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Dickey's Song
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Dacey's Song
Cynthia Voigt



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ISBN 978-1-60389-536-1

Item No. 202295

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.

Chapter 1

1. Dacey rarely gets to spend time alone to think. She finally gets a moment to herself, which she spends lounging in the shade of the mulberry tree and gazing at the branches. Create a diary entry about a place where you go to be alone. Why is this place special to you?
2. Dacey's dream comes true when she gets a sailboat, but her hopes are dashed when the boat immediately sinks. All the time and effort she put into dragging the boat to the water seem pointless. Instead of getting upset, however, Dacey begins planning how to make her boat seaworthy. Write about a character from a book or movie who faces a situation in which he or she becomes more determined after failing to reach a goal. In your opinion, what characteristics contribute to the character's ability to persevere?
3. James and Gram are surprised by Dacey's calm reaction when the sailboat sinks because they know how important the boat is to her. Write a paragraph about a time when you were surprised by someone's reaction. Describe the situation and explain how the person's reaction differed from what you expected.
4. Imagine that you are a reporter who happened to be present when Dacey's boat sank. Write the headline and the article that appears in the newspaper the next day, but recap the events in a humorous way.
5. Gram explains to Sammy, who is young, that looks can be misleading when she says, "You can't judge a book by its cover." Sammy is still confused because he cannot relate to the saying. Compose a letter to Sammy explaining the meaning of this aphorism, and use examples, either real or fictional, to support your explanation.

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13. Mr. Chappelle addresses the topic of conflict in literature with his class, and Wilhemina asks, “What about conflict between an individual and the society he lives in?” Compose a short essay about a character from another book that deals with this type of conflict. Clarify the reason for the dispute, and explain if the cause of the tension seems reasonable. In your essay, provide at least two options that may resolve the conflict.
14. Mr. Chappelle calls on Dicey for another example of a conflict, and she suggests that a conflict can arise between a person and him- or herself. Consider what you know about Dicey’s character so far, and explain why you think she gave this suggestion. How is Dicey having a conflict with herself? Use examples from the text to support your answer.
15. Maybeth exhibits an impressive musical talent, and her music teacher, Mr. Lingerle, wishes to give her weekly piano lessons. In order to pay for the lessons, the children’s allowances are reduced and Gram forfeits the money that Dicey gives her. Even though a reduced allowance will prolong her boat restoration project, Dicey is willing to sacrifice her allowance for Maybeth’s sake. Create a diary entry about someone you know or someone you have heard of who has made a sacrifice for another person’s benefit. How easy do you think it was for this person to make the sacrifice?
16. James is assigned to write a report on the Pilgrims, so he tries to think of an angle that will be interesting to the rest of the class. Write a paragraph about a period or event in American history that you like or think is interesting. Explain why this time appeals to you.
17. Dicey’s science teacher announces that the students must work with lab partners for the next two weeks, but there are an odd number of students in the class. Dicey is sure that she will be left without a partner, but she prefers to work alone. Suppose that you need to convince someone like Dicey that group work can be beneficial. Make a list of at least five advantages to working in a group or with partners.

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47. Sammy excitedly tells Dicey about a group of boys at school that he is starting to become friends with. The boys place bets with each other, but Dicey feels as though the new boys may be taking advantage of her brother because he obviously cannot win the bets. Dicey does not want to dissuade Sammy from making new friends, however, because he has no one else to play with. What do you think Dicey should say or do? Write a paragraph discussing how you would handle the situation with Sammy.
48. Sammy comes home from school cut, bruised, and bleeding after a fight he had on the bus. Fighting is becoming a common occurrence for Sammy, but he will not reveal what instigates the fights. Compose a letter to Sammy expressing your feelings about fighting. In the letter, explain when, if ever, you think fighting is appropriate.
49. Dicey is given an assignment to use fifty dollars to plan a meal for four people. She quickly calculates a twenty-dollar meal based on the meager meals that she and her siblings had lived on the preceding summer. Miss Eversleigh, however, gives Dicey a failing grade and angrily comments, "Nobody could live for long on meals like this." Imagine what it would be like to be Dicey in this situation. Write an imaginary conversation that you might have with Miss Eversleigh about your assignment, and discuss how her comment makes you feel. For example:

Miss Eversleigh: Your paper is ridiculous. You did not even try to create a realistic meal.

You: Well, did you know that I lived on that meal all last summer?
Your comment...

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59. Dacey discusses with Mina Sammy's tendency to fight and claims that she cannot figure out why he fights so often. Mina suggests that Sammy may be fighting to defend Gram, who is considered a bit crazy and is aloof to the townspeople. Mina's suggestion, although probably true, makes Dacey mad because she knows how loving and respectable her grandmother is. Think about a character from a book or movie who is considered peculiar by his or her neighbors. Write a gossip column for a newspaper about this character describing the weird traits that give him or her a reputation.
60. Mina, Jeff, Toby, and the Tillerman family gather together for an evening of playing music and singing. Although many of them are meeting for the first time, they all find a common link through the music. Describe a time, either real or fictional, that people were brought together through music.

Chapter 9

61. Gram tries to stop Sammy from being teased by changing the children's opinion of her. She goes to his school and plays marbles with the children in hopes that they will consider her fun and cool. Suppose that you are a reporter who happened to be on the scene of the marble tournament. Write the headline and the article that will appear in the paper the next day.
62. Dacey begins to realize that her refusal to learn anything in home economics class only hurts herself, and she apologizes to her teacher for being disrespectful in class. As Miss Eversleigh walks away, Dacey thinks: "If you learned something, that didn't mean you had to do it. Just because you knew how to do it. All it meant was, if you had to, or if you wanted to, then you could."

Write a paragraph explaining how this statement reflects Dacey's changing attitude.