

## Tips on Writing a Journal

A reading log or book journal is a great place to react to what you read. You can find out exactly how you feel about the characters; you may gain insight about the theme and plot; and you can expand your overall enjoyment of the literature. Here are a few idea starters. Feel free to build your own list of questions as you start your life-long habit of keeping a reading log or book journal. Read on.

### **Here's How:**

1. Write down your thoughts--after reading the opening chapter(s) of the book. How do your impressions change (or do they) after reading half the book? Do you feel any differently after finishing the book? Would you read the book again?
2. What emotions did the book invoke: laughter, tears, smiles, anger? Or, was the book just boring and meaningless? Record some of your reactions.
3. Sometimes books touch you, reminding you of your own life, as part of the larger human experience. Are there connections between the book and your own life? Or, does the book remind you of an event (or events) that happened to someone you know? Does the book remind you of what happened in another book you've read?
4. Would you like to be one of the characters (acquire a personality trait)? Which of the characters would you become, if you could? Why? If there's something about the character that you'd want to change, what is it?
5. If you were the author, would you have changed the name of a character, or altered the location of a scene? What does the name mean to you? Do you have a negative connotation associated with the name (or the place)? What would you name the character instead? What would you use as a setting?
6. Does the book leave you with questions you would like to ask? What are they? Would you like to direct your questions at a particular character? What questions would you like to ask the author of the book? Are they questions that you may be able to answer by reading more about the author's life and/or works?
7. Are you confused about what happened (or didn't happen) in the book? What events or characters do you not understand? Does the use of language in the book confuse you? How did your confusion affect how you liked the book? Is there anything that the author could have done to make what happened (or didn't happen) more clear?
8. Is there an idea in the book that makes you stop and think, or prompts questions? Identify the idea and explain your responses.
9. What are your favorite lines/quotes? Copy them into your reading log/journal and explain why these passages caught your attention.

10. How have you changed after reading the book? What did you learn that you never knew before?
11. Who else should read this book? Should anyone not be encouraged to read this book? Why? Would you recommend the book to a friend or fellow classmate?
12. Would you like to read more books by this author? Have you already read other books by the author? Why or why not?
13. Write a brief summary or review of the book. What happened? What didn't happen? Capture what it is about the book that stands out (or doesn't stand out).
14. Write about the characters? Which one is your favorite? Is there a character you hate/detest/despise? Why? What traits could you change about the characters that would change how you think about them? Do you think that any of the characters represent *real* people? Does anything about a particular character seem to be related to the author's true personality--who the writer is?

**Tips:**

1. The practice of keeping a reading log or book journal can work well for poetry and other works of literature as well (although the questions may be slightly different).
2. If you ever get the chance, you might find it interesting to read the diaries, logs or journals that great writers have kept about their reading experiences. You may even be able to compare notes. How do your reactions to books compare to the thoughts of famous writers?