

Responding to Literature

Reading Response Journal Help

The deeper meaning behind stories is not always clear. Unfortunately stories cannot be easily reduced to one specific, concrete meaning. Instead authors use characters, setting, plot, and action to explore issues that do not always have an easy solution, such as issues dealing with life and human nature.

However with practice, and the aid of a reading response journal, you can begin the process of decoding a book's mysteries. Journal writing gives you the opportunity to think more deeply about the story you have read and to demonstrate your understanding of its meaning.

So, your task is to write 3-5 reading response journal entries while you read your novel. Entries should be written while you are reading the novel and not all at once. The journal should help you think more critically about the novel you are reading and develop your opinion about the work. A reading response journal is not a summary of the plot; instead it should be about elements that you find interesting or important.

Reading Response Requirements:

- Must be in paragraph format
- Each entry must be at least half a page in length
- Explore some literary aspect of the book you are reading:
 - Point of view, character development, the importance of setting, themes, tone, mood, author's purpose, an important quote/passage, etc.
- Go beyond plot summaries

What to do while reading:

As you read, apply Active Reading skills.

This includes: **taking notes, underlining important passages, posing questions, looking up unfamiliar vocabulary, making connections, documenting "Ah-Ha!" moments, and simply trying to get the most out of what you are reading.**

So you just finished reading a chapter, section, paragraph – now what?

1. **Reflect** – look over your notes and think about what you have just read, also review your previous journal entries.
2. **Brainstorm / Free Write** – Make a list of possible journal topics: look for things that might stand out, important events, literary elements (see examples above)
3. **Pick a Topic & Write** – Begin writing your journal entry and make sure to include examples from the book to support your thoughts.
4. **Review & Return** – After you finish your entry, review what you have written to make corrections.

