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**Response Journal**

Reflections: A Student Response Journal



*The Fountainhead*  
Ayn Rand

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Reflections: A Student Response Journal



*The Fountainhead*

Ayn Rand



## Prestwick House

P.O. Box 658, Clayton, DE 19938

[www.prestwickhouse.com](http://www.prestwickhouse.com)

800-932-4593

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## 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.

## **Background/Pre-Reading**

1. Ayn Rand began her screenwriting career during college and continued it when she emigrated to the United States. She enjoyed the writing process, but came to see it more as a tool for expressing the views of objectivism rather than for creating and adapting stories for their own sake. It is ironic that someone who scorned the ideas of teamwork would choose a profession that requires so much collaboration with others.

Rand uses her main characters to serve as mouthpieces for her philosophy. Imagine that you are a screenwriter. You have written a script that concerns one of the main values of mainstream society: education, politics, religion, the justice system, the family unit, or a different value, one of your own choosing.

Write an opening monologue for your main character, and express your opinion about the value you have chosen in that monologue.

2. *The Fountainhead* is a dystopian novel about an architect who never finds financial success despite his ingenious gift. He takes personal satisfaction from his immense creative gifts and from seeing his creative visions come to life; he does not need validation from others to feel like he has talent and genius.

Consider other stories you have read, or movies you have seen, that are about people who have tremendous talents and gifts, but are unable to experience prosperity from their gift because of their own personal stubbornness, or a refusal to satisfy society's expectations.

Come up with a character description and plot outline for your own original story about someone with tremendous gifts who is not able to experience success for reasons similar to Howard Roark. Your plot outline should be written in bullet points and be no longer than a page.

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*The Fountainhead*

5. Society's fear of genius is the primary source of opposition to Howard Roark in *The Fountainhead*. This opposition is the source of much conflict, and it is this conflict that moves the plot along. While such figures as Ellsworth Toohey will embody this fear, it is the *fear* that is Roark's enemy, rather than a specific person. The most difficult part of the story, from Rand's perspective, is that the antagonist is invisible and eternal.

In your own life, what invisible antagonists do you face? What are the pressures that you face from day to day? Examples might be time constraints, peer pressure, body weight, procrastination, bad habits, fear of failure, or family strife, among others.

If you could face one of your invisible antagonists, what would you say? Write a conversation that the two of you might have.

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*The Fountainhead*

25. At the end of Part I, the reader has a solid understanding of the differences between Peter Keating and Howard Roark. While Keating has a greater level of professional success, and has the greater level of recognition in society as a great architect, he lacks personal satisfaction, because his entire focus has been on pleasing others rather than himself.

In contrast, Howard Roark designs only the buildings he wants to design, for the commissions he wants to accept. This costs him a lot of money and prestige, but he is willing to accept those costs as part of ensuring his own personal happiness.

Are you more like Peter Keating or Howard Roark? Based on the major decisions you have made so far in your life, which of these two men are you more likely to turn out like in your adult life? Why?

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*The Fountainhead*

37. In Chapter 11, Roark designs the Stoddard temple to be horizontal, and on the same scale as the height of a human. His purpose here is to make the visitor feel strong, rather than to intimidate the visitor by sheer scale, as many religious buildings did before the modern era.

In your place of worship, what is the scale? Do you worship in a building that could seat thousands and has a multistory ceiling, or is the space small and intimate? How does it make you feel to worship in that environment? Write a note to a friend inviting him or her to services at the church, mosque, or synagogue you attend. If, however, you do not go to a public place for religious reasons, or you do not believe in religion, explain why, as if you had received the invitation.

38. Stoddard's response to Howard Roark's temple design shows his absolute distaste for the way things turn out. He cancels the opening and sues Roark for architectural malpractice, as well as breaking their contract. When the lawsuit goes to trial, a good number of well-known New York architects take the stand against Roark, and the only defense that Roark offers is ten photographs of the temple itself.

Pretend that you are a writer for an independent newspaper or magazine, and you are covering the trial for your publication. Write an article summarizing the trial from an objective perspective—in other words, you are not putting Rand's spin on events, nor are you putting Stoddard's (or the other architects') spin on events.

39. After the lawsuit is over, the Stoddard Temple is redesigned and changed into the Stoddard Home for Subnormal Children. One night, Roark goes to see the newly designed building and the ways in which its original design and intentions have been radically overhauled.

Imagine that you are the obituary writer for the *Banner*. Write an obituary for the original Stoddard Temple, as though the building were actually a person. You may choose whether to slant your writing in favor of Roark, or in favor of those who think the same way as Ellsworth Toohey.