

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

A Child Called It, Day 1



Key Paragraph – 8

Mr. Hansen barks he's had enough of this. I almost leap out of my skin with fear. 'He's going to call Mother again!' my brain screams. I break down and cry. My body shakes like Jell-O and I mumble like a baby, begging Mr. Hansen not to phone Mother. 'Please!' I whine, 'Not today! Don't you understand, it's Friday?'

Writing Prompt

Pretend you are David. Write a journal entry about the life-changing events from today's reading. **In an explanatory paragraph describe the sequence of the events. Include three reasons why this will change your life.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

A Child Called It, Day 2



Key Paragraph – 26

“Everyday seemed sprinkled with magic. One day after dinner, mom and dad took the three of us to watch the sunset. All of us held hands, as we crept past Mr. Parker’s cabin to get to the river. The green river water was as smooth as glass. The blue jays scolded the other birds, and a warm breeze blew through my hair. Without a word, we stood watching the fireball-like sun as it sank behind the tall trees, leaving bright blue and orange streaks in the sky. From above, I felt someone hug my shoulders. I thought it was my father. I turned and became flushed with pride to find Mom holding me tightly. I could feel her heart beat. I never felt as safe and as warm as that moment in time, at the Russian River.”

Writing Prompt

David recalls heart-warming memories from his childhood at the Russian River. Prepare a journal entry as David. **Write an explanatory paragraph that describes David’s memorable day. Provide 2-3 details that made this day so special.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

A Child Called It, Day 3



Key Paragraph – 29

“My relationship with Mom drastically changed from discipline to punishment that grew out of control. It became so bad at times, I had no strength to crawl away—even if it meant saving my life.”

Writing Prompt

The mother’s discipline has turned into verbal, emotional, and physical abuse. **In an explanatory paragraph describe the difference between discipline and abuse. Explain how David’s punishment evolved into abuse. Provide three examples from the text to illustrate your statement.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

A Child Called It, Day 4



Key Paragraph – 61

“That day my plan failed, but on other attempts I was lucky. Once, I managed to hide my treasure in my desk in homeroom, only to find on the next day that I had been transferred to the school across the street. Except for losing the stolen food, I welcomed the transfer. Now, I felt I had a new license to steal. Not only was I able to snatch food from my classmates again, but I also sprinted to the grocery store about once a week. Sometimes at the grocery store, if I felt things weren’t just right, I didn’t steal anything. As always, I finally got caught. The manager called mother. At the house, I was thrashed relentlessly. Mother knew why I stole food and so did Dad, but she still refused to feed me. The more I craved food, the more I tried to come up with a better plan to steal it.”

Writing Prompt

David only eats when he steals food. He steals food at school and steals food from stores. Do you think David has the right to steal food? If not, what are his other options? **In an explanatory paragraph, describe whether or not David should be allowed to steal food. Provide three reasons to support your answer.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

A Child Called It, Day 5



Key Paragraph – 66

“I sat on a chair and picked the clumps of hot dogs out of the bowl with my hand. Globbs of thick saliva slipped through my fingers, as I dropped it into my mouth. As I tried to swallow, I began to whimper. I turned to Father, who stood looking through me with a drink in his hand. He nodded for me to continue. I couldn’t believe he just stood there as I ate the revolting contents of the bowl. At that moment, I knew we were slipping further and further apart.”

Writing Prompt

Pretend you are David and write a letter to your father to tell him how you wished he would save you. **In an explanatory paragraph describe the pain you are going through. Include three logical reasons why he should rescue you.**

Alternatively, pretend to be the father and explain why you felt unable to save David. Be logical in your explanation. State what you should have done and why. Apologize to David.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

A Child Called It, Day 6



Key Paragraph – 85

“Look at me when I’m talking to you!” she snapped.

Obedying her command, I slowly raised my head. As my head came up, I saw Russell rocking back and forth on Mother’s left leg. The harsh tone of Mother’s voice didn’t seem to bother him. He simply stared at me through a set of cold eyes. Even though Russell was only four or five years old at the time, he had become Mother’s ‘little Nazi,’ watching my every move, making sure I didn’t steal any food. Sometimes he would make up tales for Mother so he could watch me receive punishment. It really wasn’t Russell’s fault. I knew Mother had brainwashed him, but I had begun to turn cold towards him and hate him just the same.’

Writing Prompt

David’s mother convinces the family to see David as an object and not a person. **In an explanatory paragraph describe how the family has been brainwashed into seeing David as an ‘it.’ Provide two examples and at least one quote from the text to aid you in your explanation. Trade with a partner and edit their paragraph using the editing checklist.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

A Child Called It, Day 7



Key Paragraph – 114

“The bathtub and the backyard treatment soon became routine. At times when I laid in the tub, my brothers brought their friends to the bathroom to look at their naked brother. Their friends often scoffed at me. ‘What did *he* do *this* time?’ they’d ask. Most of the time my brothers just shook their heads, saying, ‘I don’t know.’

Writing Prompt

Child abuse takes place in secret and is difficult to discover. **In an informative paragraph, explain why people should be on the lookout for child abuse. First provide a list of statistics from today’s background information. Include at least three reasons to support your opinion.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

A Child Called It, Day 8



Key Paragraph – 122

“In time, the relationship between Shirley and Mother became strained. One day, for no apparent reason, Mother broke all ties with Shirley. Shirley’s son was not allowed to play with the boys, and Mother ran around the house calling her a bitch. Even though I wasn’t allowed to play with the others, I felt a little safer when Shirley and Mother were friends.”

Writing Prompt

Pretend you are Shirley. **Write an informative letter to Social Services explaining why you believe that his mother is abusing David Pelzer. Form your argument by presenting three facts. Describe the three facts with as many details as possible.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

A Child Called It, Day 9



Key Paragraph – 145

“My brief encounter with Kevin quickly faded away and my hatred surfaced again. I fought to bury my feelings, but I couldn’t. I knew I was never meant to be loved. I knew I would never live a life like my brothers. Worst of all, I knew that it was only a matter of time until Kevin would hate me, just like all the others did.”

Writing Prompt

The author, Dave Pelzer, has written an expose’ of child abuse. Think about what Pelzer is trying to teach the reader in this expose’. **In an informative paragraph explain Pelzer’s lessons about child abuse. Focus on three lessons and develop a statement about child abuse. Support your statement with three examples from the text. Conclude by explaining three ways how others should help.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

A Child Called It, Day 10



Key Paragraph – 156

“I’m so lucky. My dark past is behind me now. As bad as it was, I knew even back then, in the final analysis, my way of life would be up to me. I made a promise to my self I would be the best person that I could be. Today I am. I made sure I let go of my past, accepting the fact that that part of my life was only a small fraction of my life. I knew the black hole was out there, waiting to suck me in and forever control my destiny, but only if I let it. I took positive control over my life.”

Writing Prompt

Imagine you are David Pelzer and you want to write an inspiring speech or statement for struggling teens on the topic of survival and triumphing over seemingly insurmountable odds. You want to teach a life lesson on integrity- becoming the person you have the capacity to be.

Write an informative essay that explains that your childhood circumstances are only a small part of your life and does not determine their future. Explain that each individual has the power to take control of their life and create their own destiny. Explain that the power to overcome difficult circumstances comes from within. You should provide information, examples, and quotations from the text to back up your arguments. Include three logical and anecdotal arguments.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

A Child Called It, Day 11



Key Paragraph – 164

“What you have just read is a story of an ordinary family that was devastated by their hidden secret. The story has two objectives: the first is to inform the reader how a loving, caring parent can change to a cold, abusive monster venting frustration on a helpless child; the second is the eventual survival and triumph of the human spirit over seemingly insurmountable odds.”

Writing Prompt

Imagine you are David Pelzer and that you want to write an essay for young, new parents, about parenting. **Write an informative paragraph in support of positive, structured parenting. In a second informative paragraph explain the destruction of abusive behaviors. Provide three examples and at least one quotation from the text to support your informative paragraphs. Include logical and anecdotal arguments.**