

## Writing Prompts

by Padma Venkatraman

There are several excellent writing prompts and suggestions in the DISCUSSION GUIDE. Writing prompts can also be found in the BRIDGE HOME BINGO grid. Here are some additional ideas.

General:

Create a graphic novel version of a few scenes from THE BRIDGE HOME. If you don't enjoy illustration, then find out how to write a script and write a movie script or play script instead.

Chapters 1-7

The Bridge Home is written using an unusual point of view. Discuss different points of view. Write down different points of view on slips of paper, and have students draw a slip of paper and rewrite a paragraph or two from a different point of view. How does point of view affect emotional resonance?

Prompts to inspire poetry or story writing: pets, animals, sisterhood / brotherhood / sibling relationships.

Chapters 8-15

Discuss how the characters in THE BRIDGE HOME differ. Ask students to rewrite a scene in the voice of a character other than Viji, the narrator. Encourage them to delve into this character's mind and heart and infuse the scene with the other character's feelings - perhaps even a minor character such as the gardener.

Sheela Chari (author of VANISHED) created a wonderful lesson for her university students using the "Orange" chapter of the Bridge Home and Gary DeSoto's poem about an Orange. If you're working with high school students, you might want to look up the link to this lesson plan. If you're working with middle grade/middle school students, you can use the orange chapter to explore descriptive writing and encourage them to describe an experience using the five senses after noting how Viji uses the five senses during her narration. If you're working with younger students, you might want to just have them describe what their favorite food is like. Students of any age may enjoy writing a poem that engages the five senses.

Chapters 16-22

When Viji meets members of the rival group of children, Arul tries to resolve the conflict peacefully. Discuss common conflicts that arise in families and classrooms and in settings such as the sports field. Come up with suggestions on how to resolve conflict peacefully, and write an essay about conflict resolution. Or, write a biography about a person who resolved a conflict peacefully. Or, think of a national or international conflict and consider what actions are being (or were) undertaken to try and diffuse the conflict.

Muthu refers to the dumps as The Blue Hills and the Himalayas. This could be used to explore the use of euphemistic expressions - list them and perhaps write sentences using some of them.

Chapters 23-30

Candles in the Dark is a chapter that may be used as a starting point to explore symbolism, as well as imagery, simile and metaphor. Encourage the students to write a few sentences or paragraphs or a poem that uses a metaphor, simile or other form of symbolism/ imagery.

In the Hungry Ghost chapter, as well as previous chapters such as Laughter, the characters in THE BRIDGE HOME find the strength to laugh even in the most dire circumstances. How is telling a funny story different from writing a funny scene? What are different aspects of humor? Encourage students to write a poem or story or essay that is funny, after discussing how humor can be harmful or hurtful at times, and taking care to ensure that students honor differences and indulge in laughter that celebrates life, laughter that is born of understanding and mutual respect.

Chapters 31-37

How do Arul and Viji deal with grief and tragedy differently? How does Muthu cope with it? Encourage students to think of some effective ways to cope with difficulties in their own lives and list them. Older students may want to an essay on meeting adversity with positivity.

Write a short story that explores the issue of trust.

Chapters 38-44

Write a poem or short story on the theme of hope and/or courage.

Write an essay or poem or story that encapsulates what home, family and/or friendship.

