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# Sample

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**Response Journal**

Reflections: A Student Response Journal



*Ethan Frome*  
Edith Wharton

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*Reflections: A Student Response Journal*



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**Prestwick House**

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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.

## Introduction

1. Edith Wharton, the author of *Ethan Frome*, has written that she set this novel in New England after having spent years in that section of our country. After researching New England, copy down and complete the following sentences:
  - A. There are \_\_\_\_\_ New England states; their names and abbreviations are:\_\_\_\_\_.
  - B. The New England states are located geographically in the \_\_\_\_\_part of the United States.
  - C. The coastline, which runs along many of the New England states, overlooks the \_\_\_\_\_ Ocean.
2. What does the author say are the only two things of any value to readers an author can explain? To answer this question, copy down the exact words the author uses. Be sure to put her words in quotation marks.

## **Chapter II**

13. There were no cars at the time this novel is set; sleighs were used for transportation during winter. Young people in Starkfield also had sleds with which to coast down icy, snowy inclines for dangerous thrills. Ned Hale and Ruth Varnum's brush with death happens on a night run when they nearly crash into an elm tree. Suppose that you are the Mayor of Starkfield. Because you feel that it is too dangerous to go sledding after dark, you get the City Council to pass a law forbidding it. Write the announcement you would put in the daily paper informing the townspeople of the new law and why you feel it is needed.
  
14. When Ethan and Mattie arrive home after the dance, the key to the back door is missing. Zeena usually leaves it under the mat when she has gone to sleep. When Zeena opens the door to them, she explains that she did not leave the key because she could not sleep. Assuming this was not the truth, what reason do you think Zeena has for locking out Mattie and Ethan?

## Chapter IV

18. There is much written in this chapter about silences. Ethan's mother, with whom he lived before he is married, is not mentally well. She hears voices. When Zeena comes to help Ethan care for his mother before they are married, she breaks the silences of his home. After their marriage, she, too, falls silent. We all are in charge of our own silences. Think about how much silence there is in your life. Look back on your life yesterday. Then try to construct an hourly picture of when you were silent during your waking hours. You can do this by following the model below:

Yesterday:	6:30 AM	Asleep
	6:35 AM	Shouted to Mom, "I'm awake!"
	6:36 AM	Silent
	7:00 AM	Argued with my brother
	7:10 AM	Breakfast-Silent

19. Because there were no cars in this novel, horses are a large part of the story. You have encountered the following words in the novel:

1. sorrel                      2. roan                      3. bay

Look up each and write down their definitions. Choose one of the three and write a story about it for a school newspaper which would be titled: "The Horse For Me."



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34. Zeena does not come down to dinner. After Mattie and Ethan sit down to eat, Mattie senses that something is wrong and guesses that Zeena is going to send her away. Throwing caution to the winds, the couple “melt” together, seemingly heedless of the fact that Zeena is upstairs. Suppose you are Mattie, and you decide there is one of three things you could do to avoid being separated from Ethan. Choose one from the three actions below, explaining why you chose that one:
- A. You would go upstairs and plead with Zeena not to send you away, telling her you would work your fingers to the bone and try to do everything exactly as she wishes it to be done.
- OR
- B. You would marry Denis Eady in order to stay in Starkfield to be near Ethan, but would plan on having an ongoing affair with him despite being married to Denis.
- OR
- C. Another plan of action.
35. The author has dropped hints that Zeena may know more about the relationship between Ethan and Mattie than she is letting on. One hint in this chapter is, “No. They’re in a place you don’t know about,” Zeena answered darkly, with one of her secret looks.” What is your opinion of how much Zeena suspects about Mattie and Ethan? Leaf back through the novel to find a passage or two that reinforces your opinion and copy down that phrase or sentence(s).
36. When Zeena finds her precious pickle dish broken, she blames Mattie for it with the words, “You’re a bad girl, Mattie Silver...and now you’ve took from me the one I cared for most of all —...” Suppose you are having a conversation about this scene with a classmate. You think that Zeena really is talking about the pickle dish. Your classmate thinks, that Zeena, perhaps unconsciously, is referring to Mattie stealing away Ethan from her. What arguments would you make for your opinion that what Zeena is saying is actually what she means?