**How to Write a Response Journal**

Your **Literary Response Journal** should convince me that you have read and thought carefully about the assigned poems. To a limited extent, it is true that a poem means what the reader thinks it means; you must, however, be able to explain your interpretation by specific references to the poem. If your understanding of the poem is "wrong," yet your journal clearly proves that you read (or misread) the poem, you may well receive full credit. Your grade is based on what you have to say and how well you say it -- your personal reaction to the poem and your explanation of the logic that led to your interpretation.

You **MUST** include the following in every **response journal**:

the poem's title in quotation marks  
the writer's name  
a quotation from the poem -- integrated with your own sentence, properly punctuated, and commented upon as necessary to show why you cited that particular passage. **No Quote Lumps!**specific references to the poem  
careful thought

After you've included the five **MUSTs** above, you may choose any of these **MAYBEs** to guide  
your response. You may even choose the same one every time. Consider the possibilities:

1. a general statement of the poem's content
2. an analysis of the poet's persona, i.e. the poem's speaker
3. a discussion of the title's significance
4. a detailed response to a specific line or lines
5. a comparison to another poem, song, story, movie
6. an examination of poetic techniques used, such as rhyme, rhythm, simile, metaphor, personification, allusion
7. a close analysis of the poet's diction, perhaps noting specific word choices, or connotation and denotation
8. a transformation of the poem to another form, such as a cartoon, a news story, a letter, a play, a soap opera, a commercial, perhaps a different form of poetry
9. an original poem developing in some way from the assigned poem
10. a paraphrase of the poem
11. a discussion of the writer's life and its relevance to the poem
12. a statement relating the poem to your experience or ideas
13. an explanation of problems you had in understanding the poem
14. your opinion of the poem, good or bad, supported by specific references from the poem

**Length:**Approximately 1/2 to 1 page long for each **response journal.  
Format:**Blue or black ink, front side of the paper only. Hand written!

**What are the different formats for Response Journals?**

1. Double Entry Journal

This is the most common response journal. The page is divided in half lengthwise. One side refers to a specific piece of text in the form of a quote or a summary. The specific text may target a literary strategy, technique or element of the author’s craft. It may also elicit a personal response such as a connection, feeling or opinion. The other side targets the students’ thoughts regarding the selected piece of text.

2. Diary Entry

In this style, the student writes from the point of view of one of the characters. It should include

what the character might be thinking or feeling.

3. Illustration

Students draw or illustrate a specific scene using thought bubbles or captions to show the

character’s thoughts and feelings or demonstrate the scene’s importance. (Brownlie, 2005)

4. Interview

The student makes up questions they would ask one of the main characters. The questions are

answered in the characters “voice”.

5. Letter

There are many options in this response. Students may write a letter to a character, to the author,

to the teacher, to a friend, to another student. In the letter they are asking questions or sharing ideas about what they have read. At times, certain letter types could be responded to in the same fashion as a Dialogue Journal.

6. Dialogue Journal

Students reading the same novel work in pairs. They write a reflection to their partner in

response to the novel. The following day, they exchange journals and write back to their partner. (Brownlie, 2005)

7. Graphic Organizers

Graphic organizers such as KWL Charts, Mind Maps, Venn Diagrams, Timelines,

Bar & Line Graphs are used to assist students in constructing meaning from text.

8. Coding the Text

There are a variety of coding techniques including the use of stickies or highlighting to target

specific elements of text such as vocabulary, figurative language, and confusing parts of text,

questions and memorable quotes. If specific letter/symbol codes are being used, they should be developed in collaboration with your students and clearly posted in your room.

**i. JOURNAL PROMPTS**

T it le Date

 Tell about what happened in the story.

 Ask questions about things that confuse you or that you wonder about.

 Describe your feelings about the events.

 Describe your feelings about characters.

 Copy down a quote from a character and tell why you think it’s meaningful.

 Describe your favorite part.

 Make a prediction about what will happen next.

 Tell how you would react if you were one of the characters in the story.

 Describe a part that surprised you.

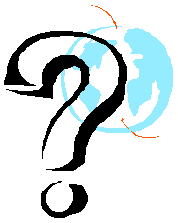
 Does the author use any strong imagery in the story (similes, metaphors, etc.)?

Give examples.

 Write a letter to the author or a character.

 Draw pictures or create graphic organizers.

Adapted from *Grand Conversations, Thoughtful Responses.* Copyright 2005. Faye Brownlie. Portage & Main Press

**JOURNAL PROMPTS**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Summary** | **Personal Response** | **Think Questions** | **Vocabulary –**  **Page # and New Word** |
| – **Main idea**  – **Beginning Middle End**  – **Characters Setting Problem Solution**  – **Important events or information**  **Author’s and how use it** | – **Like or don’t like**  – **Agree or don’t agree**  – **Favorite part or favorite character**  – **Prediction**  – **Connection to life**  – **Compare to another**  **Story**  **Message**  **I can**  **in my life** | – **Why?**  – **How?**  – **What would happen if?**  – **I wonder** | – **Look In**  – **Look Around**  – **Look It Up**  **Language**  – **Awesome adjectives**  – **Vivid verbs**  – **Precise nouns**  – **“Show not tell”**  – **Similes**  – **Other “powerful**  **language”** |

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**DOUBLE ENTRY JOURNALS**

**What’s Happening My Thinking**

Brief Summary

Key events/facts/details

Key Quotations

Themes

New Vocabulary

Confusing Part

Reader’s reaction/opinions supported with evidence from the text

Why they’re important/What’s the author’s message?

My thinking/interpretations about the meaning or significance

Text reference/In my head reference

What I know about the word/how it connects to the text

What I did to get unstuck

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**DOUBLE ENTRY JOURNALS**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **What’s important or interesting to me** | **Author’s message (what is the author trying to say?)** |  |
|  |  |