

READ 180 Homework Helpers

Writing a Literature Response

The goal of reading is the construction of meaning. When children write, they can discover more about what they think and feel about a text. Response journals are not just about keeping students accountable for what they read, although they do provide an ongoing record. Their primary use is to help students become better readers by engaging in critical thinking. Responses tell us what children are thinking and learning. They let us know if the children are involved with reading or tuning out. When children respond to text there is evidence about whether their understanding is in the ballpark or off the mark.

I tell the students that it is important to be able to say the words when reading, but it is also important to “think” about what has been read, and respond in some way. When I grade the homework responses, I look for specific features.

What I Look for in a Good Reader’s Response

1. Topic sentence-turn the question around into a topic sentence
2. Addressing the question-does it answer all parts of the question
3. Finding and using specific details from the story for support
4. Making connections and inferences to answer the question
5. Correct sentence structure and punctuation



In a prompted response, the teacher provides a question or statement for the students to write a response. I have included a list of 16 writing prompts in the homework folder. For example, the prompt might be: “*The character I most admire is...because...*” The following is an example of an excellent student response to this prompt for the story Miss Rumphius by Barbara Cooney. The student turned the question around and provided justification for their thinking. The student responded to the prompt by providing details from the story. (The sentence in bold print is the topic sentence. The other sentences are the details that support the topic sentence.)

The character I most admire is Miss Rumphius because she is kind to the children and they have fun together. I think the children in the story like Miss Rumphius because they listen to her stories. They also help her pick the lupines. They have smiles on their faces, too, so I think they enjoy being with her. I think it is great when children and grown ups have fun together.

Here is another example of a good response for the humorous book The Kid in the Red Jacket. The student responded to the prompt “*This character reminds me of myself because...*”

This character reminds me of myself because I felt like Howard when I had to move overseas. I didn't want to move and go to a new school either. I held on to a tree and my mom had to pry me off and put me in the car. I felt lonely the first day of school because I didn't have any friends. I thought when I heard kids laughing that they were making fun of me and laughing about me.

Grading Homework

I tell the students that in order for them to be complete in their response, and earn full credit, they really need more than one sentence. Each day's homework response is worth 20 points or 20%. The 5 written entries for Monday through Friday are worth 100 points or 100% for a possible weekly homework grade. Incomplete responses earn zero points and a retelling is worth half credit or 10% of the possible daily points. When the homework response includes a good topic sentence but lacks sufficient details, the entry may be worth 15 of the possible 20 points. The total weekly grade is written at the top of the page as a % score.

I do not take points off for late or overdue homework, as long as it is completed within the week. Each Monday the previous week's homework form is collected and a new form, for the present week, is inserted in the folder. Once the recording form has been collected, zero credit is given for incomplete assignments.

Remember: I'm interested in knowing what students think about the stories they read. A book report or retelling of what happened in a specific chapter of the story has its educational benefits but it is not appropriate for a literature response. Please refer to the suggested list of writing prompts, in the homework folder, for ideas. The title of the list states my expectations for the Monday through Friday READ 180 homework assignments.

I expect students to READ, THINK and WRITE.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at:
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