



Reading Response Letters



A reading response letter helps you go deeper into your book, and it helps you begin to analyze and think about the larger purpose of reading and/or writing books.

You will write one letter each week. In your reading response letter you will be writing a summary of what you have read, as well as **ONE** idea that you had while reading your book during the week.

Each letter must include the following information:

- greeting (Dear Mrs. Lounsbury,)
- title and author of the book you're reading
- a summary of what's happening in your book so far (who, what, where, when and why)
- the one idea you had while you were reading that you want to write more about
- 3 pieces of evidence from the text to support your idea using the "Pushing Your Thinking Prompts" (try to include page numbers)
- closing and signature

Reading response letters should be at least **ONE AND A HALF PAGES LONG** and written in your reader's notebook. If you choose to type your letter, please cut it out and tape it into your notebook. Remember to revise and edit your letter before you hand it in. Capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and paragraphing are important and will count towards your score for each letter.

Each week I will comment on your letter. I might ask you questions about your book or your idea. I may also give you some advice for how to make your letter even better the next time. So, be sure to read my comments each week!

MY READING RESPONSE LETTER IS DUE ON: _____

We can write about...

Characters - actions, traits, motives, reactions, thoughts, changes

Themes or messages

Significance of the setting

Specific events

Title (why the author chose it or what you would change it to and why)

Predictions

Problems/solutions

Connections

Wonderings

Noticings "I noticed... this makes me think..."

Genre and its characteristic

Author's purpose

How the author captured your interest and pulled you into the book

How the author builds suspense

New insights of understandings you have

Ending (how would you change it and why)

Pushing our Thinking Prompts

For example...

Another example...

In addition...

To add on...

This makes me realize...

This is important because...

This is giving me the idea that...

The reason for this is...

Another reason is...

This connects with...

On the other hand...

Could it also be that...

Might the reason for this be...

This is similar to...

This is different from...

I think this is important because...

This might be present because...

In the beginning... then later... finally...

In the beginning... in the middle... in the end...

Many people think... but I think...

I used to think... but now I am realizing...

September 29, 2010

Dear Mr. Lounsbury,

I am reading Blood on the River by Elisa Carbone. It is a great book so far and is filled with history.

In the beginning there was a troubled orphan named Samuel. He was chosen by Reverend Hunt to go on an expedition to the New World. Samuel was a servant on the Susan Constant with a few other boys about his age. The journey was awful! It stormed often, there was not enough food and many shipmates got sick, some even died. After stopping at several Caribbean islands, they finally made it to what is now Virginia. Samuel is now working closely with Captain Smith and is learning many new things like how to use a sword, how to clean a sword, how to speak the Indian language and to be a team player. He needs to know the Indian language because the settlers were attacked by Indians a few times already. The Indians inhabited the land first and probably feel threatened by the settlers, especially since they see the settlers making forts and fences for protection. So far a few men have been killed during the attacks, one being James, a servant about Samuel's age. Samuel is extremely upset about this and feels as if it his fault, but it really isn't. A few days later, many of the settlers got very sick. They lost all of their energy and had terrible diarrhea. No one was quite sure where this sickness came from, but half of the settlers died from it.

I came up with a theory while reading today. I think Samuel has learned to be kind, work together, and put others before himself. For example, on page 93 Samuel learned that Henry stole an egg for Abram, which means there is food being hidden. Once Henry found out Samuel over heard them talking, he said "Speak of it and you will die" (pg94). At the end of the chapter, Samuel decided to tell Captain Smith regardless of the threat on his life. This shows he is putting the well being of others before his own. To add on, Samuel dug graves and carried the corpses of the settlers that had passed while he himself was feeling ill. On page 92 Samuel said "I feel dizzy and nauseated, but I am still able to stand, and so I help to drag the bodies outside the fort and dig graves." In addition, Samuel puts Captain Smith's, Richards, and Reverend Hunt's needs before his own by bringing them the little food and water that they still have while they are ill in bed. Although Samuel is also sick, he believes they are sicker and need his help. This is all making me realize that Samuel has grown so much as a person throughout the story!

Sincerely,

Mrs. Lounsbury

November 18, 2009

Dear Class,

I've been reading The Report Card by Andrew Clements this week and I absolutely love it. So far this book has been about a fifth grader, Nora, who is a genius but she doesn't want anybody to know that she's so smart. She's been keeping this a secret from her entire family, her friends at school, and her teachers. Her best friend, Stephen, doesn't even know that she's a genius, he just knows that she's always done better than him on their report cards. Nora is totally fed up with grades and tests and she feels like people (the adults especially) are putting too much importance on tests and grades. So Nora intentionally gets a really bad report card. Her parents are furious and talk to the school about getting Nora some help. Nora ends up having to take all of these tests with the psychologist, who finds out that her IQ is that of a 16 year old or even higher. So Nora ends up telling Stephen all about this and they devise a plan together. However, their plan to set up expectations and then break those expectations fails and now Nora isn't sure what to do. She can't seem to figure out what her next step should be.

I've developed this theory about Nora and how she's the type of person who doesn't like to be the center of attention and she just wants to be normal like everyone else. *For example*, on page 134-135 Nora's mom is talking with her about how she went to Chelborn Academy and talked with the admissions department about how she is a genius. Her mom started planning out her whole life for her and Nora said to herself, "Keeping my intelligence a secret for the last five years was the best decision of my whole life." *Another example* is on pages 46-47, after Nora's parents met with her and the school about her bad report card all her teachers started paying really close attention to her and checking up on her. *Also*, on page 11 when Nora is a baby she is able to complete a puzzle quicker than her older sister, but when her sister Ann tells her to do it for her mom, Nora freezes up and chooses not to because she doesn't like this attention. All of *this is making me think* that maybe Nora doesn't realize that coming up with a plan like this to do poorly would only draw more attention to her. *At first I thought* Nora really planned things out carefully, but *now I'm realizing that* maybe she doesn't think about all of the consequences for her actions. *This is important because* Nora's main reason for doing all of this was to help make her best friend Stephen feel good about himself and realize that just because he doesn't get good grades doesn't mean he's not a smart kid. She wants him and everyone else to realize that grades aren't all that matter – there's more to a person than just their report card. However, Nora's encountering so many problems while trying to carry out her plan that this may end up hurting her friendship with Stephen, thus, defeating her whole purpose for the plan.

I think that Nora needs to take a step back and think about whether or not there's a better way to solve this problem rather than coming up with these plans that are eventually hurting the people that she cares about. *I can tell at this point in the book* that Nora's at a point in her life where she knows she's been hurting her family and teachers and friends, and now she doesn't know what to do in order to reach her goal, but also to keep her friends and relationships strong. *If I were Nora*, I would talk with her parents more about how she's feeling and what's she's going through right now instead of trying to hide her plans and her feelings about everything. If she wants them to really understand her, then she needs to be more honest with everyone. *So maybe, what I'm really thinking* here is that Nora's dishonesty has really gotten her into more trouble than anything, even though she was just trying to help other classmates and friends out. *What I'm learning* here is that telling the truth is the best solution. Even though there may be some consequences in the end, they probably aren't as bad as the consequences you get for telling lies and keeping secrets.

Happy Reading,
Mrs. Lounsbury

Scoring Guidelines

- 4 An **exceptional** performance exceeds the standards. The student:
- Focuses on the purpose of the task
 - Meets or exceeds ALL the requirements of the task
 - Organizes content and ideas in a logical way
 - Presents information clearly
 - Includes appropriate details to support ideas or conclusions
 - Demonstrates creativity, originality, and/or initiative
 - Stands out above the rest in some way
- 3 A **great** performance meets the standards: The student:
- Focuses on the purpose of the task
 - Meets most of the requirements of the task
 - Organizes content and ideas in a logical way
 - Presents information clearly
 - Includes some details to support ideas or conclusions
- 2 A **good** performance shows that the learner is progressing toward the standards. The student:
- Has some awareness of the purpose of the task
 - Meets some of the requirements of the task
 - Organizes content and ideas in a logical way
 - Presents information in an understandable way
 - May not include significant details to support ideas or conclusions
- 1 A **poor** performance shows that the learner is experiencing difficulty. The student's work:
- Does not fit the purpose of the task
 - Does not meet the requirements of the task
 - Presents information in an unorganized or confused way
 - Does not include details to support ideas or conclusions