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Reflections: A Student Response Journal



The Pigman
Paul Zindel



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ISBN 978-1-60389-623-8

Item No. 201487

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.

The Pigman

Chapters 1 and 2

1. John picks up the story of his life as a tenth grader. From what you know of him, describe how you see John as a 7th or 8th grader.
2. Imagine that you were a new 10th grader at Franklin High and got to know John from sitting next to him in English class and eating lunch with him. Write a letter describing him to a friend in your old school.
3. How do you envision Lorraine? What does she look like; how does she speak?
4. Is Lorraine someone you would have as a friend? If you are a female, is there anything about Lorraine you envy? If you are a male, is there anything about John you envy? Do either of them have any qualities you wish you had?
5. Having read chapters one and two, describe what you see are the differences between John and Lorraine.

The Pigman

Chapters 3 and 4

9. Imagine that you are a member of John and Lorraine's group. It is your turn to speak to people on the telephone and try to keep them talking on the line as long as possible. You dial, and someone answers. Write the dialogue that takes place.
10. Lorraine says that they have to write down the strange things that happened before they mature and repress the whole thing. Are they feel compelled to write this down? If you get this feeling also, relate your thoughts on it.
11. Lorraine says that she doesn't want to write reports; she wants to write stories. "I want to make things up. In a way I guess that's lying too, except I think you can tell the real truth with that kind of lying." Write about a story you've read that was made up, but told the real truth.
12. Because of the way they lie and cheat, Lorraine doesn't want to be the kind of adult that John's parents are. What kind of adult do you *not* want to be? Is there any adult that you consider a good role model? What qualities does this person have?

The Pigman

18. In this chapter, the author is making one of the points he wants to establish about Mr. Pignati. Relate your feelings about Mr. Pignati, and if you can, tell how the author got you to feel this way about Mr. Pignati.
19. Putting gender aside if you can, do you identify more with the values and attitudes of Lorraine or of John? Why?
20. There is a line from a song about people needing other people. What people in this story do you think need other people? How do you think the characters show this need?
21. John feels that his father is pressuring him to be something that he doesn't want to be. John's father would probably say that he is trying to guide John toward making wise career choices. In this situation, who do you think is right or wrong?

Chapters 11 and 12

38. As a former teacher and principal, it bothers me that Lorraine and John cut school so often. Most kids who get into trouble, get in it while cutting school. Also, most kids who get in the habit of cutting find it almost impossible to come to school, even after they believe it is important and want to come. What are your thoughts on cutting school?
39. With Mr. Pignati in the hospital and John and Lorraine having the run of the house, we read the scene in which Lorraine appears to be the one responsible for everything in the kitchen. Does it seem to you as if John expects Lorraine to do everything in the kitchen? In your opinion, is this an outdated notion or would friends of yours think as John does?
40. Describe how John and Lorraine's relationship changes in Chapter Eleven. Describe how what happens in Chapter Eleven changes John's behavior in Chapter Twelve.