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A Christmas Carol
Charles Dickens

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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.

A Christmas Carol

Stave I - Marley's Ghost

1. Complete the following dialogue between two students:

First Student: If Dickens is such a great writer, why does he use a trite phrase like “dead as a door-nail”? I get the idea that the man is dead in the first paragraph, but Dickens goes on and on about it.

Second Student: Of course, Dickens knows the phrase is trite. That is the whole point. That is why it is funny.

First Student: But he blabs endlessly about it.

You: Dickens is just trying to establish the mood of the book for the reader. The phrase helps the reader to...

2. “Sometimes people new to the business called Scrooge Scrooge, and sometimes Marley, but he answered to both names: it was all the same to him.” The name “Scrooge” in our modern world is used to describe anyone who is miserly. What other names from movies, books, or life can you think of that have a similar usage?

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9. Marley's ghost is wearing a chain made up of "cashboxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds, and heavy purses wrought in steel." These are all symbols of the things he held dearest in life and which kept him from becoming involved in the business of mankind. Think of a villain you have read about, seen in the movies, or know in real life. If this villain were to be wrapped in a chain, like Marley, what items do you suppose might make up that chain?

10. Scrooge cracks a joke when he tells Marley's ghost that "there's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!" Dickens writes that Scrooge does this "as a means of distracting his own attention, and keeping down his terror; for the spectre's voice disturbed the very marrow in his bones." Write about a time you or someone you know cracked a joke to help relieve the tension of an uncomfortable situation.

11. Marley's ghost tells Scrooge that in order to help Scrooge escape Marley's fate, three spirits will visit. Scrooge replies "I—I think I'd rather not." Write a dialogue between Marley's ghost and yourself. How would you respond to the prospect of a visit from three spirits?

12. Scrooge looks out his window and sees many phantoms wandering and moaning. "The misery with them all was, clearly, that they sought to interfere, for good, in human matters, and had lost the power for ever." Write a letter to a friend, who does not understand, explaining how this statement embodies the overall theme of this *Stave*.

A Christmas Carol

33. What would you do if you were invited to a party where the guest of honor was a person you completely disrespected? If you attend, would you do anything? If you will not attend, write a letter explaining why.
34. Dickens describes Scrooge's nephew as having a contagious, irresistible laugh. Do you know people with a laugh like that? How do you feel when you are around them?
35. Scrooge's nephew says, "I am sorry for him [Scrooge]; I couldn't be angry with him if I tried. Who suffers by his ill whims? Himself, always." This statement implies that Scrooge is only hurting himself by his behavior. Do you agree or disagree with that statement?
36. Scrooge enjoys the party games. What kinds of activities or games might you enjoy at a modern Christmas party? Do you think your friends could be entertained without modern devices like the radio or television?
37. The Spirit of Christmas Present has two deprived children hidden under his robes. "This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased."

Write a dialogue between Scrooge and the boy [Ignorance] and the girl [Want]. In this dialogue, have the children explain to Scrooge why he needs to pay attention to them.