Sharing responses to a story . . .

From Reading to Writing
Stories touch people in different ways. Some readers might like “Seventh Grade” by Gary Soto because they recognize themselves in Victor. Others might like “Zebra” by Chaim Potok because they admire Zebra’s strength.
Sharing responses to a story . . .

In a response to literature essay, the writer shares his/her interpretation of a piece of literature. The analysis may include opinions about a character, impressions of the lessons learned, prediction of the author’s purpose, and/or similarities and differences to one’s own life.
In a response to literature essay, the writer shows thoughtful comprehension beyond plot and explains underlying meaning beyond text. The writer develops an analysis of the literary work and includes support and commentary.
A successful response to literature should

• include an introduction that names the literary work and author and clearly states the writer’s overall response to it
• provide a concise summary of the literary work so that readers can understand the response
• contain analysis and specific reactions and responses to the literary work
• support the writer’s statements with quotations with commentary and details from the story
• summarize the response and provide insight of author’s purpose
As the READER reads the selection, he or she should contemplate:

• What conflicts is the character facing?
• How does the character handle them?
• How does the character change as a result?
• What is the author’s purpose—what is the underlying meaning?
• How can the reader connect the purpose and theme to his or her own life?
Beginning Your Response to Literature

1. READING THE PROMPT

- “Prompt” is the question asked about the particular literary work.
- Highlight key parts of the question.
- Focus on what the prompt is asking the writer to do in the response.
1. Carefully reread the short story. As you read, write down insights you might have.

2. Freewrite about your responses. Spend five minutes writing down your overall response to the story. Identify your reactions, such as sadness, anger, excitement, or curiosity.
Planning Your Response to Literature

3. Brainstorm “MOST IMPORTANT WORDS”.

- This is a strategy to assist the reader in analyzing theme.
- It is also helpful in contemplating the author’s purpose.
- Brainstorm CONCEPT nouns. These cannot be experienced by your senses. They are “IDEA” words.
3. Examples of “MOST IMPORTANT WORDS”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Success/ Failure</th>
<th>Respect</th>
<th>Revenge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perseverance/ Apathy</td>
<td>Self-Worth</td>
<td>Survival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty/ Abandonment</td>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>Bravery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction/ Discontent</td>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td>Discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greed/ Generosity</td>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance/ Isolation</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
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4. Concisely Summarize the Work.

- The essay should be 25% summary and 75% response and analysis.

- To summarize effectively, use the SOMEBODY WANTED BUT SO strategy.

- Imagine this strategy to be similar to a movie preview! It must be well-written and concise!
Planning Your Response to Literature

4. Concisely Summarize the Work.

SOMEBODY = Identify the author and title. Give the main character and setting.

WANTED = Identify what the main character wants.

BUT = Identify conflict that the character faces.

SO = Identify what the challenges will be.
Writing Your Response to Literature

The writer gets to express his or her response to the prompt. This requires understanding of the story and **INSIGHT**. Identifying **MOST IMPORTANT WORDS** and providing a strong **SUMMARY STATEMENT** guide the writer in developing **INSIGHT**!
Writing Your Response to Literature

1 Drafting THE introduction

- Use your **introductory paragraph** to tell your readers what they need to know about the story and to introduce your response.

- Develop a clear thesis which answers the prompt.
Writing Your Response to Literature

1. Drafting THE introduction (cont)

- Title in quotes (story) or underlined (book)
- Author’s first and last name
- Summary statement: 3-4 sentences in the “SWBS” format
- Thesis = Clear, confident answer to prompt
Writing Your Response to Literature

Drafting the 3 body paragraphs

- Pick your best three ideas as answers to the prompt.
- Find supportive quotes and provide commentary linking quote to thesis.
- Do not over-summarize, but provide a few sentences of background as needed.
Writing Your Response to Literature

2 Drafting the 3 body paragraphs

• Begin each paragraph with a strong topic sentence.

• Answer the prompt in each topic sentence.

• Provide proof and commentary for your analysis.

• Clearly explain and connect your support back to topic sentence.
Writing Your Response to Literature

3 Drafting the conclusion

- Restate thesis confidently and clearly
- Show insight in relation to author’s purpose and message to readers. What is the author wanting his or her readers to understand as a result of watching the character handle the conflict?
- Identify significance to today’s readers. How can the lessons learned be applied to their lives?
Strategies for strong writing:

• Use precise word choice including strong verbs.
• Use formal writing style—no slang, no contractions
• Avoid “I, ME, YOU”. Instead, use original nouns such as “the writer, the reader, the audience, a person, etc”
• Master MLA format
• Have one adult and one peer edit your paper.
• Use MyAccess MyEditor to catch errors in mechanics.