

Name: _____

Date: _____

6B- _____

Writing: Character Trait ¶ — Samples: Rain + Ponyboy

Directions: Use the sample paragraphs below to help you write one of your own.

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6B-1

Schooled Character Trait Paragraph

In *Schooled* by Gordon Korman, Rain demonstrates that she is a righteous character, especially through her advice to Capricorn Anderson, or Cap, her grandson. Rain and Cap live on a commune together where Rain teaches Cap the values of community life. However, when Rain goes to the hospital, Cap goes to public school, where students operate according to an every-man-for-himself philosophy. Nonetheless, when Cap's bus driver has a heart attack, Cap immediately invokes Rain's teaching, leaping past his stunned classmates to the rescue, hopping into the driver's seat, and driving to the hospital. Explaining his heroic response, Cap says to Hugh Winkleman, his nerdy friend who is awed by Cap's bravery, "Rain says you always know what you're doing when you're doing the right thing." Essentially, Cap's noble behavior is a product of Rain's teaching; basically, she has taught him to listen to his conscience. In this dramatic situation, her advice motivates Cap to drive the bus, even though legally he is too young to do so. In effect, Rain enables Cap to distinguish himself morally from his classmates, who are either too shocked or too scared to do the right thing; they either don't know right from wrong, or they do but they allow other concerns — like peer pressure, fear, or the law — to paralyze their decision-making process during this emergency. Cap's confidence, on the contrary, stems from Rain's simple life lesson, which suggests that, if Cap is pure, upright, and wholesome, then he can trust his instincts. Ultimately, Rain's ethical advice suggests that sometimes in life our ability to recognize right from wrong can simplify even life's most complicated moments because generally what's right... is right!

Ponyboy, from *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton, reveals that he is an innocent character, even in the face of danger. Pony lives on the “wrong side of town,” where he and his gang, a group of misguided, marked, damaged, and discarded kids called the Greasers, struggle to stay tough against the Socs, a rival group of wealthy kids who, according to Pony, get all the breaks. After Pony and Johnny, his best friend, kill a Soc in self-defense, they flee to a church in the country. Removed from the violence of Tulsa, they have time to appreciate the pastoral beauty of the horizon at sunrise. Observing this, Pony says to Johnny, “Nothing gold can stay,” quoting Robert Frost’s poem by the same name, and then he recites the rest of the poem: “Nature’s first green is gold / her hardest hue to hold...” The poem alternates between beautiful images of nature and the ways that this beauty eventually fades. Even though Pony says he doesn’t understand the poem, he has applied it to the perfect situation, the temporary grace of a rising sun in a valley of mist. In fact, not only does Pony comprehend the poem, but he risks becoming a living example of its dreary message. Still “golden” and clinging to his fleeting innocence, he finds poetry in the sunrise; however, as a suspect in a murder case, he is a fugitive on the run, not just from the law, but also from the gloomy fate that threatens all Greasers, losing their hold on the golden “hue” of innocence. Nonetheless, Pony seems to personify vulnerability in this novel, acting as a living, breathing answer to the implied question in Frost’s poem, Can purity endure the forces of decay? Ultimately, Pony’s vulnerability and tenderness at the church illustrate that with innocence people can rise like the sun above the darkness of violence and the injustice of stereotypes, if only for a moment, for a golden moment.