

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

An Island Like You, Day 1



Key Passage, p. 3

“Great. My mother hadn’t told me that her father had gone senile. But I *had* been dreaming about Johnny Ruiz one of the reasons I had been sent away for the summer. Just a coincidence, I decided. But, what about privacy? Had I or had I not closed the window to my room?” (p. 3).

Writing Prompt

Rita has just gotten to her grandparents house and is having a difficult time adjusting. Her grandfather is able to see through her and tell her about her boyfriend. Have your parents or grandparents ever known what you were thinking? How did you feel about it? How did you react? How do you think they knew?

Write a three paragraph narrative essay describing your situation. In the first paragraph, describe in detail the situation or event. In the second paragraph, state how you think your family knew what you were thinking, how that made you feel and how you did react. In the third paragraph, discuss the relevant importance of the situation. Did it impact you in a way that positively or negatively impacted your life?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

An Island Like You, Day 2



Key Passage, p. 16

“...I actually found some shells. This was new to me, since the public beach my cousins and I went to was swept clean of trash and everything else, every morning. Sand was all that was left until it was covered by empty cans, bags, disposable diapers, and all the other things people bring for a day at the beach and leave behind as a little gift to Mother Nature. But this was different. How could that girl in the pink house be so unhappy when she could wake up to this every morning?” (p. 16).

Writing Prompt

Rita is starting to gain an appreciation for the beauty that surrounds her. The description the author uses to describe what she sees at home and what she is experiencing now is very vivid. Why do you think the author compares the beaches with such detail? Do you think it has any reflection on Rita's life?

Using the description of the beach where she is at, compared to what she knows from being at home, write a two-paragraph response to literature. In the first paragraph, describe the important ideas you feel that the author is trying to convey with her detailed accounts of the beach.

If you lived in a beautiful location, do you think you would you be happy all the time? Does the location of your home affect happiness or sadness? Can you be happy living anywhere, as long as you make it your home? The location perspective will be the basis for your second paragraph.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

An Island Like You, Day 3



Key Passage, p. 25

“...Our parents had really come up with some awful punishments for Meli and me. I’d had one of the best summers of my life with Angela, and I was even really getting to know my grandparents—the ghost-busting magnificent duo...” (p. 25).

Writing Prompt

“When life gives you lemons; make lemonade.” Rita was sent to her grandparents as a punishment. Although, she tried to be miserable she ended up having a great time. She began to understand and like her grandparents, she met a great friend, and she learned a life lesson about negative peers. Have you ever been in a bad situation that because of your attitude turned out to be really fun?

Write a two-paragraph essay describing a time in your life where you were able to take something that was completely negative and change the outcome to make it completely positive. Describe who was involved and what the situation was. In the second paragraph, explain in detail what you learned from this situation and how it was significant to your life.

Be sure to include how your attitude helped you turn your situation around. Can the opposite occur? Can you be in a great situation but because of your bad mood have a negative experience?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

An Island Like You, Day 4



Key Passage, p. 28

“...He acts like the keeper of the Olympic torch or something. But I understand what he means. It would be wrong to blow out a candle someone lit for a special reason—like stealing a wish” (p. 28).

Writing Prompt

Johan takes pride in caring for the church. In some ways his is protecting it. He makes sure that people’s candles stay lit and the intentions they represent are protected.

Write a two paragraph narrative essay. In the first paragraph, explain why respecting “wishes” of others is so important. In the second paragraph explain why it is important for Johan to leave the candles alone. Support your ideas with information that connects all related claims.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

An Island Like You, Day 5



Key Passage, p. 34

“But what happened was that when I sat back down, I started to relax in that church like I hadn’t anywhere since I was a little kid. I breathed better. The way the air smelled like incense and candles cleared my head, and the old wood and leather all around made me feel kind of safe, like in a library” (p. 34).

Writing Prompt

Arturo describes the safe feeling he got while visiting the church. He describes the setting and the smells he associates with it. Do your senses (touch, sight, hearing, taste, and smell) play an important role in how you feel?

Write a two paragraph narrative essay where you describe something you see, smell, hear, or touch that makes you feel safe. What is it? Is it a place? Does it involve someone who is close to you? What do you associate that item or feeling with? Use as many concrete details as you can to describe your feelings.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

An Island Like You, Day 6



Key Passage, p. 43

"I plan on staying in school because if I don't I'll end up depending on someone else to take care of me, like a man. That seems to be all the women can talk about around the barrio—money and men, men and money. Maybe if I go to college and get a good job, I won't have to worry that I'll have to go on welfare if my husband leaves me" (p. 43).

Writing Prompt

Sandra has goals. She wants to be independent and able to care for herself. In order to do this she has a plan with dreams and goals that she wants to accomplish. What are your goals? What do you want for yourself in 1 year, 5 years, 10 years, life?

Write 2-3 paragraphs explaining your goals and your plan. Be as clear and concise as possible. Explain your goals and your plan with as much detail and reasoning as possible. Include the idea of making commitments to yourself in order to move forward with your plan and include education, and/or specialized training that may be required to attain success. Also, explain why having a plan makes a dream seem attainable and realistic and not just a fantasy that may never happen.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

An Island Like You, Day 7



Key Passage, p. 53

“I may have bugs bunny teeth, but they are mine, and if I put on a few pounds, they might even look right on my face, which is, at least, my real face, and not painted on. When I see Paco by himself next time I am going to talk to him” (p. 53).

Writing Prompt

Sandra realizes that although she may not be popular and great looking by her friends' standards, she is beautiful because everything on her is real. She becomes confident knowing this. Do you think it is important to be yourself and unique or to follow others?

Write a narrative letter requesting your reader to value the person he or she is. Emphasize that he or she should not change, compete with peers or pretend to be someone else just to impress others. Try to be realistic. Most of us know someone who is influenced by what others think and tend to think that it is better to follow and be accepted than to venture out of the norm and possibly be rejected or ridiculed. Your standard letter format should be addressed to someone not in your class...maybe a friend outside of school or a family member. Be firm, but also loving and supportive.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

An Island Like You, Day 8



Key Passage, p. 55

“Luis Cintron sits on top of a six-foot pile of hubcaps and watches his father walk away into the steel jungle of his car junkyard. Released into his old man’s custody after six months in juvenile hall—for breaking and entering—and he didn’t even take anything. He did it on a dare. But the old lady with the million cats was a light sleeper and a good with her aluminum cane. He has a scar on his head to prove it” (p. 55).

Writing Prompt

Luis was released to his father after breaking into an elderly woman’s home. He had organized a group of so-called friends that would dare one another to do illegal and horrible things.

Pretend you are Luis Cintron and you are now trying to get off probation. **Write a standard business letter to the woman whose house you broke into. Explain to her that you are sorry and tell her what you plan to do in the future that is constructive, not destructive. Whether or not you are offering a sincere apology is not the issue. Writing a letter to the woman is the first step to take when holding yourself accountable for your actions. This shows responsibility and a promise to do the right thing. Use standard business format.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

An Island Like You, Day 9



Key Passage, p. 68

“*Asi es la vida,*’ That’s the way life is. It sometimes makes me mad that the adults I know just accept whatever crap is thrown at them because ‘that’s the way things are.’ Not for me. I go after what I want” (p. 68).

Writing Prompt

Arturo has gotten to know his grandfather in a new way. However, he is frustrated at his grandfather’s philosophy, “*Asi es la vida*”, “That’s the way life is.” Do you think that life just happens or do you think that you are in control of your own destiny?

Write two narrative paragraphs defending your position. Structure your argument in a logical fashion. Think about the choices you make. Do you choose which course of action you’ll take all the time? Or, do you let life just happen? Do some people always seem to have to work a little harder than others in order to achieve what they want and it still does not work out for them? What kind of long-term affects do you think it might have on them?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

An Island Like You, Day 10



Key Passage, p. 72

“Mira, Mira, my friend Yolanda yells out. She’s always telling me to look at something. And I always do. I look, she does. That’s the way it has always been. Yolanda just turned sixteen and I am six months younger. I was born to follow the leader, that’s what my mother says when she sees us together, and it’s true” (p. 72).

Writing Prompt

Doris is convinced she should follow Yolanda and do whatever she wants her to. Although, their journeys are fun and fairly harmless at first they continue to escalate until Yolanda is stealing. For the first time Doris stands up for herself.

What does the phrase, “I was born to follow the leader” mean? **Write a 3-paragraph response. In the first paragraph, explain what the above phrase symbolizes or means. In the second paragraph, use information from today’s reading and from previous experiences to relate to what Doris experienced with Yolanda. In the third paragraph, write whether you see yourself as a follower or a leader and if you are content with the role you have selected for yourself. Be thorough in your explanations.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

An Island Like You, Day 11



Key Passage, p. 91

“He shuts his eyes tight against the intense light ricocheting off the white mirror like a laser beam aimed straight at him. It feels like it’s burning a hole through his skull—and his mother’s voice keeps calling him back, worming its way into his head, tracking him down to the dark corner where he hides” (p. 91).

Writing Prompt

The author is not very clear about what has happened to Kenny. She allows you to come to your own conclusion.

In two paragraphs, respond to the following questions: What is really going on? Will Kenny live through it? Was his mother right? Do you think this is an effective writing style for this particular story?

Explain if you think this stylistic format is effective. Why or why not? Do you think you would have the same response in the story if you knew exactly what happened? What was the transformation Kenny went through?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

An Island Like You, Day 12



Key Passage, p. 95

“To some people that is not an insult, Yolanda,’ she says, ‘When I was a little girl on the island, the jibaros were the backbone of our country—the good, simple people who farmed the land’” (p. 95).

Writing Prompt

Yolanda is not overly enthusiastic about Don Jose or her mother dating. She sees him as a threat and makes fun of who he is based on his clothes. Has he done anything wrong?

Write a two-paragraph essay where you either defend Don Jose and his pursuit of Mami, or object to it. Be clear and concise. Have a clear and specific thesis statement that defines your position. Give details from the novel to support your thesis.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

An Island Like You, Day 13



Key Passage, p. 106

“...I get this feeling that she is trying to transfer something to me, something she’s feeling—love, happiness, whatever it is, it feels good, so I just close my eyes to try and enjoy it. But glued to the back of my eyelids is a picture of Papi, looking sharp in his white shirt and tie. Don’t forget me, he whispers in my head. Don’t forget” (p. 106).

Writing Prompts

Yolanda is struggling with the death of her father. Although, she knows they should move forward it is still hard. She finally accepts that her mother is happy—but concerned that with time she will forget her father. Is there a balance between moving forward and not forgetting the loss of someone you cared for?

Write 2 paragraphs explaining how you can move forward and still hold that person close to your heart. You can support your thesis with primary and secondary sources. Refer to the novel, your personal experiences and other information you may have read about living through the death of a loved one and the steps it takes to live your life again without this person, but never forgetting the loved one. An example of a secondary source would be the horrific devastation that occurred on September 11, 2001. Terrorists killed nearly 3,000 people. Many memorials, tributes, movies, etc., have been made to help us not only deal with this tragedy, but, most importantly, to never forget them.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

An Island Like You, Day 14



Key Passage, p. 111

“Your grandmother says to tell you that of all the hurtful things you can do to a person, the worst is to make them feel as if they are worth nothing” (p. 111).

Writing Prompt

Connie is so concerned about her and what people will think about *her*, that she forgets to treat her grandmother well. In actuality people think more negatively about her because she watched her grandmother struggle. Do you think that grandmother is right that the worst thing you can do to another is to make them feel as if they are worth nothing?

Write a 3-paragraph essay explaining a person’s value. Tell where you think worth comes from. This is your opinion, thus don’t be concerned with what you think you should express. Write what is true for you. Explain if you think there is anything worse you could do than to cause a person to feel like nothing. Be clear and concise. Think about your life so far. Have you experienced this yourself? Have you witnessed this happen to someone in your family or with a friend? Anticipate and address any misunderstandings your reader may have.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

An Island Like You, Day 15



Key Passage, p. 113

“Yes, ma’am,’ Even though I feel funny about being asked to spy on Bob Dylan...but if they gave him the job as a lifeguard, they ought to trust him to do it right...” (p. 113).

Writing Prompt

Teresa was hired to work in the snack shop. Bob Dylan was hired as a lifeguard. Mrs. O’ Brien is asking Teresa to spy on Bob and tell her if he is messing around. Do you think that is Teresa’s job? Do you think it is her responsibility to report it if he is not doing his job correctly?

Pretend you are Teresa and are not comfortable spying on a peer. **Write a business letter to Mrs. O’ Brien. Let her know that you are not comfortable spying on your peer. Explain to her that you have no knowledge of his job or his duties. Ask her to find another alternative to supervise Bob Dylan. Maintain a serious and professional tone. Use appropriate vocabulary and tone to defend your position.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

An Island Like You, Day 16



Key Passage, p. 125

"My mother uses Maricela as a warning to me of what I'll become if I don't get an education and stay away from boys. I sometimes remind my mother that if Maricela's parents had given her a good home life, maybe she would have turned out better. But now, seeing her standing there looking totally unconcerned about the danger her son could have faced in the last hour, makes me want to turn her in to family services. She doesn't deserve to have a cute kid like Pablito" (p. 125).

Writing Prompt

Maricela selfishly leaves her son in a dangerous situation. Teresa steps in to care for him. Why was Teresa so angry? Do you think that Maricela deserves to have a cute kid like Pablito?

Pretend you are Teresa. Write a letter to the Social Services Department based on the facts in today's reading. Give them an account of the things she has done that are neglectful in regard to her child. In your letter, tell them that you don't want Pablito taken away. Express that you wish to focus getting Maricela the help she needs in order to be the best meet the needs of her child. Offer suggestions to the department to help them support Maricela.

Think about Pablito and the awesome responsibility it is to care for a child. It is better to teach Maricela and to help her raise a good child than to not support her. Give as many solutions as possible that would help Maricela to be a better parent.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

An Island Like You, Day 17



Key Passage, p. 142

“...with each step, El Building looms larger in front of her. She’s always thought that the old gray tenement building with its iron fire escapes hanging from its sides like bars make it look like a prison or an insane asylum. But right now she just wants to let the place swallow her. She wants to be in its belly. Safe within the four walls of her room where she can sort out her thoughts and try to discover what she really wants” (p. 142).

Writing Prompt

Anita ran away from her life. What she realizes is that her life is not that bad. In addition, she doesn’t know what she wants her future to be. She realizes that she has to figure out what she wants and it is best to do that in a safe environment. Pretend you are one of Anita’s friends.

Write her a letter explaining that running away is not the solution when her life is not going the way she wants it to. Give her advice on better ways to solve her problems. Suggest that she get her life in order before she considers dating anyone. In addition, clearly state that happiness comes from within a person’s mind. She can choose to live a positive life despite the attitudes and actions of others. Also, emphasize that having a man in her life is not the answer or solution to her problems. In addition, help her formulate a plan for her future.

As you write structure your arguments in a logical fashion.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

An Island Like You, Day 18



Key Passage, p. 151

“The barrio doesn’t forget and the barrio doesn’t forgive.’

‘What do you have to be forgiven for Ricky? Being yourself?’ Martini smiled at Rick.

‘For being different,’ Rick said, turning to me. ‘You’ve heard my story, right, Doris?’” (p. 151).

Writing Prompt

Rick has returned to the barrio and he wants to establish a theatre group for the kids. Sadly, people’s impression of him makes it impossible for his dream to come true. He realizes that being different will always haunt him. Doris understands his predicament because she is different to. Is it wrong to be different or should differences be embraced and uniqueness celebrated? Read the poem “The Road Less Traveled” by Robert Frost attached.

In two paragraphs, write about a time that you chose to be different and unique or a time when you stood up to your peers and followed your goals and dreams instead of conforming to what others thought you should do. BE as descriptive as possible. Detail how people’s perceptions were possibly changed by your position. What did it feel like for you to stand up and be different? Why do you think that more people choose to follow the group instead of making their own choices?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

An Island Like You, Day 19



Key Passage, p. 159

"It was one of the most awesome experiences of my life...I cried when the show ended. I thought I knew which cat Rick had played: it was the wise one, the one who says that there's a better world beyond the dangerous alley and the grimy junkyard" (p. 159).

Writing Prompt

The kids loved the play. Doris thought she could determine which cat Rick had played. Why do you think she chose the wise cat? Do you think she could relate to that character? Or do you think Rick played that Cat to send a message?

Do you think that the author is trying to make a point by casting Rick as the wise cat? What message is she trying to convey to the reader when she writes, "there is a world beyond the dangerous alley and the grimy junkyard?"

In a 3 paragraph narrative essay, respond to the following topics: In the first paragraph, explain what the author means when she writes, "there is a world beyond the dangerous alley and the grimy junkyard?" and give your opinion on it. In the second paragraph, address the kind of world you think that Rick wanted the kids in the barrios to experience. In the third paragraph, express whether or not people are motivated to change their circumstances if they aren't aware of their choices?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

An Island Like You, Day 20



Key Passage, p. 164

“My mother came up and in her beautiful high voice began singing “*Las Mananitas*”. Some of use joined in, others didn’t, but no one spoke and no one left. I was glad that my mother held my hand because I had begun to feel that I had been in the spotlight too long, that I was beginning to fade. Through her tight grip I felt the energy and courage it takes to sing in front of people. Each time you do it, you risk public failure. But when it, works, you hold people’s attention, and for a few moments you may change their lives.”

Writing Prompt

Doris has stood up and is not invisible. She is not only standing up for herself but for Rick who lived his life invisible in the barrio. She risked being mocked by the neighbors but she was able to change the life of her mentor Rick. Throughout the novel the author has highlighted individual stories. Why do you think she used Rick’s party as the closing story? What impact do you think she intended to have? What do you think the clowns and the balloons symbolized?

Write a final three-paragraph essay explaining the impact she intended to have on her neighbors and on herself. Support your ideas and viewpoints with references to the text and to other works, and from your own personal experiences. In your narrative essay include your answers to the following questions: Why do you think the author used Rick’s party as the closing story? What do you think the clowns and the balloons symbolized?