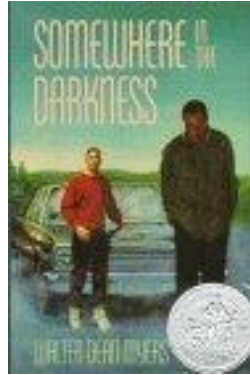


Somewhere in the Darkness



ISBN-10	0-590-42411-4
ISBN-13	978-0-590-42411-0
Author	Dean Meyers, Walter
Publisher	Scholastic Paperbacks
Copyright	1856
Lexile	640L
Genre	Fiction, Children's literature
Synopsis	Jimmy is fourteen, lives in Harlem and is holding his own in a pretty tough world. But things get tougher when Jimmy's father Crab, shows up. Crab, who disappeared nine years ago, suddenly wants Jimmy to know him. They set off on a trip halfway across the country to visit Crab's old haunts. On this trip Jimmy learns about his father and about himself, finding out that while things can't always be fixed, sometimes they can be understood, and maybe even forgiven.
Themes	Family Relations
Protagonist	Male, African American
Note	Over the years, these books have been published in multiple editions. The page numbers in your book may be different than the ones on the lesson plan.
More Information	www.scu.edu/character      

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt *Somewhere in the Darkness*, Day 1



Key Paragraph pg. 6-7

“There was the hint of a smile on the psychologist’s face. Jimmy looked past him to the clock on the wall. The wall was painted green on the bottom and white at the top. The line dividing the white and green went right behind the clock. Jimmy looked back at the psychologist. He was writing on his pad. Jimmy didn’t answer more questions.

It wasn’t anybody’s business, he thought, that his real mother was dead. His father wasn’t anybody’s business, either. Neither were his daydreams. Sometimes, he thought, adults didn’t like the idea of kids thinking anything or knowing anything they didn’t know. Jimmy enjoyed letting his mind wander, enjoyed the thoughts that ran through his mind like a long, pleasant movie.”

Writing Prompt

Can you identify with Jimmy’s lack of motivation towards school? Why or why not? Then, write an informational paragraph that provides reasons you think Jimmy is not motivated to go to school. Be creative in your information, but also be sure to draw on some of the facts you already know, or have inferred, from today’s reading. Use a simile, metaphor or analogy to get your point across to the reader; maintain a formal tone throughout your writing. Do you think he should care about school? Why or why not? Be sure to conclude your paragraph with a reiteration of the reasons you think Jimmy is not going to school. When you have finished writing, be sure to go over your work and edit it.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Somewhere in the Darkness, Day 2



Key Paragraph pg. 17

“Jimmy hadn’t been sick so much as he had been tired. It was a funny kind of tired, not the kind that you got from playing ball. No muscles ached, his arms and legs weren’t tired. It seemed to come from inside. It was almost as if something tired was growing in him. In the mornings he would just get up and not feel like doing anything. He didn’t know why.”

Writing Prompt

Do you think that the man in the hallway is really Jimmy’s father? Why or why not? Do you think Jimmy will be happy to see him? Write an explanatory paragraph about how you think Jimmy will react to seeing his father. Explain the emotions Jimmy must be feeling, using evidence you have gathered from the past two days. Has there ever been a time in your life when someone unexpected suddenly shows up? Were you happy to see them? Why or why not. Do you think Jimmy’s reaction will be the same as yours, or will it be different? Maintain a formal tone throughout your paragraph and be sure to conclude with a reiteration of your main points.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Somewhere in the Darkness, Day 3



Key Paragraph pg. 28

“Jimmy would have like to look at him good without him looking back. He would have liked to stand them both in front of a mirror to see how they looked together. But he knew that he was looking at him, watching every move he made. He couldn’t relax.”

Writing Prompt

Why didn’t Crab mail any of the letters that he wrote to Jimmy while he was in prison? What do you think the letters said?

Next, imagine that you are Crab. Write an explanatory paragraph to Jimmy from prison. Use elaborate details to explain what you life is like; use simile, metaphor or analogy to express your emotions to your son. What would you say? What do you think Crab wanted to say to Jimmy but couldn’t tell him?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Somewhere in the Darkness, Day 4



Key Paragraph pg. 38

“Jimmy put his bag in the trunk. Crab closed it and went around to the driver’s side, opened the door, and slid in. Jimmy looked back toward where he knew Mama Jean was. He halfway expected to see her down the street, waving her arms for him to come back. If she had been there, calling to him, he might have gone back, too.”

Writing Prompt

Before you begin writing, reflect on what a father is. What is your own experience of what a good Dad should be. What is a father to Jimmy? Do you think Crab will meet Jimmy’s expectations? Why or why not? Write an explanatory paragraph that describes whether or not you think Crab is a good father to Jimmy. Think about his absence throughout Jimmy’s childhood. Do you blame him for not being present to his child? Or do you think he was doing the best he could under the circumstances? Do you agree with Jimmy’s definition of a father?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Somewhere in the Darkness, Day 5



Key Paragraph pg. 46

“Crab went back to the car and got in. Jimmy turned and walked in the opposite way. Hid didn’t know what to do. He didn’t know what to say to Crab. He didn’t even know Crab.

There were tears in his eyes as he walked that broke up the light into tiny fragments. He thought about looking for a bus station, to get back to New York, but he wasn’t sure why, or why he was afraid of Crab. But he was scared, scared and tired.”

Writing Prompt

Have you ever known someone who was put in jail? How did you feel about their situation? How do imagine Jimmy is feeling when he learns that Crab has escaped?

Write an informational paragraph about Jimmy’s reaction to Crab’s confession. How is Jimmy feeling and why does he react this way? Is Jimmy more upset because Crab ran away from prison, or because Crab is sick? Why do you think Crab lied to Jimmy and Mama Jean about being on parole? Do you think Jimmy has a right to be mad the Crab lied to him? Has anybody ever lied to you? How did you react? Be sure to end your writing with a reiteration of your main stance in the paragraph.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Somewhere in the Darkness, Day 6



Key Paragraph pg. 61-62

“Jimmy went down the hall, pushed open the first door he got to, and saw that it was the bathroom. He closed the door behind him, locked it, and checked the money in his sock again. He thought of Mama Jean and realized that he didn’t even know how long he had been away from her. He had left in the evening. It was almost evening again. Two days. They were a long way from New York for only two days, he thought.”

Writing Prompt

Why does Jimmy keep thinking about Mama Jean? What does Mama Jean represent for Jimmy? Write a paragraph about Jimmy’s relationship with Mama Jean. Do you think he should have left her to go with Crab? Is there anybody in your life that is special to you like Mama Jean is to Jimmy? Would you want to leave them? Why do you think Jimmy left with Crab?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Somewhere in the Darkness, Day 7



Key Paragraph pg. 70-71

“There were other things that he wanted to know, too. He wanted to know what kinds of things Crab had been thinking about in jail. Behind everything was the moment in the hall when he had first heard him speak. At the time Jimmy had been curious but he had been scared, too. Now the thought of it, the thought of him and Crab in the hallway, was like a shadow that darkened his memory, that filled him with dread and wonder and delight. His father had come from somewhere, from some place, from some other time when his mother had been alive, and when he had either been a baby or not yet born. Nothing had gone wrong in his life then; it had been a perfect time. He had simply been unaware of it.”

Writing Prompt

Jimmy always seems to be worrying about what Crab thinks about him. Do you recall a time when you were worried about what others thought about you?

Write an explanatory paragraph about why you think Jimmy is seeking Crab’s approval. Is that a normal for a son to want from his father? Have you ever felt that you needed to prove yourself to another person? Why did you feel that way? Do you think Jimmy feels the same way that you did? Be as descriptive as possible in your writing – draw on personal experience as well as evidence from the text.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Somewhere in the Darkness, Day 8



Key Paragraph pg. 86

“ ‘I went out and listened to one group and they were smoking. Then Billy and his little trio came on and they just did the whole thing. Listening to that boy playing I knew I couldn’t do nothing that came even close. Guy said he’d let me use his horn, and I couldn’t even put my hand out to reach for it. Anything I could have been is gone. Got myself all aggravated. That’s why my back started acting up.’ ”

Writing Prompt

Why do you think Crab is so upset that he can’t play the saxophone anymore? What does this inability to play symbolize for Crab? Have you ever found out that you had lost a skill or ability? How did you feel? Write an informative paragraph about how Crab has been affected by his time in prison. Some details about Crab’s life in prison are provided in the novel – however, many details are missing: use your imagination to fill in the gaps. Be creative as possible, provide rich details using simile, metaphor or analogy, and try to maintain a formal tone throughout your writing. How is his life different now than it used to be? What role does Jimmy play in Crab trying to get his old life back? Has there been a time in your own life when you tried to regain something that you had lost? Were you successful? Why or why not?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Somewhere in the Darkness, Day 9



Key Paragraph pg. 92

“He thought, if Crab didn’t come back, he could call Mama Jean collect and she would find a way for him to get back to New York. He moved back closer to the building as the wind picked up and sent the rain under the marquee. He was surprised that he was worried about being left along in Chicago. He had never been afraid in New York. That was what his life was like. It was different now that it had been. He told himself that no matter what happened, even if Crab did leave and he couldn’t call Mama Jean collect he wouldn’t steal anything.”

Writing Prompt

Why does Jimmy tell himself that he won’t steal anything? Why is that important to Jimmy? Pretend you are Jimmy. From his point of view, write an explanatory paragraph about your own morals and values. Why don’t you want to steal anything? Does this have anything to do with Crab? What about Mama Jean? Do you have morals for yourself the same way that Jimmy has morals for himself? Be creative in your writing; use a simile, metaphor or analogy at least once in your paragraph to describe your morals.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Somewhere in the Darkness, Day 10



Key Paragraph pg. 102-103

“Jimmy wanted to ask Crab how his father had looked. He tried to imagine Crab as a boy, sitting next to his father. It was a hard thing to do, imagining an adult as a child. Looking at Crab in the car, as the day waned and the neon lights flashed against the sharp angles of his face, it was hard to imagine him as anything but what he was, a strange, dark man hunched over the wheel of a rented car.

After a while he felt himself going to sleep and gave in to it. He thought of Mama Jean, an impossible distance behind him. In front of him, somewhere in the darkness, lay Arkansas.”

Writing Prompt

Do you think Crab is afraid of being like his father? Do you think Jimmy is afraid of being like Crab? Why or why not?

Then, write an informational paragraph using evidence from the text and from other informational sources that explains the relationship between fathers and sons in this book. To provide yourself with more concrete examples, feel free to conduct research using reliable online sources or authoritative print sources that provide details about the relationships between real-life fathers and sons. Why might Jimmy want to be different than his father? Do you think Jimmy will be a better person after he has met his father? Why or why not?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Somewhere in the Darkness, Day 11



Key Paragraph pg. 117

“Sometimes I wonder how we would have turned out if things had been different.’

‘Like what?’ Jimmy turned as they passed a mule that was all leather and angles.

‘Like if this little thing had happened, or that little thing,’ Crab said. ‘I don’t know. Maybe if I had the time to think before I got into trouble the same that I had after I got into trouble. Funny thing, they give you all that time in jail to think about your life. When you get out in the street and you can use the time you too buys hustling up a image you can deal with.’

Writing Prompt

What do you think Crab thinks it is to be a man? What does Jimmy think it is to be a man? Do they have the same definition?

Then, write an informational paragraph about how the characters define manhood. What do you think makes a man? Do you think that Crab is a good man? Do you think that Jimmy will be a good man? Are there any examples in your own life of what a man should be? Describe the characteristics that this person has, or imagine a person who has the characteristics, that makes him a good man. Use a simile, metaphor or analogy to describe this person’s qualities.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt
Somewhere in the Darkness, Day 12



Key Paragraph pg. 125

“For a while Jimmy had thought that he was beginning to know Crab, He has liked sitting with him in the car, just the two of them, talking about things that Crab had done years before. He had liked it when Crab was right about what the policeman was going to do, too. In a funny way he had even liked it because Crab was hurting. Now, as the miles droned by, they were right where they had been before. Crab was a stranger, and here, far away from Mama Jean and home, so was he.”

Writing Prompt

What is Jimmy learning by traveling with Crab? What is he learning about himself? What is he learning about his family and his history? What is he learning about the United States? Write an informational paragraph about all of the things that Jimmy is learning about on his journey with Crab Do you think this knowledge will change him? Have you ever had an experience that changed you the way that this experience might change Jimmy.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Somewhere in the Darkness, Day 13



Key Paragraph pg. 138

“Jimmy thought he was going to be sacred, but he wasn’t. He was tired, though. His legs were aching. Before he fell asleep he thought of Mama Jean, then he thought of some of the kids in his class. He wondered what they had said when he had stopped coming to school. Probably just thought he was a dropout or something.”

Writing Prompt

Why do you think that Crab goes to the conjure man instead of a doctor to try to cure his ailments? How is the conjure man different from a regular doctor? How does this difference represent a cultural difference between the North and the South?

Write a paragraph that describes the different worlds that Jimmy has experienced on his journey. How does Jimmy feel about the conjure man? Which ‘world’ does Jimmy feel connected to the most?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Somewhere in the Darkness, Day 14



Key Paragraph pg. 153

“Maybe, he thought, what he had been thinking was like what Crab had been dreaming, just prison dreams. He had been thinking, since that moment in the hall when he had first seen him, his mind racing wildly through scenes of family and wholeness, that maybe something magical would happen. It wouldn’t have been walking off into the sunset. It would have been about him and Crab together and knowing something special that could never be forgotten.

Writing Prompt

Does Crab want Rydell to tell the truth so that he will be legally innocent or because he wants Jimmy to know that he’s innocent? Which is more important?

Write an informational paragraph about Crab’s motivations for proving his innocence. Do you think he is more worried about going back to prison, or if Jimmy believes that he is innocent? Why might this be important to Crab? How is this showing integrity? Wholeness?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Somewhere in the Darkness, Day 15



Key Paragraph pg. 167

“Jimmy had thought about having a child. It seemed so far off, like something that could never happen, but somehow would. He thought about what he would do with the child if it were a boy. He wouldn’t know much about getting money to buy food for him, or what things to tell him to do except to be good and not to get into trouble. But he would tell him all the secrets he knew, looking right into his eyes and telling him nothing but the truth so that every time they were together they would know things about each other. That way there would be a connection, he thought, something that would be there even when they weren’t together. He would know just how he was like his son, and how they were different, and where their souls touched and where they didn’t. He knew if he ever had a son he would have to do it right away, and all the time, because sooner or later there wouldn’t be enough days left to fit meaning in.”

Writing Prompt

Did Jimmy ultimately make the right decision about going with Crab? What do you think will happen to Jimmy now? Has this experience impacted him positively or negatively?

Write an explanatory paragraph predicting how you think this experience will change Jimmy. Do you think he will have a different view of the world now that he has met his father? What did Crab show Jimmy while they were together?