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Reflections: A Student Response Journal



Durango Street
Frank Bonham



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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.

Chapter 1

1. In this chapter, we meet Rufus Henry, the main character in *Durango Street*. Imagine you are Rufus' Parole Officer. Your job upon first meeting him is to write up your impressions of what kind of young man you think he is for his case file. Try to include the things he values and the things that make him angry. Begin your write up with the words: Rufus Henry is...
2. Rufus keeps a scrapbook of his hero, the football player Ernie Brown. Have you ever had a hero? Is there someone you look up to in the way that Rufus looks up to Ernie Brown? A good way to tell about your hero is to write it as a news story for your local paper. In your story write about why you respect this person so much. The title of your story would be, "Everyone Needs a Hero and Mine Is..."
3. Mr. Rubio informs Rufus that Rufus will be going home to a different place. He tells Rufus "Your mother's moved, by the way. Do you know the Durango Housing Project?" What if this happened to you? Complete the following dialogue that you might have with Mr. Rubio after he told you that you have to go live in a new place:

Mr. Rubio: I know, I know, this is tough...

Me: Tough! Tough! You don't know what the word tough means...

Durango Street

7. Rufus feels happy when he arrives home. “A joyful melting feeling came up through him. He was home. The place everybody only had one of.” Write a paragraph describing what “home” means to you. You may want to write about how you feel when you are at home or what it feels like for you to be away from home. The title of your paragraph should be, “Why My Home is Home.”

Chapter 4

8. Rufus knows that he does not want to end up stuck in a dead-end job. He wants to go to school, possibly to become a teacher. He thinks to himself, “Without education, a boy was dead...” Do you agree with Rufus? When you think about what job you may want to have later in life, do you find that you need a good education to have that job?
9. Rufus’ little brother Curtis confides in Rufus that he has been thinking about joining a gang called the Little Warriors. What would you say to your little brother or sister if he or she said they wanted to join a gang? Write the conversation you might have. Begin your conversation as follows: You: Listen, little bro,...

Chapter 15

30. Now that Rufus has become the gang headman, the Moors are “committed to following him.” Imagining that you are in Rufus’ position, answer the following questions. Would you enjoy being the “leader” of a group of your peers? Would you be nervous about making certain decisions that would affect not only you but the entire group? Would you want to be the leader of a group or not and why?

Chapter 16

31. Sentences with action in them make reading very enjoyable. Choose six sentences from this chapter that you find the most exciting. Copy the sentences leaving a space between each one. Copy every word and all punctuation exactly. When you have finished, write three sentences about why you made the choices you did.

Chapter 17

32. Rufus arrives home and learns that the Gassers have attacked his little sister Janet and have cut off one of her pigtails. He is furious about this. “A black violence rose in Rufus. Pain, sadness, and rage choked him.” What would you do if someone cut off your sister’s pigtail? Make a list of **four** possible actions you might take if they did. Be sure to use complete sentences for your list. Across from each item, write down the possible consequences of your actions.

Chapter 24

43. Simon steals Rufus' scrapbook and humiliates Rufus by showing it to Ernie Brown. That night Rufus finds out that the news of the incident is all over town. Even his little sister Janet knows because she heard some kids talking about it at the playground. Imagine that Ernie is furious with Simon for embarrassing Rufus, and he forces Simon to write an apology. Begin your letter as follows: Yo Rufus, what's the matter? You can't take a joke? Man, I didn't...

Chapter 25

44. Rufus persuades Willie to find him a gun. His plan is not to shoot anyone, but to scare the Gassers by shooting up Simon's car. As you know, gun ownership is a very controversial subject in our country. Imagine your teacher has asked you to write a report, either for or against, on gun ownership. Your report should be at least **ten** sentences long. Begin with the sentence: "Guns can kill; there is no doubt about that."

Chapter 26

45. The Moors decide to hold a graduation dance. Unknown to everyone else, Rufus has a hidden motive for the dance. Imagine that you are the police captain who has heard that the Moors are planning a graduation dance. Write a list of **ten** rules that you intend to give to Rufus. Unless he follows these rules, you tell him, he will be forbidden to hold the dance.