How to write a Response to Literature Essay

What is a Response to Literature Essay?

A Response to Literature essay is a writing piece in which the writer reads a piece of literature and writes about the personal connections and personal feelings the piece inspires in the reader. The response also describes the main theme or message of the literature and explains what lesson the reader learned from the literature.

What should I do first?

Step 1: Read the piece of literature, novel, short story, etc. in which you will respond.

Step 2: Before writing the essay, organize your thoughts. Using the attached worksheet, make some brief notes on the following topics:

• What is your initial, overall response to the piece of literature.
• Jot down notes about your personal memories, emotions, thoughts, etc. that may help you connect you to the novel or the character.
• What is the main theme/message the author is trying to get across?
• What did you learn from reading the novel?

Step 3: Writing the Response to Literature Essay

I See Purple Cows!

I See Purple Cows! = ISPC

I = Introduce the piece of literature
S = Summarize the novel’s storyline (10 -12 sentences)
P = Personal Connection
C = Conclusion

Follow the steps shown above when writing any Response to Literature Essay.

Paragraph One:

Introduce the piece of literature...then write a summary.

Identify the literature. Tell the type of literature (novel, article, etc.), title of the literature (properly punctuated) and the author.

Example: The novel, The Door in the Wall, by Margurite de Angeli is about... (continue with your summary)
(Paragraph One…continued)

**Following the introduction sentence, write a BRIEF summary of the novel’s storyline.**

You should use a MAXIMUM of 10-12 sentences to summarize only the MAIN POINTS of the story. DO NOT retell the entire story! Your summary should include the beginning ... middle...and end of the story.

**Paragraphs 2, 3 & ?: Please write AT LEAST TWO Personal Connection paragraphs.**

**Personal Connections**

What events, topics or ideas from the novel, *The Door in the Wall*, were you able to connect with?

a) Begin with a **topic sentence** that connects YOU to an event or topic from the story that inspired a response from you.

b) **Explain** your connection with the story event/topic/character. How did you relate to this event in the story? Or how did you relate to a character in the story? Or what are your thoughts about the character, plot or a specific event?

c) **Explain** your response. Explain your feelings or emotions about the connection you have made.

d) Use an **example or quote** from the story to help support your connection. (Required!) How did a part of the story remind you of your connection?

e) **Think deep!** Be expressive! Provide lots of “meat” in your paragraphs!! The reader of your essay can not read your mind! 😊

f) Try **REALLY HARD** to make some type of connection to the story. IF you can’t make any personal connection at all...then talk about the main character from the story. Talk about the events that he/she experienced and what he/she realizes or learns through the events. (Refer to our sample essay if needed.)

**Final Paragraph:**

**Conclusion**

In the concluding paragraph, write about what you believe to be the theme/message of the novel. What main message is the author trying to get across?

a) Begin with a topic sentence that introduces the main theme/message of the novel.

b) **Explain** the theme/message the novel is trying to get across. Remember Bro. Luke’s quote? What did we say that it meant?

c) Use an **example** from the novel to help support your ideas. Include the main character in this example.

d) **Explain** the overall lesson the main character learned. **Explain** the lesson you learned from reading the novel.
Format:

- Because this is a Response to Literature essay, you should be writing the response paragraphs (paragraphs 2-?) in first-person (I, me, my, etc.).
- Your Final Draft must be word processed! TWO FULL PAGES minimum, Times New Roman font, size 12, double spaced. Remember, NO extra large spaces between the paragraphs.
- This is a formal essay format. Use a straight left margin.
- Give your essay a creative title that goes along with the topics you are discussing. Center your title and use correct capitalization (capitalize the first and last words and all large words in between). Times New Roman font, size 12, NO bolding, just regular font.

Other Notes and Tips:

- Use your The Door in the Wall notes to help you. You have lots of great information there, so make good use of it!
- Remember… a paragraph is more than a few sentences in length. Be sure to use COMPLETE THOUGHTS and COMPLETE SENTENCES. Be sure to include ALL parts of the paragraph elements for each section. Explain, Explain, Explain!!!
- PROOFREAD and EDIT your essay. There should be NO errors in spelling, capitalization or punctuation. When using names from the book, please spell them correctly!
- Collection Day – On collection day I will collect ONLY the FINAL DRAFT.
Response to Literature Worksheet

What should I do first?

**Step 2 Worksheet:** Before writing the essay, organize your thoughts. Make some brief notes on the following topics:

1. Jot down notes about your personal memories, emotions, thoughts, etc. that may help you connect you to the novel or the character. What events, topics or characters in the book remind you of something in your life?

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2. What is the main theme/message the author is trying to get across?

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3. What did you learn from reading the novel?

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