



## JOURNAL WRITING STRATEGIES

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**Purpose:** This is your opportunity to respond honestly, thoughtfully, creatively, and personally to reading selections without the fear of being “wrong.” Your goal is to make meaning out of what you have read in order to improve your comprehension and appreciation. Rather than relying on the teacher’s expertise or outside critical authorities, you will become your own reading expert. Ideally, a dialogue will occur between you and the author. Not only will you become a better reader as you write in response, but I will have a much better understanding of who you are as a reader, thinker, and ruminator.

Below are several reader response strategies. Write approximately two pages of response at the conclusion of each reading session. Feel free to “mix and match” the strategies, and **do not merely summarize**. Instead muse, take risks, and enjoy the freedom of writing in your own voice.

- *Freewriting* – Write whatever comes to mind without stopping! Do not censor your thoughts or edit, and don’t lift the pen!
- *React/Identify* – React to or identify with a character’s choice. What would you have done differently? When has something similar happened to you? Register those strong feelings! Recall similar moments in films, other books, or your actual life.
- *Reflect* – Muse on what you’ve read and imagine alternatives. Consider what the author is attempting to show you. Identify significant moments in the book, and suggest how these moments matter.
- *Questions, questions, questions* – While reading, note in the margins (or on a post-it note) where you have questions of “genuine doubt.” After your reading session, write out these questions of interpretation and reflect on how they might be answered. You should find that the best questions will generate many interesting responses.
- *Anticipate* – Make and remake hypotheses about your reading. Imagine how the characters will act, how the narrative might unfold, how the author might resolve the conflict.
- *Prioritize* – Learn to isolate those words or images that recur (good writers do not repeat themselves unintentionally). Copy passages that strike you as important, and consider thematic implications. Trust your instincts!
- *Key Passage* – Find an important passage, cite it so that you can refer to it in class discussion, and write about what it is that you think is important.
- *Literary Devices* – Note how the author uses literary devices to further his or her objective. Be aware of how point of view, setting, language, images, and tone support the author’s overall intention. Refer to the “Literary Devices” file on my website.

*When people write about something, they learn it better.*

*Toby Fulwiler*

