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Reflections: A Student Response Journal



*The Prince and
the Pauper*
Mark Twain



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ISBN 978-1-60389-628-3

Item No. 302153

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 Prince and the Pauper

Chapter I – The Birth of the Prince and the Pauper

1. Tom Canty and Edward Tudor are born on the same day. Canty is not wanted by his family, but Edward's birth is celebrated throughout England. Most parents tell their children stories about when each child was born. Relate a family story surrounding your own birth.

Chapter II – Tom's Early Life

2. Twain is well known as a great American humorist who often uses satire to poke fun at society. One way he accomplishes this is to be sarcastic. In this chapter, Twain describes Tom's childhood. He writes,

“One summer's day he [Tom] saw poor Anne Askew and three men burned at the stake in Smithfield, and heard an ex-Bishop preach a sermon to them which did not interest him. Yes, Tom's life was varied and pleasant enough, on the whole.”

Twain is being sarcastic when he says Tom's life was pleasant enough. It cannot have been pleasant for Tom to watch four people be burned at the stake. Twain is also satirizing the ineffectiveness of the church to reach the people, and he is satirizing the brutality of the laws which dictate this type of harsh punishment.

As Tom, write a diary entry describing the aspects of your early life that are “varied and pleasant enough.” Use sarcasm, like the sarcastic comment above, at least two times in the diary entry.

The Prince and the Pauper

5. At the end of Chapter 5, Tom has a dream that he was a princeling. When he awakens, and finds that it was just a dream, Tom is especially disappointed by his terrible home. Twain writes,

And when he awoke in the morning and looked upon the wretchedness about him, his dream had had its usual effect – it had intensified the sordidness of his surroundings a thousand fold. Then came bitterness, and heartbreak, and tears.

Write a dialogue between two students debating the following idea:

People who have unrealistic dreams and expectations are doomed to be disappointed in life.

Student One agrees with this statement, but Student Two disagrees. Use incidents from the story to support the points of each debater. The debate might begin as follows:

Student One: Tom's dream about one day becoming a prince is stupid. He knows that his father is a thief and his mother is still alive. Princes must be born into royal families. He can never be a prince, so his dream is silly.

Student Two: Dreams are never silly. Dreams are...

Chapter XI – At Guildhall

19. Tom learns that King Henry is dead and that the people now believe that Tom is the new King of England. His first act as King is to spare the life of the Duke of Norfolk. Suppose you were suddenly elected to be President of the United States. What would be your first act and why?

Chapter XII – The Prince and His Deliverer

20. As Miles Hendon, write a diary entry describing your impressions of Edward and why you decide to indulge his illusion that he is the King of England.
21. Based on your life experience, in one or two paragraphs, discuss the extent to which you agree with the following statements Miles Hendon makes about the relationships between children and parents.

My father loved him best of us all, and trusted and believed him; for he was the youngest child and others hated him – these qualities being in all ages sufficient to win a parent's dearest love; and he had a smooth persuasive tongue, with an admirable gift of lying – and these be qualities which do mightily assist a blind affection to cozen itself.

Chapter XXV – Hendon Hall

43. Hendon excitedly points out special features of his hometown. Suppose you were giving a newcomer a tour of your neighborhood. What special features might you want to point out? In one or two paragraphs, imitating the paragraphs in the book, write about your neighborhood.
44. Write a dialogue between two students discussing the ways in which Edward's problems and Miles' problems are similar. The dialogue might begin as follows:

Student One: Edward tells everyone he is the King, but...

Chapter XXVI – Disowned

45. Edith tries to warn Miles that his brother will destroy him if he continues to claim his birthright. She does this very cleverly, and without actually saying that she knows he is Miles. Assume that Edith and Miles are able to have an intimate conversation that cannot be overheard by her husband or any of his spies. Write the conversation they might have. In the conversation, Edith clearly expresses her fears.

The new conversation might begin as follows:

Edith: Miles, I have come to warn you. Yes, I know it is you, but you must go because it is dangerous for you to remain.

Miles: Oh, Edith...