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Reflections: A Student Response Journal



Jane Eyre
Charlotte Brontë



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Charlotte Brontë



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ISBN 978-1-60389-578-1

Item No. 202176

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 the following excerpt young Jane Eyre describes her surroundings as she sits on a secluded window seat.

Folds of scarlet drapery shut in my view to the right hand; to the left were the clear panes of glass, protecting, but not separating me from the drear November day. At intervals, while turning over the leaves of my book, I studied the aspect of that winter afternoon. Afar, it offered a pale blank of mist and cloud; near, a scene of wet lawn and storm-beat shrub, with ceaseless rain sweeping away wildly before a long and lamentable blast.

Jane is told to separate herself from her “contented and happy little cousins” Eliza, John, and Georgiana, so she sits in the window seat. In a similar paragraph, write a description of a place you like to go when you need to seclude yourself from others.

2. John abuses and tortures young Jane. She is aware that she is being badly treated, but is unable to defend herself. She writes,

Accustomed to John Reed’s abuse, I never had an idea of replying to it; my care was how to endure the blow which would certainly follow the insult.

Write a letter to Jane giving her some advice on how to resist or respond to John’s abusive behavior.

3. While quietly reading a book, Jane is confronted by John Reed. He sticks his tongue out at her, insults her, and throws a book at her. Even though the entire incident is John Reed’s fault, Mrs. Reed punished Jane.

Pretend you are Jane’s best friend. Jane calls you on the telephone very upset over her mistreatment. Your job is to console her. Record your telephone conversation here:

Jane:

You:

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8. Bessie sings a familiar song to Jane. The melody usually uplifts Jane and makes her feel better, but today, Bessie sings with a low pitch and tone, thus making the song seem sad. The melody upsets Jane, and she begins to cry.

Write the lyrics of a song that is special to you and tell why that particular song is so important. Is there a certain song that reminds you of someone in your family who is gone? Did a loved one sing a special song to you when you were a child? Do you listen to a particular song when you feel lonely or sad? Have you ever invented a song of your own to suit your own needs? Do you have a secret favorite song about which no one knows? How is it that music can affect us so profoundly?

9. Jane tells Mr. Lloyd that she is very unhappy at Gateshead; she is also upset that she has no other family. However, when Mr. Lloyd asks Jane if she would like to live with her poor relatives, if they could be found, Jane declines, stating that she does not understand how poor people can be kind or happy. She equates poverty with degradation.

Write a short chapter for a self-help book in which you provide instructions on how to be happy in life. What, specifically, should one do in order to be happy? Does one's level of happiness depend on one's level of income? Describe specific things that one can do to ensure happiness.

Chapter 6

15. Helen gives Jane the following advice on how to accept censure from the teachers at Lowood:

“And if I [Jane] were in your place I should dislike her; I should resist her; if she struck me with that rod, I should get it from her hand; I should break it under her nose.”

[Helen] “Probably you would do nothing of the sort: but if you did, Mr. Brocklehurst would expel you from the school; that would be a great grief to your relations. It is far better to endure patiently a smart which nobody feels but yourself, than to commit a hasty action whose evil consequences will extend to all connected with you; and, besides, the *Bible* bids us return good for evil.”

To what extent do you agree with Helen’s advice? Write Helen a note giving your opinion. Cite incidents from your life experience or references to your family to illustrate your ideas.

16. In the following passage, Helen lists her faults, which she believes contribute to her problems in school. Write a similar list of faults about yourself. Consider what character traits or habits you have that might interfere with your studies. As you write, try to imitate the author’s writing style. Notice the extra long sentences and excellent vocabulary. Feel free to use a thesaurus.

Now, mine [thoughts] continually rove away: when I should be listening to Miss Scatcherd, and collecting all she says with assiduity, often I lose the very sound of her voice; I fall into a sort of dream. Sometimes I think I am in Northumberland, and that the noises I hear round me are the bubbling of a little brook which runs through Deepden, near our house; - then, when it comes to my turn to reply, I have to be awakened; and, having heard nothing of what was read for listening to the visionary brook, I have no answer ready.

Chapter 8

20. Jane is upset because Mr. Brocklehurst tells all of the teachers and students that she is a deceitful girl. Helen tries to comfort Jane. She says,

“If all the world hated you, and believe you wicked, while your own conscience approved you, and absolved you from guilt, you would not be without friends.”

Write a dialogue between two students discussing the meaning of this passage. The dialogue might begin as follows:

Student One: I think the passage is saying that a person must follow his or her own conscience.

Student Two: Yes, but if you read further, it becomes clear that the passage has another, deeper meaning. Helen is saying...

21. Miss Temple performs an act of kindness when she invites Jane and Helen to her room for tea. In the following excerpt, Jane describes the amazing impact this gesture has on Helen.

The refreshing meal, the brilliant fire, the presence and kindness of her beloved instructress, or, perhaps, more than all these, something in her own unique mind, had roused her powers within her. They woke, they kindled: first, they glowed in the bright tint of her cheek, which till this hour I had never seen but pale and bloodless; then they shone in the liquid lustre of her eyes, which had suddenly acquired a beauty more singular than that of Miss Temple's – a beauty neither of fine colour nor long eyelash, nor pencilled brow, but of meaning, of movement, of radiance.

Notice the author's lavish style of describing the change in Helen. Imitating this style, write about an act of kindness and the impact it has on the people it involves. The act of kindness can be something from your experience, from a television program, from a novel, or from a movie.

22. As Jane, write one or two paragraphs explaining why, at the end of the chapter, you say, “I would not now have changed Lowood with all its privations, for Gateshead and its daily luxuries.”