

Chicago Latina Trailblazers Question Bank

Categories of questions:

Writing & Discussion prompts for essay questions

- 1. Topics for Argumentation Essays or Debate*
- 2. Informative writing*
- 3. Narrative writing*

There are three pages of Questions for Guided Reading. They have their own PDF.

Differentiation: Many questions ask for more than one response. Several have at least three components. This is a good place to make adjustments as needed for students.

Writing and Discussion Prompts

TOPICS FOR ARGUMENTATION ESSAYS OR DEBATE

IL W.9-10.1a-e Write arguments to support claims with reasons and relevant evidence.

IL SL.9-10.1a-d Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 9 topics, texts, and issues, building on other's ideas and expressing their own clearly.

W.9-10.2, Students should be able to explain, analyze, compare, explain, examine, trace, and distinguish between or among two or more ideas.

1. Education — Compare & Evaluate

Each chapter describes aspects of a Trailblazer's education. Compare your educational experience with that of at least one Trailblazer. What strengths and weaknesses do you see in each experience? If you could make one major change to improve education, what would it be? Evaluate which factors have the greatest effect on student success and defend your position with evidence.

IL W.9-10.1a-e; IL RI.9-10.1; IL SL.9-10.1a-d;

Higher-order skills: Compare/contrast, analysis, evaluation, problem-solving, evidence-based reasoning.

2. Courage — Compare & Evaluate

Compare examples of courage demonstrated by two Trailblazers. Which example best represents “real courage”? Develop a definition of courage and defend your judgment with specific evidence and logical and emotional appeals.

IL W.9-10.1a-e; IL RI.9-10.1; IL SL.9-10.4; IL SL.9-10.6

Higher-order skills: Compare/contrast, analysis, evaluation, defining criteria, evidence-based reasoning.

3. Moral Dilemmas — Critical Thinking

Identify a moral dilemma faced by a Trailblazer and compare it with one from your own experience, current events, media, or film. Evaluate the choices available. Was the decision justified? What alternative decision could have been made? Defend your conclusion.

IL W.9-10.1a-e; IL SL.9-10.1a-d; IL RI.9-10.1; Higher-order skills: Analysis, compare/contrast, evaluation, problem-solving, perspective-taking, decision-making.

4. Advocacy — Analyze & Create

Choose a Trailblazer and analyze what motivated her to become an advocate. Evaluate which of her actions had the greatest impact and why. Create a persuasive multimedia advertisement demonstrating the value of advocacy. **IL W.9-10.1a-e; IL SL.9-10.5; IL SL.9-10.6;**

Higher-order skills: Analysis, cause/effect, evaluation, synthesis, creation, persuasive reasoning.

5. Sympathetic or Unsympathetic — Evaluate

Choose a Trailblazer or another person in the text whom you consider sympathetic or unsympathetic. Evaluate the person's motivations, decisions, and circumstances. Could someone reasonably reach a different conclusion? Defend your interpretation with specific textual evidence.

IL W.9-10.1a-e; IL RI.9-10.1; IL SL.9-10.1a-d;

Higher-order skills: Analysis, evaluation, perspective-taking, interpretation, evidence-based reasoning.

6. What Has Value? — Evaluate & Persuade

Choose something you believe has significant value. Evaluate why it matters and compare its importance with another activity, interest, or experience. Write a persuasive letter convincing your audience of its value using evidence, personal experience, and clear reasoning. **IL W.9-10.1a-e; IL W.9-10.4; IL W.9-10.5;**

Higher-order skills: Compare/contrast, evaluation, prioritization, persuasive reasoning, evidence-based reasoning.

7. Humor and Irony — Compare & Evaluate

Identify two humorous or ironic moments from the Trailblazers' stories. Compare how humor or irony functions in each example. Which is more effective in communicating the author's message or revealing something about the Trailblazer? Why? Support your conclusion with evidence.

IL RI.9-10.1; IL RI.9-10.4; IL W.9-10.1a-e;

Higher-order skills: Compare/contrast, analysis, interpretation, evaluation, evidence-based reasoning.

8. Economic Circumstances, Money — Analyze & Evaluate

How does having money or the lack of it shape a person's opportunities, choices, and motivation?

Analyze how financial circumstances can create barriers or motivate change, and evaluate whether money determines a person's success or is only one factor among many. Use specific evidence to support your conclusion. **W.9-10.1; W.9-10.2; W.9-10.9;**

Higher-order skills: Analysis, cause/effect, evaluation, argumentation.

9. Community Organizers — Analyze & Evaluate

Compare two Trailblazers as community organizers. What factors contributed to their effectiveness?

Which factor was most important? Use specific evidence from the Trailblazers' lives to defend your answer. **RI.9-10.1; RI.9-10.3; W.9-10.1; W.9-10.9;**

Higher-order skills: Compare/contrast, analysis, evaluation, cause/effect, evidence-based reasoning.

10. Success — Evaluate & Rank

Evaluate the Trailblazers' success. To what extent did luck, privilege, circumstance, effort, and talent contribute? Rank the factors and defend your conclusions with evidence. Indicate specific evidence from the chapter(s).

RI.9-10.1; RI.9-10.3; W.9-10.1; W.9-10.9;

Higher-order skills: Analysis, evaluation, ranking, prioritization, evidence-based reasoning.

11. Past & Present - *Synthesize, s* - the process of combining information, ideas, and findings from multiple sources to create a new, cohesive understanding, idea or a fresh argument. Consider the political, social, and cultural issues affecting Chicago and the nation today. **Synthesize what you have learned about the Trailblazer's experiences with what is happening today.** What issues, challenges, or struggles have changed, and which remain similar? Explain how these connections support or challenge the idea, *"The more things change, the more they stay the same."* Use specific evidence and examples.

RI.9-10.1; RI.9-10.3; W.9-10.2; W.9-10.9;

Higher-order skills: Synthesis, comparison, analysis, making connections, evidence-based reasoning, connecting past and present.

Writing and Discussion Prompts

TOPICS FOR INFORMATIVE WRITING

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

1. Gender Expectations — Compare & Analyze

Analyze how gender expectations affect Luz María Solís in Chapter 12. What opportunities is she included in or excluded from? Compare the expectations placed on Luz María with those placed on her brothers. Analyze how these differences influence their opportunities, responsibilities, and choices. Use specific textual evidence.

W.9-10.2; W.9-10.9; RI.9-10.1; RI.9-10.3;

Higher-order skills: Compare/contrast, analysis, cause/effect.

2. Relationships — Compare & Analyze

In Chapter 2, Mary Gonzales's relationship with her husband changes as her work develops. Analyze the factors that contribute to their growing distance. Compare their relationship with another relationship in the book or literature. What similarities and differences help explain why some relationships become stronger while others experience conflict or distance? Support your analysis with specific textual evidence.

W.9-10.2; W.9-10.9; RI.9-10.1; RI.9-10.3;

Higher-order skills: Cause/effect, compare/contrast, analysis.

3. Prejudice — Analyze & Compare

Write an analytical essay examining prejudice in the Trailblazers' experiences. Identify the different forms of prejudice presented in the text. Compare how prejudice affects at least two Trailblazers and analyze the different ways they respond to these barriers. What factors help them confront or overcome prejudice? Support your analysis with specific examples and quotations.

W.9-10.2; W.9-10.9; RI.9-10.1; RI.9-10.2; RI.9-10.3;

Higher-order skills: Classification, compare/contrast, analysis, cause/effect.

4. Family History — Compare & Analyze

The Trailblazers share details about their families and personal histories. Research your own family background by interviewing relatives or examining family sources. Compare aspects of your family history with those of one Trailblazer. Explain how family, culture, place, or historical circumstances influenced each person's identity and opportunities. Create a multimedia presentation and present your findings to the class. Teachers may decide to use a [PechaKucha format](#).

W.9-10.2; W.9-10.6; SL.9-10.4; SL.9-10.5; SL.9-10.6

Higher-order skills: Research, comparison/contrast, analysis, synthesis.

*A **PechaKucha** is a short, fast-paced presentation format.*

Format for students: **10 × 20:**

- **10 slides**
- **20 seconds per slide**
- Slides advance **automatically**
- Total presentation time: **3 minutes and 20 seconds**

The slides are usually **image-focused**, with very little text. The speaker explains the ideas instead of reading information from the slides.

5. Supporting Characters — Analyze & Evaluate

Choose a minor person from one of the Trailblazers' stories and create a multimedia presentation analyzing that person's role. Explain how the individual supports, challenges, influences, or motivates the Trailblazer. Analyze how this person's actions contribute to the Trailblazer's development and accomplishments. Include images and specific quotations from the text. Present your analysis to the class.

W.9-10.2; W.9-10.6; W.9-10.9; RI.9-10.1; RI.9-10.3; SL.9-10.4; SL.9-10.5;

Higher-order skills: Analysis, cause/effect, evaluation, synthesis.

6. Role Models — Analyze

Choose a Trailblazer you consider a strong role model. Identify specific examples of her work, mentorship, leadership, or community involvement. Analyze how these qualities contributed to her impact on others and explain which qualities appear most significant. Cite specific evidence from the text.

W.9-10.2; W.9-10.9; RI.9-10.1; RI.9-10.3;

Higher-order skills: Analysis, cause/effect, evaluation.

7. Language and Identity — Analyze & Reflect

People often speak differently depending on who they are talking to (friends, family, teachers). Why does this happen? Interview someone who does this and ask if they notice it and why they think they do it? If you do this, why?

IL W.9-10.2; W.9-10.7; SL.9-10.1; L.9-10.3;

Higher-order skills: Analysis, reflection, perspective, self-evaluation.

8. Working Together — Compare & Evaluate (Informative)

Compare how working together supported at least two Trailblazers. Which form of support appears to have been more effective? Are there other forms of support mentioned? Use evidence from the chapter for your answer.

RI.9-10.1; RI.9-10.3; W.9-10.1; W.9-10.9;

Higher-order skills: Compare/contrast, analysis, evaluation, cause/effect, evidence-based reasoning.

9. Necessity Is the Mother of Invention — Compare & Evaluate (Informative)

Compare at least three Trailblazers whose actions illustrate “necessity is the mother of invention.” What problems forced them to develop new solutions, and which response was most effective? Cite examples from the chapters.

RI.9-10.1; RI.9-10.2; RI.9-10.3; W.9-10.1; W.9-10.9;

Higher-order skills: Compare/contrast, analysis, problem-solving, cause/effect, evaluation.

10. Individual Influence — Compare & Evaluate (Informative)

Choose two Trailblazers and evaluate how individuals can create change despite limited power or resources. Using evidence from the chapters, whose actions provide the stronger example of individual influence? Why?

RI.9-10.1; RI.9-10.3; W.9-10.1; W.9-10.9;

Higher-order skills: Compare/contrast, analysis, evaluation, cause/effect, evidence-based reasoning.

Writing and Discussion Prompts

TOPICS FOR NARRATIVE WRITING

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9.3a-e Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

1. Personal Experience — Describe & Reflect

Recall a time you looked forward to an activity, such as going to a lake, museum, amusement park, party, learning to ride a bike, or riding a roller coaster. Write a personal narrative using sensory imagery—sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste—to bring the experience to life. Explain why the experience was meaningful to you.

W.9-10.3a-e; W.9-10.4; W.9-10.5;

Higher-order skills: Reflection, description, synthesis.

2. Seasons — Describe & Connect

One Trailblazer worked during a hot, humid Chicago summer and described the heat. Choose your favorite season and write a descriptive narrative showing what makes that season meaningful to you. Use sensory details involving activities, food, sleep, weather, and daily life.

W.9-10.3b-d; W.9-10.4; W.9-10.5;

Higher-order skills: Connection, reflection, descriptive analysis.

3. Trailblazer Story — Adapt & Create

Choose a Trailblazer story that could be adapted into a one-act play. Working in a group, identify the central conflict and develop a short play with characters such as a protagonist and antagonist. Use dialogue, sequencing, and details from the text to communicate the conflict and its importance. Present the play to the class.

W.9-10.3a-e; W.9-10.4; W.9-10.5; SL.9-10.1a-d; SL.9-10.6;

Higher-order skills: Analysis, adaptation, synthesis, creation.

4. Fear and Comfort — Reflect & Analyze

Write about a time you felt worried or afraid and were comforted by a parent, friend, relative, or another person. Describe what happened and what the person did or said. Reflect on how you understand the experience differently now than you did at the time.

W.9-10.3a-e; W.9-10.4; W.9-10.5;

Higher-order skills: Reflection, perspective, analysis.

5. Childhood Beliefs — Describe & Evaluate

Think of a superstition, myth, or childhood belief that you or someone you know once believed. Write a narrative describing the belief, how it began, and when or why it ended. Reflect on whether losing that belief changed your perspective and whether you are glad it ended.

W.9-10.3a-e; W.9-10.4; W.9-10.5; Higher-order skills: Reflection, cause/effect, evaluation.

6. Seeing Others Differently — Reflect & Evaluate

Think about people who are sometimes overlooked, such as unhoused individuals, service workers, or people asking for help. Write about an encounter that caused you to see another person differently. Explain what you learned about that person and what the experience taught you about yourself.

W.9-10.3a-e; W.9-10.4; W.9-10.5;

Higher-order skills: Perspective, reflection, evaluation.

7. **Changed Your Thinking — Reflect & Evaluate** (Narrative)

Which Trailblazer or idea in the book most challenged or changed your thinking? Indicate the page number and either quote or summarize the specific text. Explain why it challenged or changed you. Evaluate whether that change will influence your future choices.

RI.9-10.1; RI.9-10.2; W.9-10.1; W.9-10.9;

Higher-order skills: Analysis, reflection, evaluation, perspective-taking, application.

8. **Cultural Identity — Compare & Reflect**

Compare your experience with cultural identity to that of one Trailblazer. What similarities and differences do you see in the role culture has played in your lives? Cite examples from the chapter.

RI.9-10.1; RI.9-10.3; W.9-10.2; W.9-10.9;

Higher-order skills: Compare/contrast, analysis, reflection, perspective-taking.

9. **Personal Challenges — Compare & Evaluate**

Identify three personal challenges that affected you and compare them with those that influenced a Trailblazer. Identify specific evidence from the book. Which had the greatest impact and why?

RI.9-10.1; RI.9-10.3; W.9-10.1; W.9-10.9;

Higher-order skills: Compare/contrast, analysis, evaluation, cause/effect, reflection.

Research Topics located at: