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Response Journal

Reflections: A Student Response Journal



No Easy Answers
(Ed.) Donald R. Gallo

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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.

The Photograph

1. Anthony describes the opening scene in the boys' locker room with great detail. He reveals the personality of each of the football players by how they talk, how they react, and what they do to each other. This is a snapshot of a part of classic high school culture in America. Think about your day at school. In a letter to a pen pal from another country, describe a typical scene you encounter at school to illustrate the types of students in an American high school. You may choose one of the following or pick something else from your experience: lunchtime, the band room just before class starts, the media center, or passing between classes.
2. Anthony seems to be a reasonable person who doesn't like to hurt people, but he agrees to go along with Lance Hickerson's plan to photograph Ms. Jenson skinny dipping anyway. In a detailed paragraph, explain a situation in which you put yourself in a predicament that you knew was wrong. What did you do to get out of this situation? Were you successful? What was the outcome? Why did you put yourself in that situation? Why do you think Anthony did it?
3. Banned from the school newspaper's darkroom, forced to resign as team manager, hurting from poison ivy pustules, and friendless, Anthony is punished for his actions. However, he still feels compelled to find out what happened to Ms. Jenson. To rid himself of the guilt he has from hurting her, he sends her a letter of apology, the photograph, and the negative. Recall a time when you hurt somebody. Write a letter of apology to that person, explaining how you hurt the individual, and what direction you now hope the relationship will go.

I've Got Gloria

9. Physical appearance plays a big role in whether we like someone or not. Scott doesn't like Mrs. Whitman because of the way she looks and because she "gave" him an "F." Many times a person looks angry, frustrated, tired, ornery, pretty, or pleasant, but once you get to know that person, you realize that the individual's look has nothing to do with his or her personality. Write a letter to a friend, describing a time when you first met someone and made a false assumption about that person's personality. What perception did you first have of this person and why? What changed your impression of this person?
10. Scott's plan of revenge seems good to him. He doesn't think about all the problems he might face to avoid being caught. Imagine you are Scott's parents. Write a letter to your son, explaining why you view him as irresponsible. Be detailed; you want Scott to understand your point of view.
11. As Mrs. Whitman, create a dialogue about what you would tell Scott the next day in class after you realized he faked the dognapping. Would you be angry and resentful or sympathetic?

Mrs. Whitman: Well, good morning, Scott.

Scott: Ah, hi.

Mrs. Whitman: I suppose you know that...

12. Mrs. Whitman adores her dog. Pets often have a special place in our hearts, because they are good listeners, they are comforting, and they give unconditional love. Describe how a pet has made your life easier and helped you through bad times. If you don't have a pet, how has a pet made a difference in the life of someone you know? As an alternative, write a short poem to your pet, explaining how you feel about it.

Simon Says

20. Martha believes everything Simon tells her because she is a trusting person and has a strong crush on him. Unfortunately, she realizes that he has taken advantage of the situation. Write a diary entry about a time in your life in which something similar happened. Explain how you felt at the beginning of the relationship and then at the end when you found out you were being used.
21. Martha feels very strongly about animal rights. Write a persuasive letter to the editor of your school or local newspaper about something you feel should be changed or improved. Some examples include lowering the drinking age, giving students more rights in school, the need for more recycling, better care for foster children, more shelters for the poor, or safer parks and streets. The possibilities are endless.
22. Imagine you are Martha and your anger with Simon needs to be expressed. You must confront him about how you feel. Write the dialogue of the conversation the two of you might have. Make sure you use the proper tones and words to demonstrate Martha's strong feelings.

Martha: What you did was unkind and inconsiderate toward me! And you hurt an innocent rabbit in the process.

Simon: No, it wasn't. I was just having some fun and getting back at my father at the same time.

Martha: I don't care! This...

23. Animals are often used in research for medicine, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and hair and skin care products. Many people think this practice is cruel. What is your opinion? List as many reasons as you can to back up your belief. As a secondary activity make a list of some companies that use animals for testing products and write a personal opinion paragraph on whether you believe it is ethical to use the animals in this way for human benefit.

Little Li and the Old Soldier

31. Little Li is furious at the barbarians for their destruction of his village, home, and family. His rage, coupled with his guilt for causing the attack, fueled his thoughts of revenge. Anger is a powerful emotion, which often can make you say things you don't mean and can cause you to act irrationally. Write a journal entry about a time when you were so angry that revenge—verbal or physical—was all you could think about. What were your thoughts? Did you or did you not act on them? Why? Was there a better way to resolve the situation?
32. Imagine you are Little Li's aunt. Write a letter to Little Li describing the moment she realizes the barbarians have come to destroy the village. Be descriptive about what she sees, what she feels seeing the village's homes being destroyed, and also describe her feeling of powerlessness.
33. Oftentimes, we dream about things that come true or help us understand something going on in our lives, just like Little Li dreams of the Old Soldier. Write a few paragraphs about a dream you had that affected you or had something to do with your real waking life. Why do you think dreams make perfect sense when you are sleeping, but are confusing and illogical when you remember them?