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Response Journal

Reflections: A Student Response Journal



*The Rose That
Grew From Concrete*
Tupac Shakur



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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.

Pre-Reading

1. When you hear rap and/or hip-hop music, how does it affect your mood and why? Write at least six sentences that describe the way you feel about this type of music. You can discuss the industry itself, the artists, lyrical themes, etc.
2. What ideas do you think Tupac will address in the upcoming poems? Why? What do you hope he will discuss? How do you think he'll express his ideas? (In other words, do you think his poems will be long and complicated, will they be in formal English, etc.?) Write a few brief sentences that answer these questions.
3. Who is your favorite musical artist and why? Write this person a fan letter in which you describe the reasons for your admiration. Your letter should be at least half a page long.
4. Write at least six words to describe Tupac and what you know about him. Next to each word, write a brief sentence that explains why you chose it. For example:

Word: *murdered*

Sentence: Tupac was gunned down and *murdered*.

The Rose That grew From Concrete

Preface

9. The Preface begins with a poem; the first line states “celebrate life.” Write a poem that celebrates your life or the concept of life in general. Although your poem does not have to rhyme, it should contain at least 10 lines.
10. The Preface celebrates Tupac’s brief life and the impact that he was able to have while he was alive. Although he is no longer with us, he lives on through the words he left behind.

Write an editorial on whether you believe there’s life after death. Your editorial can be for your school newspaper, a local or national periodical, or a magazine. Although you are free to express your ideas, you should support them as much as possible. In addition, name the publication that you are writing to.

Foreword: Tupac, C U in Heaven

11. Nikki Giovanni, in the Foreword, says that people created the term “gangsta rap” to distinguish Shakur’s music from other genres. Define “gangsta rap” in a few brief sentences. How does it differ from other musical genres? Write your definition and explain it as if to an elder who doesn’t understand the concepts.
12. Giovanni gives a brief anecdote about a commemorative stamp for Elvis and how it was chosen. Then, she describes the stamp that she would design as a tribute to Shakur.

Compare and contrast Elvis to Tupac. In what ways were these legendary figures alike and different? You may consider their genres, messages, fan base, lifestyles, death, etc. Try to write at least one page.

The Rose That grew From Concrete

“Under the Skies Above”

18. As the subtitle shows, this poem is about a miscarriage.
- A) Freewrite about how you feel when you read this poem. While writing, consider the thoughts that come to mind and how they affect your emotions.
- B) Answer the following questions:
- How does Tupac seem to view the unborn child? How does this compare to your own view?
 - How should one be expected to lead a child “when even I don’t know what’s right?” What fears and concerns might Tupac had had when writing this statement? What would your concerns be?

The Rose That grew From Concrete

“Black Woman”
“1st Impressions”
“Carmencita of the Bronx!”
“From First Glance”
“Elizabeth, A Different Love”
“Love Within a Storm”
“The Power of a Smile”
“Genesis (The Rebirth of My Heart)”

29. Compare and contrast the women (Marquita, Irene, Carmen, Michelle, Elizabeth, and Rene) to whom these poems are dedicated. Make a list of what you know about each woman. Then, answer the following questions:
- How does Tupac describe each woman?
 - What characteristics (physical, emotional, spiritual, etc.) are conveyed about each one?
 - How important is each female to the author? Explain the reasons for your opinions.

“A Love Unspoken”

30. In the middle of the poem, Tupac says, “People tend 2 choke/that which they do not understand.”

List five examples of situations that would apply to this statement, and explain how they illustrate it. You may consider issues such as gender, class, race, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, etc.