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Response Journal

Reflections: A Student Response Journal



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ISBN 978-1-60389-608-5

Item No. 202169

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. Ellen and Annemarie are best friends, yet are very different in their size and capabilities. How are you and your best friend alike and different?
2. After the two Nazi soldiers stop the girls from racing and question them, both girls admit they were scared. Describe the last time you were truly afraid. Were your fears well-founded?
3. On her way home from this encounter, Ellen plans to shield her mother from the truth about the encounter with the soldiers. “But she was too late. Kirsti had gotten there first.” Do you think Ellen planned to tell her mother the whole truth? Rewrite the dialogue as though Kirsti had not “gotten there first.”
4. The two mothers are concerned that the Germans will recognize Annemarie and Ellen the next time they see the girls and advise them to walk a different way to school and blend into the crowd. “It is important to be one of the crowd, always. Be one of many. Be sure that they never have reason to remember your face.” In what ways do you see students your age trying to be “one of the crowd”? Why would they do this?

Chapter 3

10. In response to the news that the Germans are closing Jewish businesses, Annemarie's mom assures her that the Hirsch family will be okay. "Friends will take care of them,...That's what friends do." What do your friends do to take care of you? What do you do to take care of your friends?

11. As Annemarie becomes more aware of the danger for the Jewish people, she realizes how important it will be for the other people in Denmark to help protect them. What people in our society need to be guarded and helped? What do you believe is the most important thing we should do for them? Why?

12. Some of the tenderness Peter feels for Annemarie is apparent when he talks to her. He gives her a nickname that shows he recognizes how much she has grown. Give at least one nickname that someone has given you. What does it mean? Does it adequately describe you? Why or why not?

Chapter 4

13. Upon returning from shopping for shoes with her mother, Kirsti announces, "I won't!...I won't ever, *ever* wear them! Not if you chain me in a prison and beat me with sticks!"

What is the ugliest thing you ever had to wear? Why did you dislike it so much? Were you more upset about wearing something you didn't like or what people might think of you? Why?

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25. Later, Annemarie decides not to tell Ellen the whole truth when she realizes that would be better for Ellen: “She understood that she was protecting Ellen the way her mother had protected her.” Have you ever protected someone from the truth or danger? Why did you think it was necessary? What was the outcome?
26. When asked who the people in the living room are, Mrs. Johansen says they are friends of Great-aunt Birte. “Annemarie knew that Mama was lying again, and she could see that Mama understood that she knew. They looked at each other for a long time and said nothing. In that moment, with that look, they became equals.”

Describe the time when you realized that you were equal to an adult.

27. There is much tension in the room when Peter comes to the house during Great-aunt Birte’s funeral: “But he said nothing. There was no playfulness to his affection tonight, just a sense of urgency, of worry.”

If Peter had had the time and the opportunity, write what he would have said to Annemarie and Ellen to comfort and encourage them.

Chapter 12

34. As Annemarie waits for her mother to return from the boat, she is anxious and worried. Describe an event or outcome you had to wait for. Why is waiting often harder than doing or participating?
35. In her concern over her mother being late, Annemarie looked out the window and saw a "...blurred heap, at the beginning of the path. Annemarie squinted, forcing her eyes to understand, needing to understand, not wanting to understand."
Why doesn't she want to understand? Explain to another student what Annemarie sees, but does not want to see. When was the last time you tried to believe something other than the truth? From what were you trying to protect yourself?

Chapter 13

36. When Annemarie finds her mother in the yard, Mrs. Johansen says, "I'm afraid my ankle is broken, Annemarie. Thank goodness it is nothing worse. An ankle mends. And I am home, and the Rosens are with Henrik." It is clear that she places more priority on the safety of her friends than her broken ankle. What are the things in your life that are the very most important to you? What do these priorities indicate about your character?