded by Shaka, their most famous leader. Shaka was a ruthless ruler with a genius for military tactics” (p. 23).

Writing Prompt

Write a paragraph or two describing how creating your poster with an argumentative theme, helped bring history that much more to life and exposed the reality of apartheid. What did you find as you were drawing and talking with your partner? Did more details come to the surface? Did it make the chapter more interesting? What argumentative stance can you take in regard to the topic of your poster?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Nelson Mandela, Day 4



Key Paragraph, p. 30

“The National Party instituted more than a hundred laws aimed at keeping blacks and whites separate...and unequal. This was the beginning of a radical political philosophy of racial segregation called apartheid (ah-PAHRT-hayt). Apartheid means separateness in Afrikaans and, as of 1948, it was the official policy of the South African Government” (p. 30).

Writing Prompt

Do you think the whites had the right to do with all of the rules and regulations they enforced upon the black South Africans? **Write a compelling argument supported by valid reasons in regard to what you think.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Nelson Mandela, Day 5



Key Paragraph, p. 40

“Mandela disagreed with this approach. For one thing, it was unrealistic. The different racial groups in South Africa—black, white, colored, and Asian—had come to stay. Although Mandela felt that whites had to be convinced to end their domination of the African, he also believed that South Africa must become a society free of any kind of racism” (p. 40).

Writing Prompt

Mandela disagrees with “driving the white man into the sea.” He wants to have Africa be a place where ALL races are equal and welcome. Can you write about why he is reasoning this way? Why wouldn’t he just want to beat the whites and be on top?

Can oppression be ended with more oppression? **Create an argument supporting that it doesn’t matter who is on “top”, someone will always be oppressed in that model? Why is that not what Mandela wanted?**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Nelson Mandela, Day 6



Key Paragraph, p. 55-66

"Mandela's lengthy testimony (441 pages of court record) was *measured* and *eloquent*.

In our experience the most important thing about imperialism today is that it has gone all over the world subjugating people and exploiting them, bringing death and destruction to millions of people. That is the central thing, and we want to know whether we should support and perpetuate this institution which has brought so much suffering.

His explanation of the ANC policies and his composure and good humor throughout brought him and the organization worldwide respect" (p. 55-56).

Writing Prompt

Is there a time in your life when things might have gone more smoothly if you had kept your cool and had self-control? What if you had not? Use the argumentative approach to explain your reasoning.

Write a few paragraphs describing how if Nelson had not exhibited such exemplary self-control and composure would it have impacted the judge's decision? What might have happened if he had lost self-control and yelled or acted rudely in court?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Nelson Mandela, Day 7



Key Paragraph, p. 64

"Nelson woke as early as four a.m. to run. The streets were usually empty. People had not yet begun to make their way to the buses that would take them on the long journey to the mines and factories. After his run he had fresh orange juice, a raw egg, and toast. Then he left for Pretoria, where the trial was being held. Often he stayed overnight preparing his defense" (p. 64).

Writing Prompt

Pretend you are Nelson. What does it feel like to have this schedule? **Using the argumentative approach, describe what motivates you to be so healthy and so disciplined. How do you feel about yourself? What is going through your mind as you are running? What else drives you – is it valid?**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Nelson Mandela, Day 8



Key Paragraph, p. 70

“When it was over sixty-nine people lay dead or dying. At least another one hundred and eighty were wounded, including forty women and eight children. Most of the dead and wounded had been shot in the back” (p. 70).

Writing Prompt

Did Robert differ from Nelson? If you were living in South Africa in 1960, what group do you think you would have wanted to be a part of and why? The PAC or the ANC or the government run by the Afrikaners? **Write an argumentative paragraph explaining your position.**

[Remind students that this issue is not just a black/white issue. The tables could be turned and it could be white/black with the blacks on top. Or it could be Asians/Latinos or Blacks/Asians. The point is to move toward an understanding that it does not matter “who is on top”, that model of oppression will never work, because someone will always be on the bottom...and that someone could be you!]

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Nelson Mandela, Day 9



Key Paragraph, p. 81

“Political division, based on colour, is entirely artificial and, when it disappears, so will the domination of one group by the other” (p. 81).

Writing Prompt

Write an argumentative paragraph describing your feelings about Nelson’s statement.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Nelson Mandela, Day 10



Key Paragraph, p. 90

"To Winnie he wrote: *Sometimes I feel like one who is on the sidelines, who has missed life itself*" (p. 90).

As a person in prison for so long, write a few paragraphs describing what you think Nelson meant by this quote. How would you feel if you were in his shoes?

Writing Prompt

Imagine that you have been in prison for this long. **Write a few paragraphs describing what you think Nelson meant by the quote above. How would you feel if you were in his shoes?**

Steve Biko was described as a martyr. Define martyr, and explain how that definition fits or doesn't fit in an **argumentative paragraph**. **Include details such as: was his treatment just? What does it say about the level of hatred and bigotry that still existed in the mid-1970s?**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Nelson Mandela, Day 11



Key Paragraph, p. 106

“The students had done something that had never been done before: confronted the government with every means available to them. The uprising was the most serious confrontation between blacks and the government in modern times” (p. 106).

Writing Prompt

In 1980 South African Prime Minister P.W. Botha told white citizens they must “adapt or die”. Apartheid as it existed could not continue indefinitely. Pressure to make changes was coming from a variety of sources.

Write a few paragraphs arguing why or why not white citizens must “adapt or die”. Using the argumentative approach explore why apartheid could or could not continue indefinitely. Should the Afrikaans give in to the pressure?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Nelson Mandela, Day 12



Key Paragraph, p. 125

“Government controlled television...continued to cover the usual rugby matches...The Afrikaner papers that did cover the crisis reported only the destruction of government property or violence done by blacks to other blacks. They urged the government to use maximum force to restore law and order” (p. 125).

Writing Prompt

In a few paragraphs, **write about why you think the government should or should not report that blacks are fighting against other blacks? What might the government be trying to prevent?**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Nelson Mandela, Day 13



Key Paragraph, p. 127-128

“Black collaborators were targets for revenge by comrades. Anyone suspected of working with the government was subjected to ‘necklacing.’ The victim of a ‘necklacing’ had an automobile tire that was soaked in gasoline placed around his neck and set on fire. Comrades hoped this would make anyone who was thinking about working with the police think twice” (p. 127-128).

Writing Prompt

Reflecting on the method of “necklacing”, **write a compelling argument regarding this practice. Include details such as whether it was effective, necessary, validated, or against it – was it inhumane and as bad as apartheid itself in some ways?**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Nelson Mandela, Day 14



Key Paragraph, p. 139

“But Nelson Mandela had been offered his freedom before and had refused it” (p. 139).

Writing Prompt

Write a few paragraphs arguing why it did or did not take courage for Nelson Mandela not to say yes to the first offer to get out of prison. Do you admire someone who has that much leadership and commitment to a cause? Tell why or why not.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Nelson Mandela, Day 15



Key Paragraph, p. 151

“Despite my seventy-one years, at the end of this visit I feel like a young man of thirty-five. I feel like an old battery that has been recharged. And if I feel so young it is the people of the United States of America that are responsible for this” (p. 151).

Writing Prompt

What do you think Nelson meant by this statement? What do you think made him feel young again? What did the people of the United States do that made Nelson feel so good? **Write a compelling argumentative piece choosing to support or go against Nelson’s statement. Was his statement propaganda to gain the support of the U.S.?**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Nelson Mandela, Day 16



Key Paragraph, p. 158

“Even as apartheid was dying and Mandela was emerging as the leader of the ANC, however, there was much opposition to the ANC’s desire to form a single democratic government that would represent all the people” (p. 158).

Writing Prompt

Thinking back to the definitions of determination, cooperation and compromise, **do you feel Nelson has *shown these character traits (determination, cooperation, and compromise) in you’re his life?* Argue your opinion in two paragraphs.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Nelson Mandela, Day 17



Key Paragraph, p. 174

"It is indeed a most welcome thing that this august organization will mark its 50th anniversary next year with the apartheid system having been vanquished and consigned to the past...The millions of our people say thank you, and thank you again, that the respect for your own dignity as human beings inspired you to act to insure the restoration of our dignity as well" (p. 174).

Writing Prompt

Were you moved and inspired by Nelson Mandela's life? Would you like to meet him? What questions would you ask him? What would you want to know more about?

Employing the argumentative method, write in support for or against Mandela's approach.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Nelson Mandela, Day 18



Brainstorming web and outline

- **Thinking through Biography:** In the next two pages you will see a flowchart and an outline for writing a biography. The idea is for your students to access the timeline, lifeline, bio cube and all their quickwrites, snapshots, journal entries, OMPs and so forth to decide which memories, characteristics, facts etc. they would like to include in Nelson's biography.
- Option 1: Together, you can go through the brainstorming outline and write Nelson's biography as a class. Then students can choose their own person to research and write a short biography using the same format.
- Option 2: Your students can write a biography of Nelson Mandela using the materials generated over the last 3 weeks. You can get them started on the web outline as needed.
- Option 3: You can move to a biography of someone else completely, using the discussions and written work of the past 3 weeks as a model of what might be interesting for them to pursue in their own biography.

For today, decide which format you feel most comfortable pursuing and begin filling in the brainstorming web and basic written outline. Students may want to fill in the web and then only choose to write about a portion of those items listed. Steer them in the right direction given their needs and talents.

Biographical Essay

Basic information

Name:
Date/place of birth:
Profession:

Memories of this person

Which is the most important memory? Why do you think you feel this way?

Memory 1:
Memory 2:
Memory 3:

Personality traits

What is this person like? Write adjectives that describe him or her, and back them up with examples.

Trait 1:
Trait 2:
Trait 3:

Actions

What kinds of things does this person do? Consider his or her work, recreation, leisure time, etc.

Action 1:
Action 2:
Action 3:

Beliefs/opinions

What does this person believe about life, the world, society, etc.?

Belief 1:
Belief 2:
Belief 3:

Lessons

What have you learned from this person?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Nelson Mandela, Days 19-20



Web and outline, writer's workshop, revising and editing

- Continue completing outlines and web.
- Once students have finished those, begin building paragraphs stemming from the outline. Students will already have written about many of these topics. Have them refine what they wrote and add transitions between paragraphs.
- You may want to only do 2 memories and 2 characteristics. Of course, use your judgment about how much you expect. Keep in mind however, that their finished written product should be 500-700 words long.
- Once rough drafts are complete, have students check one another's work for basic punctuation, spelling and capitalization. ***See student response sheet and revising and editing questions.***
- Have them rewrite and revise any parts that still are unclear.
- Polish it up!
- Celebrate and share your written products! Add them to your portfolio!

Student Response Sheet

I noticed...

I wondered...

Strong words, phrases, images in the writing:

Questions I still have:

Revising checklist

- ☐ Is my biography clear and understandable when I read it aloud?
- ☐ Does each paragraph start by clearly telling the reader what to expect?
- ☐ Do my examples help the reader understand the text?
- ☐ Do I have transitions between my paragraphs?
- ☐ Do I need to ADD any information, dialogue, text?
- ☐ Do I need to CUT any information, dialogue, text?
- ☐ Do I need to put anything in any different order?
- ☐ Do I need to rewrite any parts?

Editing checklist

- ☐ Are the beginning of my sentences capitalized? People's names? Other proper nouns?
- ☐ Do I have periods, exclamation marks and question marks in the correct places?
- ☐ Do I have any misspelled words? Are there any words I should look up in the dictionary that I am unsure about?