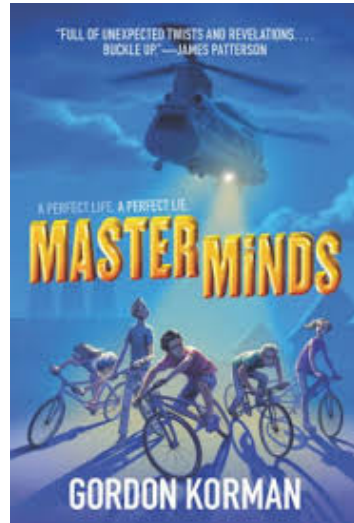


Masterminds

Writing Prompts



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Genre Science Fiction

Synopsis Eli and his friends live in the perfect New Mexico town called Serenity. When one friend leaves Serenity, Eli begins to realize that home is not what he thought it was. Using daring plans, Eli and his friends uncover the truth of where they live and what they are.

Themes Friendship, Courage, Experiments, Genetics

Note This book is the first in a series. The last chapter does not offer a full resolution.

Character-Based Literacy Program Writing Prompts

Masterminds, Day 1



Analyze the key paragraph.

Key Paragraph, p. 30

“One thing bothers me, though. Why doesn’t the *Pax* print the bad stories that are in the *USA Today*? Is it because we don’t have to worry about things like murder? Just because we live here doesn’t mean we shouldn’t know about the outside world. What about someone like poor Randy? When he gets to his grandparents, will he be ready?”

EXTEND

Write a short product based on today’s prompt to connect to the unit theme.

In this unit, you will write about key virtues that are either central or missing in Serenity.

Today’s virtue is honesty – one of the three Essential Qualities of Serenity.

- Define honesty and provide an example from the story.

Write 1–2 paragraphs. Provide evidence from the text. Use as many details as possible.

Character-Based Literacy Program Writing Prompts

Masterminds, Day 2



Analyze the key paragraph.

Key Paragraph, p. 53

“She gives me a mischievous grin, which makes her appear even younger. ‘That’s classified, mister.’”

“Classified?”

“You know,” she explains, “like government secrets.” She stares at me, puzzled that I don’t understand.”

“It’s not honest to keep secrets,” I say.

“Sometimes things have to be kept from us for our own good. Like national security. If the president told everybody his plan for that, he’d also be telling the enemy.”

“I’m even more confused. ‘who’s the enemy?’”

“She looks flustered. ‘well, there isn’t one now. I’m just explaining why certain information has to be classified.’”

Instructions

1. Underline or highlight all of the words that express an emotion. Are Mrs. Delaney and Eli feeling mostly happy, awkward, curious, or angry in this paragraph?
2. Do you agree with Mrs. Delaney that some things should be maintained classified? Think of at least one example of information that should be accessible only to some people.

Write a short product based on today’s prompt to connect to the unit theme.

Today’s virtue is contentment – one of the core subjects in Serenity School.

- Define contentment and use example from the text or the real world.
- Include your opinion on ways in which schools can promote students’ sense of contentment.

Write 1–2 paragraphs. Provide evidence from the text. Use as many details as possible.

Character-Based Literacy Program Writing Prompts

Masterminds, Day 3



Analyze the key paragraph.

Key Paragraph, p. 68-69

“Eli answered his own question. ‘I think he did write. I think he wrote before he even left. There’s a message for me here somewhere.’

There are about a million things wrong with that logic. For example, if Randy already knew what he wanted to say before he left, why didn’t he just say it? What could be so secret? We don’t keep secrets here.”

Write a short product based on today’s prompt to connect to the unit theme.

Today’s virtue is harmony – one of the three Essential Qualities of Serenity.

- Define harmony and provide an example from the story or real life.
- Does harmony mean complete agreement on ideals or interests?
- In your opinion, is harmony defined differently by an authoritarian government (leadership that requires blind submission to authority) versus a democratic government (leadership that support freedom of thought and action)?

Write 1–2 paragraphs. Provide evidence from the text. Use as many details as possible.

Character-Based Literacy Program Writing Prompts

Masterminds, Day 4



Analyze the key paragraph.

Key Paragraph, p. 82

“Our town is so small that it’s easy to keep a running census. The information is open access. Anyone can go on the internet and check who lives here, who their kids are, and what their job is—except the Surety, who are kept anonymous.”

Write a short product based on today’s prompt to connect to the unit theme.

Today’s virtue is trust.

- Define trust and provide an example from the text or from real life.
- What makes a person trustworthy?
- What makes websites and online articles trustworthy?

Write 1–2 paragraphs. Provide evidence from the text. Use as many details as possible.

Character-Based Literacy Program Writing Prompts

Masterminds, Day 5



Analyze the key paragraph.

Key Paragraph, p. 103–104

“I’ll always remember those afternoons as the time that I leave Serenity for good. Not physically, of course. But that’s when the whole idea of the town—the honesty, harmony, and contentment— ceases to have meaning for me. I’m lying to them, and I don’t even feel bad about it, because they’re lying to me. It may look like harmony in my room, but that’s all phony. And for sure, I’m not feeling very content about it.”

Instructions

1. What does Eli mean when he says he left, but not physically?
2. Does being lied to justify lying to the same people?

Write a short product based on today’s prompt to connect to the unit theme.

Today’s virtues are liberty and justice.

- Serenity’s pledge of allegiance emphasizes unity instead of liberty, and gladness instead of justice.
 - Define liberty and justice, provide an example from the book or real life.
 - Why do they emphasize unity and gladness?
 - Under what circumstances should people choose liberty and justice over unity?

Write 1–2 paragraphs. Provide evidence from the text. Use as many details as possible.

Character-Based Literacy Program Writing Prompts

Masterminds, Day 6



Analyze the key paragraph.

Key Paragraph, p. 128–129

"It's worse than that," I tell him. "The Purples, everybody who works at the school, or the factory—"

"Our parents!" moans Tori.

"It's the whole lot of them," Malik adds angrily. "Every adult in Happy Valley."

"Right," I agree. "And if they control our internet, and they control our school, and they control our town, then we can't trust anything we think we know about our lives!"

Instructions

1. Do you agree that they cannot trust what they know about their lives? Explain.
2. What areas of their lives can they still trust?

Write a short product based on today's prompt to connect to the unit theme.

Today's virtue is moral courage.

- Eli and his friends show moral courage when they are ready to take risks to find out the truth about Randy and Serenity.
 - How would you define moral courage?
 - Provide at least one example of moral courage from real world situations or another book.

Write 1–2 paragraphs. Provide evidence from the text. Use as many details as possible.

Character-Based Literacy Program Writing Prompts

Masterminds, Day 7



Analyze the key paragraph.

Key Paragraph, p. 171–172

“I don’t feel special. I feel violated, invaded, and extremely creeped out. I feel like I’m some kind of lab rat!”

Tori is visibly upset. “Don’t try to make sense of this! None of this makes any sense! I’m supposed to be Osiris 9! It’s on notes signed by my own parents! What’s an Osiris?”

“I’m so gobsmacked that I’ve forgotten where I am and what I’m doing. At that moment, my mind is a boiling whirlwind of questions. One question, really: *Why?* Why have eleven kids been studied since the minute they were born?”

Write a short product based on today’s prompt to connect to the unit theme.

Today’s virtue is perseverance.

- Eli, Malik, Hector, and Tori displayed perseverance during their tour of the factory.
 - How would you define perseverance?
 - Provide at least one example of perseverance from real world situations or another book.

Write 1–2 paragraphs. Provide evidence from the text. Use as many details as possible.

Character-Based Literacy Program Writing Prompts

Masterminds, Day 8



Analyze the key paragraph.

Key Paragraph, p. 186

"I want so much to reach her, but fear has made her completely close herself off."

"Remember," she persists, "you promised you wouldn't tell. Even if you think you're helping me, you're not."

"What has her so scared? She's with *me*; her parents love her; our town looks after us 100 percent. How could she have found something wrong when everything's so totally right?"

Instructions

1. Give an example of how fear make us become closed off.
2. Why is Amber resistant to believe her best friend?

Write a short product based on today's prompt to connect to the unit theme.

Today's virtue is adaptability.

- Eli and his friends made a startling realization about themselves. They will have to adapt this information into their view of themselves and Serenity.
 - How would you define adaptability?
 - Provide at least five examples of how Eli and his friends will have to adapt.

Write 1–2 paragraphs. Provide evidence from the text. Use as many details as possible.

Character-Based Literacy Program Writing Prompts

Masterminds, Day 9



Analyze the key paragraph.

Key Paragraph, p. 205

“Tori covers her face with her hands. “I can’t believe we’re *criminals*. I can only imagine the terrible things we must have done!”

“Stop right there, “Eli orders. “We haven’t done anything. Even if we’re exact doubles of people who’ve committed crimes, we’re innocent. Don’t ever forget that.”

“That was the whole purpose of the experiment,” I put in. “To prove that we can be good even though we’re clones of bad people.”

Write a short product based on today’s prompt to connect to the unit theme.

Today’s virtue is compassion.

In times of hardship, friends show each other compassion.

- What does compassion mean to you?
- How are the characters showing each other compassion after learning about Project Osiris?
- Provide examples of any character who does not show compassion for others.

Write 1–2 paragraphs. Provide evidence from the text. Use as many details as possible.

Character-Based Literacy Program Writing Prompts

Masterminds, Day 10



Analyze the key paragraph.

Key Paragraph, p. 245–246

“Mrs. Delaney, “Eli begins, “I don’t know how we can ever thank you—“
“You can’t,” she interrupts, almost coldly. “This never happened, so there’s nothing to be grateful for. I’ll keep your secret just this once, because it’s my secret too. But I’m *not* on your side. I’m not on anyone’s side, and I intend to keep it that way.”

Write a short product based on today’s prompt to connect to the unit theme.

Mrs. Delaney helps Eli, Amber, Malik, Tori, and Hector allude the Surety.

- Put yourself in Mrs. Delaney’s perspective and write about what she might be thinking, doing, and seeing.
- Choose one of these virtues and explain when Mrs. Delaney exhibits it: courage, compassion, honesty, integrity.

Write 1–2 paragraphs. Provide evidence from the text. Use as many details as possible.

Character-Based Literacy Program Writing Prompts

Masterminds, Day 11



Analyze the key paragraph.

Key Paragraph, p. 285–286

“I am scraped and bruised and bleeding all over. Everything hurts, and yet for some reason, I feel terrific. It takes a moment before I realize why. The paralyzing headache and nausea are gone. When the truck blew up, it took the barrier generator with it. A rush of exhilaration comes over me. The walls of our prison were never brick and mortar, but they were just as real. For the first time in our lives, we’re free.”

Write a short product based on today’s prompt to connect to the unit theme.

Today’s virtue is self-reliance.

- Eli, Amber, Tori, Hector, and Malik have left Serenity. Now that they do not have people to take care of them, they need to rely on themselves and each other.
 - Provide at least two examples of how the characters need to be self-reliant.
 - Provide at least two examples of how the characters need to be reliant on each other.

Write 1–2 paragraphs. Provide evidence from the text. Use as many details as possible.

Character-Based Literacy Program Writing Prompts

Masterminds, Day 12



Analyze the key paragraph.

Key Paragraph, p. 297

“Here’s what haunts me: If we didn’t have to rush our plan in order to get *me* out of Happy Valley before Weeding Day, could we have come up with a better way to do it that didn’t get Hector killed? If I didn’t cheat on tests and gorge myself on cookies and cupcakes and get myself classified as “toxic”; if I wasn’t such a big *jerk*, would Hector still be alive?”

Instructions

1. What emotions are Hector feeling in this moment?
2. Do you think Malik is justified in feeling responsible? Why or why not?

Write a short product based on today’s prompt to connect to the unit theme.

Today’s virtue is optimism.

- Eli, Malik, Tori, and Amber are optimistic as they journey through the forest.
 - What is your definition of optimism?
 - Provide at least 3 examples of optimism from the text and how it helps the characters.

Write 1–2 paragraphs. Provide evidence from the text. Use as many details as possible.

Character-Based Literacy Program Writing Prompts

Masterminds, Final Assignment



Your final writing product will be an argumentative essay in response to the following question:

Did Eli and his friends live up to their genetic destiny? Why or why not?

Your essay should include at least 250 words (one page double-spaced).

The essay should be concise – avoid repetition and redundancy in statements. Use the following checklist to evaluate your work:

- The essay begins with a clear argument.
- The essay provides examples to clarify on the reasoning.
- The essay includes good transition sentences and phrases.
- The essay thoughtfully presents counterarguments.
- There is a topic sentence in each paragraph.
- There is a logical progression from one paragraph to the next.
- The essay ends with a strong conclusion.

Create a timeline to organize your writing schedule.

- Add dates in the right-side column.
- Add lines to the schedule, as needed.

What	When
Create a thesis statement.	
Collect and organize ideas and facts.	
Complete an introduction paragraph.	
Complete the body paragraphs.	
Complete the conclusion paragraph.	
Read through and refine.	
Submit first draft.	
Revise based on feedback.	
Submit final draft.	