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Reflections: A Student Response Journal



Tuesdays with Morrie
Mitch Albom



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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.

Pre-reading

1. The cover of this book is pretty bland by most standards. It is a simple beige background, with different colored writings. As a publishing house executive, write a memo to your staff, defending or opposing the choice of the cover for *Tuesdays with Morrie*.
2. The subtitle of *Tuesdays with Morrie* is “an old man, a young man, and life’s greatest lesson.” Based on this subtitle, what do you think this novel is about? Write a well-developed paragraph explaining your answer.
3. This book’s author, Mitch Albom, has dedicated *Tuesdays with Morrie* to his brother Peter, who is “the bravest person (Albom) knows.” If you were to write a book about your own life experiences, to whom would you dedicate it? Imagine that you are writing a book about your life, and write a dedication of one or two sentences for that book. Then, write a short section for a press release for the book, explaining why you chose to dedicate your book to that person.

The Syllabus

7. In the summer of 1994, Morrie got a strange feeling that something bad was coming. It is almost as if he had a premonition about his illness. He seemed to know that a major change was coming in his life.

Have you ever had a premonition or a sense of déjà vu? Have you ever felt or even dreamt that something happened, only to find out later that it actually did happen? Write an e-mail to Morrie, explaining a time when you, like he, felt that something was going to happen to you, only to find out later that your premonition came true.

8. Morrie loves to dance. He goes once a week to a church for a public dance, sometimes even taking his own music for the D.J. to play. He doesn't even care if there's no one to dance with him. He'll just fling his hands in the air and begin to dance by himself.

Dancing is a great activity for older people like Morrie. It is a social activity that also provides a bit of exercise. Write a section for a senior center's brochure, describing fun activities like dancing, crafts, and so on that can be beneficial for senior citizens. Be sure to include the benefits of each of those activities, too.

9. When Morrie dances, he is usually alone. According to Mitch, Morrie is a wild dancer, too, waving his arms around and whirling crazily on the dance floor. In fact, judging by the way he danced, most people at the church hall thought that Morrie was just some crazy old man, not realizing that he was actually an esteemed college professor. This just goes to show that we can't always tell what a person is like just by looking at him or her.

Using Morrie as an example, write a posting for an online fashion magazine, explaining how a person should be judged.

The Student

17. After his college graduation, Mitch thinks that he can do anything that he wishes, but he feels like something is preventing him from accomplishing his goals. He essentially sits around “wondering why the lights (are) not turning green for (him).” What he wants most of all is to be a professional musician, but he keeps getting rejected by music industry people. This is frustrating to Mitch, and he finds that for the first time in his life, he “(is) failing.”

Failure is difficult to face, especially when you are failing at something for the very first time. Write an e-mail to Mitch, explaining to him why failure is a good and necessary thing. After all, it is sometimes important to fail at something before you find ultimate success.

18. After his uncle died, Mitch found a focus in his life. He went back to school, got a Master’s degree, and started a career as a writer. He found great success as a sports writer, but he also became a workaholic, making work a priority over family and friends.

Working as much as Mitch does has both positive and negative aspects. Make a list of all of the benefits being a workaholic can bring. Then do the same for all of the drawbacks. Last, write an essay that compares and contrasts the positive and negative aspects about being so intensely focused on work.

19. Even though Mitch works a lot, he still finds time to fall in love. He meets “a dark-haired woman named Janine” and, after dating her for seven years, the two of them get married.

To some people, seven years may seem like a long time to date someone before getting married. Others may think that it is far better to date someone for a long time before committing to marriage. What is your opinion? Write the script for a Valentine’s Day radio show in which you explain to people the preferable amount of time to date someone before deciding to get married and why.

The Classroom

27. Mitch's first visit with Morrie causes him to reflect on some of the most important aspects of his life. Morrie asks him very personal questions, such as, "Are you at peace with yourself?" and "Are you trying to be as human as you can be?" These are in direct contrast to how Mitch is actually living his life. Nothing is as important to Mitch as his work, not his community, not giving of himself, not his own inner peace.

As society moves faster and faster, it becomes harder for all of us to find a sense of inner peace or a sanctuary away from the stress of the world. What do you do to get away from it all and foster a sense of peace within yourself? Do you paint or go for a run or read? Write a well-constructed essay in which you explain what you do to foster your own sense of inner peace.

28. A long time ago, when Mitch was still Morrie's student, Mitch took to calling his professor "Coach." It was a term of endearment that Morrie enjoyed and seemed natural to Mitch.

Why do you think the term "coach" is particularly appropriate in describing Morrie and his relationship with Mitch? Write a short section for the Cliff's Notes of this book, explaining why the term "coach" is appropriate for Mitch to call Morrie.

29. Morrie tells Mitch that dying is one thing to be sad about, but living unhappily is even worse. Morrie goes on to say that most people are, in fact, unhappy, mostly because they try to adhere to what culture tells them to do, even though it's not what they want for themselves. What are some things that culture tells us we should do or be, even if they are not right for us? Write a note to Mitch in which you use examples to support what Morrie says about why people, in general, are unhappy.