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Response Journal™

# Sample

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## Response Journal

Reflections: A Student Response Journal



*A Hero Ain't Nothin'  
But a Sandwich*  
Alice Childress

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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.

## **Benjie Johnson**

1. This story opens with “Now I am thirteen but when I was a chile...” What do you think Benjie means by this? In your opinion, is he a child or an adult?
2. What is your opinion of Benjie’s language? Do you have any trouble understanding it? Does his language seem appropriate?
3. “I don’t mind too much when parents and school teachers, social workers and head shrinkers tag names on me and go to generalizin. They ole and it’s parta they nature to be sayin things like they know facts and you don’t know nothin!” Do you have any reaction to Benjie’s comments?
4. At the end of the first chapter, what is your opinion of Benjie? Can you see both good and bad things in him, or only one or the other?

## **Butler Craig**

5. How does Butler think people get to be drug addicts? What annoys him about some of the theories he hears? Do you agree or disagree with him?
6. Butler says that Benjie would steal anything not nailed down in order to support his habit. This is definitely not the picture Benjie gave us. What do you suppose is the correct information? How can they have such different opinions on this subject?

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19. Bernard Cohen asks, “What will this country be if the all-black schools get all-black teachers?” Why does he believe this would not be good development? What’s your opinion on this point?
  
20. Some students get upset with teachers who try to sound like students. Why do you think a teacher might or might not speak like a student? If you were a teacher, what would you do?

**Benjie Johnson**

21. Benjie remembers the good times that he, his mother, and grandmother had when he was six, seven, and eight. Does Benjie blame someone or something for ending these good times? Do you think he’s right?

**Nigeria Greene**

22. Nigeria Greene could be described as a man with a passion. What is his passion?
  
23. What are Greene’s beliefs? If you were to visit his classroom, what would you say to him about his teaching style?
  
24. Mr. Greene makes a case for what he says whites call “segregation in reverse.” Explain his argument to a classmate who didn’t understand the point he was making.

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35. Do you like Benjie? If you do, try to analyze and state what it is that makes you feel positive toward him.
36. Benjie tells Butler, “We livin in a time when a hero ain’t nothin but a sandwich.” To what extent do you agree with Benjie? Is this a time when there are no heroes?
37. Benjie questions why he has to live with Butler, saying, “If she [his mother] wanta live with someone why I gotta live with em too?” As a friend, what would you say to Benjie if he had said this to you?
38. Benjie says, “Bein a child is bein a slave.” What are some things Benjie thinks stand in the way of his freedom? Can you find places where these things are mentioned by other characters?
39. Do you think Benjie believes what he says when he steals Butler’s overcoat?