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Reflections: A Student Response Journal



Tears of a Tiger
Sharon M. Draper



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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.

CRASH, FIRE, PAIN

1. Put yourself in the place of one of the boys who escaped the crash but was forced to watch “helplessly as Robert Washington burned to death.” Imagine that a similar crash has happened and that you are now standing on the sidelines, like Andy, B.J., and Tyrone, watching a friend of yours die trapped inside a burning car. What’s going through your head? How do you feel physically—nauseous, full of adrenaline, some other way? How do you expect you’ll feel tomorrow? Freewrite on these questions for at least a page.
2. When you hear or read of a car accident that involved teenagers, do you tend to assume that drugs or drinking played a part in the event? What about when you hear or read of a car accident that involved the elderly? Explain your answers in a paragraph or two.

HIT THE SHOWERS! HIT THE STREETS!

3. Andy and Rob have their own slang and manner of speaking. On the surface, they seem to be putting each other down, but it’s clear to us that they’re close friends who respect each other. Think of a friendship you’re a part of or a group you belong to that has its own “language” or style of speech. What purpose does the language serve? Does it draw you closer together? Does it set you off from others? Write a paragraph or two about it—if possible, in the slang or style itself.

OH NO! IT JUST CAN’T BE!

4. As Keisha, write a diary entry in response to the news that your boyfriend has just survived a tragic accident—and the news that his friend did *not* survive. Does knowing that Andy was driving change the way you feel about him? How do you think the event will affect your relationship?

Tears of a Tiger

9. On his decision to return to his church, B.J. says, “I’m not too proud to know when a problem is bigger than I am.” How do you handle situations in which a problem seems bigger than you are? Do you try to push through on your own? Do you turn to a friend, a parent, a coach, or a religious leader? Explain.

“MY MOST FRIGHTENING MOMENT”

10. In a paragraph rich with sensory detail, write about your own most frightening moment.
11. Of the day after the accident, Rhonda writes, “[E]verybody at school was crying—even the people who didn’t know Robbie, even the teachers.” She herself didn’t cry. Instead, she felt sick and angry.

When a public tragedy occurs—that is, not the death of someone in your family but something more “public,” such as the events of 9/11/01 or an outbreak of war—are you more likely to respond with sadness or with anger? Explain your answer in a paragraph.

THE HAZELWOOD HERALD

12. Niafra, an exchange student from French West Africa, feels that American students “do not give enough honor to their teachers.” Do you think teachers deserve more honor than what is regularly given them by their students? Should they be honored more or less than parents are? In what way—if any—do you “honor” your teachers? Elaborate on this topic in a paragraph.
13. One *Herald* editorial says that statistics don’t usually “mean much, but this statistic [Rob] had a name, a face, a basketball jersey, and friends.” When you hear a statistic—such as the *Herald*’s report that someone dies in a drunk-driving accident every eighteen minutes—how do you feel? Do you agree that it’s hard to feel emotional about the numbers when you don’t have the faces to match? Elaborate.

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24. Andy mentions that some kids at school haven't looked him in the face since the accident; one even taped a note that said "Killer" to Andy's locker. Suppose that you went to Hazelwood High and were acquainted with—not great friends with, but not a stranger to—Andy. How do you think you'd be treating Andy these days? Could you look him in the face? Would you leave a note on his locker? Would you basically act the same as you always had around him? Elaborate in a paragraph or two.
25. We already know that Andy's mom doesn't care for basketball and rarely comes to his games. Here, we find out that Andy thinks his mom's sorority functions are "stupid" and didn't go to a cotillion when she invited him. Is there a difference between Mrs. Jackson's attitude towards her son's activities and Andy's attitude towards hers? Does Andy have a double standard? Explain your answers.
26. Andy's mom refuses to call herself "African-American" because she hasn't been to and doesn't know anyone from Africa. One could certainly argue that a white person from South Africa who moves to America has a better claim to call herself "African-American" than a black person who's lived in America all her life. What do you think? Imagine that your local news station is doing a segment on the words we use to identify ourselves and has asked for people to call in and sound off on the issue. In a paragraph, write down what you'd say if you called in.
27. Andy's disgusted that his father is a Republican. How do you feel about your own parents' politics? Do you share their opinions on major issues like abortion, defense, capital punishment, and gay rights? Elaborate in a paragraph or two.
28. Psychologists generally make notes on their patients after they've finished a session. As Dr. Carrothers, write up your notes about your first session with Andy. Do you think he can benefit from your help? How will you help him? Does he seem well-adjusted in the aftermath of the accident?

NIGHT AND DREAM

45. Andy imagines that Monty will have a future as a lawyer or doctor, but when he thinks of his own future, all he sees is “a blank—and darkness.” Is it difficult for you to picture who you’ll be in fifteen years? What do you envision when you think about your future? Elaborate in a paragraph or two.
46. Andy’s nightmare about Rob reveals that, even though Andy knows Rob’s death was an accident, he feels—at least subconsciously—guilty for it. Describe a “guilt dream” you’ve had in the past. How did you feel when you woke up?

A LETTER OF REMEMBERED JOY

47. It’s almost always comforting and interesting to write about your own or read about someone else’s fondest memories. Back in 1970, a writer named Joe Brainard took this truth to the extreme, writing a 192-page book called *I Remember*. The book consists entirely of Brainard’s memories, and each sentence in it begins with “I remember.” After reading Andy’s letter, write an “I remember” list of your own. Go for at least twenty sentences, starting each with “I remember.”
48. Imagine that you are Rob’s mother or father and have just finished reading Andy’s letter. Reply to his letter with one of your own.