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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.

Macbeth

Act I

1. In the first scene, the Witches use the phrase “fair is foul and foul is fair.” Have you ever experienced anything that was both “foul and fair”? Write about what you experienced in a letter to Shakespeare.
2. Duncan reigns over Scotland, which is at war with Norway, but his country is also filled with internal rebellion. Imagine that you are Duncan’s advisor. What advice would you give him to face these difficult challenges?
3. You are one of the Three Weird Sisters and participate in a conversation that takes place among these three Witches before they announce their prophecies to Macbeth and Banquo. What do you say to them? Your dialogue could begin as follows:

First Witch: Let’s tell Macbeth exactly what he wants to hear.

You: Maybe we should...
4. The Witches have told Macbeth that in time he will become King of Scotland. His ambition drives him to perform deeds that will speed up the process. Pretend that you overhear your parents talking about buying you a car next year. Do you wait patiently for it to happen, or do you do whatever is needed to make it happen? Explain your reasoning.
5. Macbeth insists on knowing what the future holds for him, even though at times he doesn’t believe what the Witches tell him. Would you like to have your future predicted? Why or why not?

Macbeth

11. Macbeth and his wife plan the cold-blooded murder of an innocent man. They calculate how to place the blame on others and appear free of guilt. Such a crime might seem to call for the death penalty if Macbeth and his wife are discovered. Explain your feelings about the death penalty in a few paragraphs, and back up your opinions with facts.
12. How do you feel about Lady Macbeth's treatment of her husband, for example her constant criticism of his inability to act like a man? What would you say to her if you could?
13. Lady Macbeth has demonstrated that she will do anything to get what she wants. Have you ever wanted anything so much that you were willing to do anything to make it happen? Write a diary entry explaining what happened.
14. You and Duncan are both guests at Inverness at the same time. You overhear the plan to murder the King. You want to warn Duncan, but you do not want to put yourself in danger. What will you do? Explain your reasoning.

Act III

25. Pretend that you are Banquo. You decide to confront Macbeth with your suspicions of him. Construct a conversation in which you speak to him directly about this situation. Your conversation could begin as follows:

You: Look, Macbeth, I have always been willing to support you but now...

26. Macbeth asks Banquo three times if he is going riding and if he is going alone. If you were Banquo, would this alert you to trouble? What would you do?
27. Imagine that you are one of the murderers Macbeth has hired to kill Banquo. In your diary, write down the pros and cons of obeying Macbeth. Try to list at least five of each.
28. Pretend you are the King of England. Write Macbeth a letter detailing what you feel will be the result of his murdering ways.
29. The Macbeths begin to realize that killing Duncan has not solved all of their problems. In fact, Duncan's death has caused only more difficulties. Have you ever taken an action to solve one problem that caused new problems? Tell about the situation and about how you handled it.
30. In Act III, scene I, Macbeth conspires with two murderers. However, later, there are three murderers. Put yourself in the place of the other two murderers. Why has Macbeth sent for the third and why does he keep the other's participation a secret until the last minute?

Macbeth

40. Macbeth's killing spree goes on; he has ordered the killing of Lady Macduff and her son. Though this play was written in the 1600s, there is still much violence in the world of political power, even in modern times. Suppose Macbeth were alive today and you overheard him ordering the deaths of Lady Macduff and her son. Complete the following dialogue of what you would tell him about doing such a thing:

You: Sir, I apologize for eavesdropping, but I must speak up about...

41. Macduff's son is confused about what being a traitor means. Lady Macduff gives him one definition. A dictionary would give a more detailed meaning. Complete the following sentences:
- A. Lady Macduff defines a traitor as...
 - B. The dictionary defines traitor as...
 - C. I think of a traitor as... (write your answer in at least three complete sentences)
42. Write a letter to Macduff telling him about his wife's distress. Try to convince him to return home to his family and to fight against Macbeth.