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ISBN 978-1-60389-533-0

Item No. 201698

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. Early in this chapter, Ben tells Madec to wait until he has seen horns before he fires his gun. Madec is so anxious to kill a bighorn that he does not want to listen to this advice. While Ben seems like a character with great patience, Madec seems to have very little. In a few paragraphs, write about an instance in your life when it was difficult to have patience, though you knew it was probably the right thing to do. Be sure to include the reason for your impatience and the way it affected your performance.
2. Early in their time together, Madec tells Ben that he is “not the type of man who can understand big-game hunting.” Madec makes a hasty, maybe even false, assumption about Ben before getting to know him. There are misjudgments every day—in the news, at school, or even at home. Pick one and imagine you are a reporter for a local paper. Write a brief article that tells what happens when people make misjudgments and how they affect others.
3. Madec explains to Ben that he hunts because he enjoys the satisfaction of outwitting the animals he stalks and kills. The sport of hunting often creates controversy; many people support the right to hunt, but others feel it is inhumane and unnecessary. What are your views about hunting? Write a brief letter to the editor of a hunting magazine discussing your feelings about the right to hunt.
4. Madec only needs Ben to help find the bighorn; once bighorn is found, Madec makes it clear that Ben will no longer be needed. It is clear that Madec does not enjoy Ben’s company and is frustrated about having to rely on someone he does not like. Describe a situation similar to Madec’s, in which you had to rely on someone you did not like or trust. Be specific about your feelings, which may include resentment or uncertainty. If you have never experienced this type of situation, but you know of someone who has, you may write about that experience instead. Try to imagine how you would feel.
5. At the end of the chapter, it is clear Madec is not an honest man. It seems his intentions are to ignore his fatal mistake, and if Ben does not insist on verifying Madec’s story, he may get away with being dishonest. Do you think lying is ever justified? Write a letter to a friend, presenting your opinion and the reasoning behind it.

Chapter 3

10. At the beginning of this chapter, the narrator says that Madec’s voice had a “chiding, teacherlike quality.” Tone of voice can produce many different reactions and responses. What different tones of voice do you use? Does your tone change, depending on who you are talking to or your mood? In a note to a friend, describe the different tones of voice you use each day with the people around you.
11. Madec says that he believes people in a small town think and behave differently from people in a big city. What are some common perceptions of people who are from each area? Make a comparison chart in your journal. In one column, list the traits you think are common to people from small towns, and in the other column list traits you feel are common to people from the city. Your chart should use headings like the following:

PEOPLE FROM A SMALL TOWN PEOPLE FROM A BIG CITY

12. While discussing his potential fate if Ben were to turn him in, Madec insinuates that the justice system is easily manipulated and fooled into punishing the wrong person. Do you believe that our justice system works fairly? Imagine you are writing a letter to a judge; give an example of fair or unfair treatment. Briefly explain why you think so.
13. When Ben first realizes that Madec intends to frame him for the murder of the prospector, he does not exactly feel fear or even apprehension. Instead, he experiences an almost physical sensation, like “a chill gripping his shoulder blades.” Write a poem that describes Ben’s slow realization that Madec intends to frame him and perhaps cause his death. In your poem, use descriptive adjectives that convey Ben’s “chill” to the reader.
14. After calling Ben a loser and a nobody, Madec states that, “The world is already too full of men like you.” Do you believe the world can have too many of a certain kind of person? Write a short essay answer to that question, giving precise reasons for your belief.

Chapter 8

33. Madec shoots Ben in the arm, then moves the jeep to a better position to take another shot at Ben. The sound of the jeep makes Ben remember a time when he visited the county fair as a child. While there, he saw a young girl riding a motorcycle on a Velo-Drome, riding around and around until she was riding on a vertical wall. Ben recalls, "He had stared at this, not believing it could be done..." As children, things that might not impress us as much as adults easily amaze us. In a diary entry, write about a time when, as child, you were amazed by something you saw. Describe what you saw, and explain what you think made it so extraordinary.
34. After making it to the ledge, Ben finds the strength to stand up and move toward the edge. He expects to find shade, depressions on the wall, or water, but instead he finds that the ledge ends abruptly, dropping straight down to the breccia. This is a "knife in the back," Ben thinks. He feels he has been cheated out of some reward for all his hard, painful work. The feeling of betrayal is extremely unpleasant. Using the Internet, textbooks, or your own knowledge, find someone in history who has also been betrayed, either by another person or by nature. Write a short biography of this person.
35. When Ben enters the funnel, he loses his ability to see. Darkness surrounds him, and so he must rely on his other senses, particularly touch, to find his way through the corridor toward where he sees some light. While in the corridor, he becomes acutely aware of its many different textures. There are certainly many textures in our world, but we rarely think of them because we are often focused on more obvious and important concerns. Think carefully about the different textures you encounter each day. Make a list of as many as you can.

Chapter 15

51. When Ben arrives in town, he turns Madec in to Strick, a local law enforcement officer. Strick is confused about why Madec is tied up. Madec seems to be badly hurt and helpless. Ben's reply to Strick's questioning is simply, "Because he's dangerous." Strick doesn't believe Ben; however, and demands that Madec be untied. What is dangerous to some people is not to others. Write a short essay on the signs that indicate when someone is dangerous. Use examples from movies, television, novels, and the news. Remember that, like Madec, some "bad guys" are clever at disguising their deceptive side.
52. While in the Diagnostic & Treatment Center with Dr. Saunders, Madec gives his statement as to what happened to him while he was in the desert with Ben. Now, imagine you are the court reporter taking down this statement. What kind of story do you think Madec would give? Write a one-page account that presents Madec's self-serving and untruthful version.
53. By the end of this chapter, it is clear that Ben's worst fear is being realized: he begins to look like the guilty party. Ben is shocked and angry when Strick tells him he will be charged. How could he and not Madec be the one in trouble with the law? Can you think of a time when a student you know was blamed for something he or she did not do. Write a concise defense for this person to be delivered to your principal.