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Reflections: A Student Response Journal



Tuck Everlasting
Natalie Babbitt



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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.

Prologue

1. Authors often use weather to help set a mood in a story. In the first paragraph of this story, a hot, silent August day is described. As you read this section, what mood do you think the author is trying to get across? Can you relate to this mood? Have you experienced such a day before? What kind of a mood did it put you in, or, if you haven't experienced it, what kind of mood do you think it would put you in?
2. Another way this author is trying to set a mood is through the use of a metaphor. She says that first week of August "hangs at the very top of the summer, the top of the live-long year, like the highest seat of a Ferris wheel when it pauses in its turning." Describe what it feels like to be stuck at the top of a Ferris wheel, either by remembering your own experience, or by using your imagination.
3. At the end of the prologue, the author talks about fixed points of turning things, such as the hub of a wheel, the sun, and the wood in the story to come. Look around or use your imagination and come up with other things that revolve around a fixed point. Describe them or draw them to illustrate your points, if you like.

Chapter 1

4. The author asks the reader to consider what owning a piece of land really means. She asks how far down does one own a piece of ground. Does one own just the top layer we see, or does ownership go all the way to the center of the earth? What do you think? How deep and how high can a person own ground and the space above it? What makes you think this way?

Chapter 3

9. Winnie tells a toad that she discovers how she is feeling and her plans to run away. Why do you suppose she tells a toad her deepest thoughts and feelings rather than a person? Many people talk to their pets in this manner. Make up a conversation you might have with a pet.
10. Winnie tells the toad that she wants to do something important, but feels she can't if she's made to stay in her yard all day. What kinds of important things can children and young people do in the world? Make a list of ten ways you could improve the world by doing something important. Pick one item and write a paragraph detailing what effects your choice would have.
11. Have you ever felt like running away from home like Winnie does in this chapter? Write a letter to an imaginary friend. In it tell this person why he or she should not leave home.

Chapter 4

12. The author gives us a detailed description of the stranger Winnie meets in this chapter. Using the details the author provides, draw a picture of what you think this man looks like. Then, write a few sentences explaining your reaction to him. Do you like him, not like him, trust him, fear him, etc.? Explain why you feel this way.
13. Winnie's grandmother thinks she hears elves making music in the woods. Do you believe, or have you ever believed, in elves, fairies or other magical beings? Explain in a short paragraph.

Tuck Everlasting

43. The man in the yellow suit says he will only sell the spring water to people who deserve it, and that it will be very expensive. Do you think, if such a water were ever found, that it should only be given to certain people, or should it be available to all? If only to certain people, how would you decide who should get it?
44. Imagine the man in the yellow suit has hired you to write an advertisement for the spring water. What would you say? What would the ad look like? What information would you include? Remember, this is before television, so the ad has to be for print sources such as newspapers and magazines, or for posters. Design the ad.
45. The man in the yellow suit says Mae is selfish because she doesn't want anyone else to drink the water. Write a note to the man and explain your reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with him.
46. Are you surprised that Mae injures the man in the yellow suit? Are you glad she does, or are you upset about it? Explain.

Chapter 20

47. When the Tucks argue that Mae's violent actions are justified because the man in the yellow suit was going to kidnap Winnie, the constable points out that *they* kidnapped her first. Write an editorial for a school newspaper explaining your feelings. Make sure that you write as if it were a real editorial.
48. Some people say that violent actions are allowed if they are performed for a good cause, as when Mae feels she is right to injure the man in the yellow suit. This is in opposition to Martin Luther King's feelings that non-violence is the way to change people and laws you disagree with. Defend one of these two positions in a paragraph.

Chapter 23

54. Imagine you are Winnie's mother, father, or grandmother. Write a letter to her explaining how you feel to have Winnie back. Detail what you are going to do differently to keep her more safe than before.
55. Winnie feels very guilty for going against her parents' wishes. Why do you think human beings have the emotion of guilt? What purpose does it serve us? Would our society be better off or worse off if people stopped feeling guilty? Explain.

Chapter 24

56. Winnie remembers some lines from a poem: *Stone walls do not a prison make, / Nor iron bars a cage*. Explain what this poem means to someone who does not understand.
57. Do you think Winnie is doing the right thing by helping Mae escape from jail? Explain your answer.
58. How might things have turned out differently if there hadn't been a huge, loud thunderstorm that night? Write a final paragraph for the chapter that shows the difference.