

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Stuck in Neutral, Day 1



Key Paragraph, p. 5

“This has gone on for eight years now. Every year, year in and year out. Yep, according to the world I’m dumb as a fence post. I’ve heard the docs explain why they think I’m so stupid to my parents and my parents explain it to their friends about a trillion times. They think it’s because my brain doesn’t work. They don’t know that is only partially true” (p. 5).

Writing Prompt

One literary device is called foreshadowing. It means to give hints to the reader about things that might happen later in the story. What do you the author might be foreshadowing in the above quote?

Write an informative/explanatory paragraph detailing to your reader that the author is foreshadowing in the above passage. Introduce your topic. Organize your ideas using strategies such as defining, classifications, and compare/contrast. Develop your topic with relevant facts. Conclude with a section that supports the information presented.

Final Writing Product

Research various different disabilities that people can have and their affects. Choose one that interests you

Day 1	Choose a disability that people can be born with or acquire (CP, Down’s Syndrome, autism)	List three facts about this disability. Write a paragraph describing it.
-------	---	---

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Stuck in Neutral, Day 2



Key Paragraph, p. 9

“...Sounds to letters, letters to words, words to sentences—reading. Of course, nobody knows I can read. Like the captain says in *Cool Hand Luke*, ‘What we have here is a failure to communicate.’ In my case that’s kinda like calling the Grand Canyon a pothole.” (p. 9).

Writing Prompt

Shawn describes his ability to read but he cannot communicate to others that he can read. There is a failure to communicate. Communication can take on many different forms. Verbal, non-verbal, physical, etc.

Write a paragraph explaining forms of communication to your reader. Introduce your topic clearly. Your paragraph must be well organized. Develop your topic with relevant facts, concrete details, and quotations. Use appropriate transitions.

Final Writing Product:

Using the disability you chose to research on day one, do the following exercise.

Feature Story

Write a story that details people with this disability or ability and how they have exceeded expectations of others and excelled in their abilities.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Stuck in Neutral, Day 3



Key Paragraph, p. 17

“Death. That was the closest I’ve ever been to it. I could feel what it was like, which was just like Cindy said—nothing, a big, fat nothing. It looked to me like when you die, you just, I don’t know, and your life just disappears. That day death stared at me through bloody eyes, and it terrified me” (p. 17).

Writing Prompt

We all eventually die, describe one thing you would want to change or do more often that encourages you to be your best, whole, undivided, principled self.

Write one paragraph in which you explain to your reader your One Thing. Introduce your topic. Organize your ideas and information for your reader. Develop your topic with relevant facts, details, and information. Use appropriate transitions to create flow. Conclude with a statement that supports your introduction.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Stuck in Neutral, Day 4



Key Paragraph, p. 26

“This makes it sound like the only reasons my dad would kill me are selfish ones. Honestly, I don’t believe that. Dad wants to kill me to save me from suffering. He’s afraid I’m trapped and in pain. He wants to kill me because he loves me” (p. 26).

Writing Prompt

Define and discuss the notion and use of irony in literature. Describe the irony in the passage above. What does this irony add to the story? Does it make it more suspenseful? More complex?

Write a one paragraph explanatory text in which you share with your reader about the use of irony in literature. Introduce your topic clearly. Develop your topic with relevant facts, details, and quotes if needed. Use appropriate transitions to create cohesion. As you write use precise language to convey your ideas. Provide a concluding statement that supports your topic.

Final Writing Project

Using the disability you chose to research on day 1 of the lesson, find data about the disability. How many people have it, life span, and quality of life are topics you can look up. You can add these charts to your final project.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Stuck in Neutral, Day 5



Key Paragraph, p. 35

“Of course, except for seizures, my life is one of total dependence. Once I started being able to sneak away from my body, seizures became very important to me. I love the feeling of movement, the pure joy of being able to fly. I love the feeling of escaping from my screwed-up, worthless body. I love my seizures because they give me the kind of life I imagine normal people enjoy, and then some. They give me freedom” (p. 35).

Writing Prompt

Imagine what it is like to be Shawn. What additional insights are revealed about Shawn through this chapter? How does the life inside his head (1st person narrator) differ from how he is perceived? Does that change your perception of what a person in a permanent vegetative state *might* be experiencing? Do you think people perceive you different than you are?

Write a one paragraph explanatory piece in which you share with your reader how you perceive yourself versus how others perceive you. Introduce your topic. Organize your ideas and concepts. Develop your topic with relevant facts and details. Use appropriate transitions to create cohesion. Conclude with a statement that supports your topic.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Stuck in Neutral, Day 6



Key Paragraph, p. 38

*"Shawn does not grow,
He stays the same...
His arms and legs
Are overcooked spaghetti
Lace with the bones of dead birds...
Behind his eyes it's blank
As fog over snow"* (p. 38).

Writing Prompt

Shawn's dad is writing about Shawn. He uses both a metaphor and simile in this stanza. The metaphor is: his arms and legs are overcooked spaghetti. Do you think the use of metaphor here helps the reader visualize more clearly? He also uses a simile: Behind his eyes it's blank as fog over snow.

Explain what you think Shawn's dad means. What tone does he create?

Write a paragraph in which you explain to your reader how Shaw's dad uses Metaphors and similes in his writing. Introduce your topic and preview what is to come next by organizing your ideas. Develop your topic using relevant facts. Use appropriate transitions to create cohesion in your writing. Use formal style and language. Use precise language. Provide a concluding statement, which supports your topic.

Final Writing Project

Write a news story that highlights the ADA. Give details of the cost and the social impact of the act.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Stuck in Neutral, Day 7



Key Paragraph, p. 51

“He’s weak and cowardly. Sometimes I hate him. But I know, too, that he just can’t stand seeing Shawn suffer with the seizures. Syd can’t stand the thought that Shawn might be trapped inside himself” (p. 51).

Writing Prompt

Sometimes very difficult decisions have multiple dimensions. Why do you think Shawn’s mother felt that Shawn’s father was a coward for leaving? Are their ways in which leaving had integrity if it was what he felt he had to do?

Write an explanatory paragraph in which you write define integrity and explain if Shawn’s dad had integrity by leaving his family. Use relevant facts as you write. Use appropriate transitions and concise language. Provide a conclusion that supports your opening statement.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Stuck in Neutral, Day 8



Key Paragraph, p. 60

“For the first time in my life I’m thinking about being loved and being known somehow going together. What if somehow, some way, I could get somebody to love me and know me? What if there is a way that I could let somebody know that I am smart and that I like my life and that I don’t want to die!” (p. 60).

Writing Prompt

What do you think life would be like if people appreciated and loved one another for whom they truly were? What can you do in your life to promote love and appreciation? Do you try to really get to know people? This is a part of living a life with integrity.

Write a paragraph in which you inform your reader about the merits of being loved and being your true self. Introduce your topic Organize your ideas clearly. Support your topic with facts and details. You appropriate transitions to create cohesion. Provide a concluding statement, which supports your opening.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Stuck in Neutral, Day 9



Key Paragraph, p. 69

“I am sure Detraux is a hero to a lot of people. His son has a terrible seizure condition and was retarded...I loved my son too much to watch him suffer anymore...then he added that he'd killed his two-year-old son to 'end my baby's pain'” (p. 69).

Writing Prompt

Shawn's father is going on a talk show to highlight families who deal with children with severe disabilities. He is there to support euthanasia. Research Euthanasia. **Write one expository paragraph in which you examine this topic and inform your reader. Introduce your topic. Develop your topic with relevant facts and details. Use appropriate transitions to create cohesion. Provide a concluding statement in which you support your opening statement.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Stuck in Neutral, Day 10



Key Paragraph, p. 70

"The *Alice Ponds Show* is one of the most popular programs in America. Alice appeals to an uneducated loud audience. Actually, most times I have ever seen it, it's seemed pretty ridiculous...Alice opens her show in her typical style, introducing the day's program in as controversial and outrageous manner as she can" (p. 70).

Writing Prompt

Based on the reading and the day's opening question The Alice Ponds Show does not seem like a well-balanced news program.

Write an informative paragraph in which you educate/inform your reader about ways to better find well-balanced news. Introduce your topic clearly. Organize your writing logically. Develop your text with relevant facts and definitions. Form a concluding statement, which supports your opening.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Stuck in Neutral, Day 11



Key Paragraph, p. 84

*"Months break over us
Shawn is dead,
Only he eats, breathes, defecates,
Trapped inside some kind of being
That no one will ever
Understand" (p. 84).*

Writing Prompt

Write a paragraph and explain whether or not you think this is a powerful poem. What do you think about the word choice and the ideas? Do you think he could have done anything to get across his point more clearly? What about the tone and/or voice? Can you hear Shawn's dad's frustration and sadness?

Final Writing Project

Write a news/feature story that highlights the impact that living with a person with disabilities has on the family. Cite divorce rates, cost, loss of work, etc.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Stuck in Neutral, Day 12



Key Paragraph, p. 100

“The memories of us, once we die, are all that’s left of us. When I’m gone, maybe someone will pick up my dad’s poem ‘Shawn’; maybe it will be a year after I’m dead, maybe two years, maybe two hundred years” (p. 100).

Writing Prompt

How does it make you feel when you remember events in your life? How do you want others to remember you? Will they remember you as someone who continued to change for the better? How does time shape our memories?

Write an informative paragraph in which you tell your reader why memories (both good and bad) are needed. Introduce your topic. Give examples to support your topic. Write in a logical fashion. Use clauses and transitions to create cohesion in your writing. Conclude with a statement, which supports your opening.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Stuck in Neutral, Day 13



Key Paragraph, p. 103

“‘I love you, Dad,’ I say, and in the instant before the dream ends, I add desperately, ‘I don’t want to die!’” (p. 103).

Writing Prompt

Do you find it frustrating as a reader that Shawn can’t communicate? Do you find yourself wanting to communicate for him? What would you say and whom would you want to talk to? Do you think the author does a credible job making you feel like you know what’s going on with the main character?

Write an informative paragraph in which you inform your reader what it would be like for you, not to be able to communicate. Write an opening statement. Support your statement with facts and definitions. Share your experiences with your reader. Conclude with a statement, which supports your thesis.

Final Writing Project

Write a news/feature story that highlights the services, organizations, and recreational support for people with the disability you chose.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Stuck in Neutral, Day 14



Key Paragraph, p. 116

“In writing *Stuck in Neutral*, I wanted to invent a character, and how the world might be for that character, based on what life might be like for my son Sheehan. Is Sheehan a secret genius, like Shawn in this story? Does he like potato chips and rock and roll? Inside himself is he witty and funny and wise? Is he happy to be alive? I can’t say ‘yes’ to any of these questions. But I can’t say ‘no’ either. All anybody can honestly say is ‘I don’t know’—none of us really does” (p. 116).

Writing Prompt

Did the book end the way you thought it would? How did you like the ending? Would you have ended it differently? Does it make a difference to you that the author has a son like Shawn? What do you think about folks like Shawn? What kind of world do you think they live in? It takes integrity to take care of a son or daughter with this condition.

Write one paragraph in which you explain why it takes integrity to care for a child like Shawn. Write a strong opening statement. Use definitions to help clarify integrity. Give examples to support your statement. Use transitions and clauses to create cohesion. Conclude with a statement, which supports your thesis.

Final Writing Project

What do you think should happen to people like Shawn? Do you think his father and Earl are correct? Write an opinion article or statement, which summarizes your opinion.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Stuck in Neutral, Final Writing Product



Final Writing Product:

The final writing project with is writing to explain or inform your reader. You will do this be creating a newspaper layout to share about a disability that you have researched and the impacts it has on families and society.

Research various different disabilities that people can have and their affects.

Choose one that interests you or you have been affected by.

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

a.) Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

b.) Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.

c.) Use appropriate transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.

d.) Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.

e.) Establish and maintain a formal style.

f.) Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.

Day 1 News Story	Choose a disability that people can be born with or acquire (CP, Down's Syndrome, autism, deafness, blind, etc.)	List three facts about this disability. Write a paragraph describing it.
Day 2 Feature Story		Write a story that details people with this disability or ability and how they have exceeded expectations.
Day 4 Data		Find data about the disability. How many people have it, life span, quality of life, etc. You can add these charts to your final project.
Day 6 News	Research the American with Disabilities Act	Write a story that highlights the ADA. Give details of the cost and the social impact of the act.
Day 11	Research the family	Write a news/feature story that highlights the impact that living with a person with disabilities has on the family. Cite divorce

		rates, cost, loss of work, etc.
Day 13	Services	Write a news/feature story that highlights the services, organizations, and recreational support for people with the disability you chose.
Day 14	Opinion	What do you think should happen to people like Shawn? DO you think his father and Earl are correct? Write an opinion article or statement, which summarizes your opinion.

- Put your stories together in a newspaper style format.
- You can add—weather, maps of the Seattle Area, and other information that you learned in the text.
- Add charts and graphs to give your reader data to support your stories.
- Use the standards outlined above as you write your paragraphs.
- Be creative.