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Reflections: A Student Response Journal



Rumble Fish
S. E. Hinton



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ISBN 978-1-60389-636-8

Item No. 202172

Response Journal

To The Student

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

Response Journal

4. Steve insists that he and Rusty-James meet for dinner to talk about the “good old days.” He also wants to tell Rusty-James about everything that has happened in his life since they last saw each other. Choose one of the following activities to complete:
- A. Compose a letter to someone you haven’t seen for a long time. In the letter, discuss at least five events that have occurred in your life since the last time you met.
 - B. Compose a letter to a current friend describing a past experience you had with that person using the five senses. Explain why that event is memorable to you, and how it changed you.

Chapter Two

5. Benny’s is the hangout for the junior high kids. It used to be the hangout for the high school students, but they left when the junior high students started going there. Students like Benny’s place because they can eat good, cheap food, visit their friends; and play pool. Write a paragraph about a hangout place for students in either your school or on a television program. Why do students like to go there? What do they do there? What’s the best and worst feature about it?
6. Rusty-James cannot think about two things at once because he has a short attention span. While he is in Benny’s, he has to stop playing pool in order to think about his problem with Biff. Recall a time when you had a lot of things to get done quickly, such as finishing school work and chores before meeting your friends. Write a letter to a friend in which you talk about what you had to accomplish, and how you handled the situation. Did you complete your tasks? Could you complete more than one at a time? Why or why not?

Response Journal

10. Gang fights used to be a common occurrence in Rusty-James' neighborhood, but now it has been many years since any gangs have battled. Rusty-James and his friends begin to reminisce about the various gangs from the past, and how the fights had begun. Make a list of as many countries as you know which have been involved in war, whether past or present. Write a brief five-sentence summary discussing what this list tells you about human nature.

11. Rusty-James stops on the bridge to look at the river. Before leaving, he throws his cigarette butt in to the water, saying, "It was so full of trash that a little more wasn't going to hurt it any." Pollution is a major problem that is affecting our planet. Think about an environmental issue that you would like to focus on in your community. Write a persuasive speech to give in front of your city council about this issue. Be sure to explain how this problem is damaging the environment and the community. Give details of your plan to solve the problem.

12. When he was a young child, Rusty-James went to the zoo with his father. His experience at the zoo was so fulfilling that he tried to return by himself, but got lost. Now that he is a young adult, Rusty-James still thinks about the animals he saw, and relates them to the people he knows. Choose one of the following activities to complete:
 - A. Create a diary entry discussing what animal you are most like and why. What are at least three similar traits that you see between you and this animal? Explain your answers with specific examples of behavior.
 - B. Create a diary entry about the best experience you have ever had with an animal. Why is this encounter memorable? How did it make you feel?

Chapter Four

20. Coach Ryan offers Rusty-James five dollars to beat up Don Price, but Rusty-James claims that he is too sore to do it. What would be your response to a teacher asking Rusty-James to beat up another student? Write a dialogue between you and Rusty-James in which you tell him how you feel about his coach's proposition. Use the following example to begin your dialogue.

Rusty-James: Who cares who asked me? It's no big deal. I get five bucks to beat up someone I don't like.

You: Well, I think. . .

21. English is one of Rusty-James' favorite classes because it is easy. All the English teacher does is read stories to the class, so Rusty-James gets to relax for awhile. He takes advantage of the fact that the teacher thinks the students are stupid. Write a paragraph each about your most and least favorite subjects in school. Why do you like and dislike these classes? How do your feelings for the teacher affect your feelings for the class or subject?
22. Rusty-James recalls when he broke his ankle by jumping from a two-story roof on a dare. The pressure of a dare can sometimes make people do things that they normally wouldn't do. Describe a time when either someone you know or a character from a book or movie acted on a dare. Write an account of that experience, including what the person did after he was dared, and what happened to him. Would you have followed through on the dare if you were in the same situation as that person or Rusty-James?

Rumble Fish

26. Cassandra claims that she started shooting up because she was upset over Motorcycle Boy's disappearance. She insists that she is not addicted, but that she only uses drugs to help her deal with stress. There are many other ways to deal with stress that aren't harmful to your body. Write a short how-to guide for an imaginary magazine, discussing what you feel are the five best ways to handle stress. Explain how to achieve these stress reducers.
27. Rusty-James is astounded when Motorcycle Boy takes an interest in his welfare. The following excerpt explains Rusty-James' view on his relationship with Motorcycle Boy.

I was a little surprised he'd worry about me. See, I always thought he was the coolest guy in the world, and he was, but he never paid much attention to me. But that didn't mean anything. As far as I could tell, he never paid any attention to anything except to laugh at it.

Describe what you think the perfect older brother or sister should be like.

28. Sometimes, Rusty-James feels left out when his father and brother talk because he doesn't understand what they're talking about. They'll often make references to mythology and literature that Rusty-James knows nothing about and, as a result, Rusty-James becomes frustrated. Create a diary entry about a time you felt left out because you didn't understand what others were talking about. How did it make you feel?