

## Reflective Journal Questions

Using a spiral notebook, create a Reflective Journal by selecting one of the following questions to answer after you read each chapter in your chosen novel. Make sure you vary your question choices so that you are not using the same one more than twice:

- 1) Select one of the characters in the chapter and list 5 adjectives that describe his/her appearance and behavior in that chapter. Support each idea with a quote from the text.
- 2) Tell what happened in the chapter you read.
- 3) Ask 2 questions about things in the chapter that confused you or made you wonder. Describe your feelings about the events of the chapter and explain why you feel that way.
- 4) Describe your feelings about the events of the chapter and explain why you feel that way.
- 5) Describe your feelings about one of the characters in the chapter and explain why you feel that way.
- 6) Describe your favorite part of the chapter.
- 7) Make a prediction about what you think will happen next in the chapter and tell why you think that.
- 8) Tell how you would react if you were one of the characters in the chapter.
- 9) Describe a part in the chapter that surprised you.
- 10) Draw a picture of something that happened in the chapter and write a caption for it.
- 11) Define any words you didn't know when you read this chapter.
- 12) Find a phrase or sentence in the chapter you especially liked and share your thoughts about it.
- 13) Make a connection between something in this chapter and something that happened in another story you read or in a movie/TV program you saw and write about it.
- 14) Compare a character in the chapter to someone you know.
- 15) If you had to be one of the characters in this chapter, who would you be and why?
- 16) If you were the author of this book, would you change anything in this chapter? If so, what? If not, why not?
- 17) What is the setting of this chapter? Is it important to what happens in the chapter? Why or why not?
- 18) After reading this chapter, has your opinion of anything or anyone in the book changed?
- 19) Explain how an event in this chapter is like something that has happened in your life.
- 20) Compare a character in the chapter to a specific animal and explain why you chose that animal to represent your selected character.

## Key Questions to Ask Yourself While Reading

**Plot:** What central conflicts drive the plot? Are they internal (within the character) or external (between a character and a force)? How are the conflicts resolved? Why are events revealed in a particular order?

**Setting:** Does the setting (time and place) create an atmosphere, give an insight into a character, suggest symbolic meanings, or hint at the theme of the work?

**Character:** What seems to motivate the central characters? Do any characters change significantly? If so, what – if anything – have they learned from their experiences? Do sharp contrasts between characters highlight important themes?

**Point of view:** Does the point of view – the perspective from which the story is narrated – affect our understanding of events? Does the narration reveal the character of the speaker, or does the speaker merely observe others? Is the narrator perhaps innocent, naïve, or deceitful?

**Theme:** Does the work have an overall theme (a central insight about people or a truth about life)? If so, how do details in the work serve to illuminate this theme?

**Language:** Does language – such as informal, standard or dialect, prosaic or poetic, cool or passionate – reveal the character of speakers? How do metaphors, similes, and sensory images contribute to the work? How do recurring images enrich the work and hint at its meaning? To what extent do sentence rhythms and sounds underscore the writer's meaning?

**Historical context:** What does the work reveal about the time and place in which it was written? Does the work appear to promote or undermine a philosophy that was popular in its time?

**Class:** How does membership in a social class affect the characters' choices and their successes or failures? How does class affect the way characters view – or are viewed by – others? What do economic struggles reveal about power relationships in the society being depicted?

**Race and culture:** Are any characters portrayed as being caught between cultures: between the culture of home and work or school, for example, or between a traditional and an emerging culture? Are any characters engaged in a conflict with society because of their race or ethnic background? To what extent does the work celebrate a specific culture and its traditions?

**Gender:** Are any characters' choices restricted because of gender? What are the power relationships between the sexes, and do these change during the course of the work? Do any characters resist the gender roles society has assigned to them? Do other characters choose to conform to those roles?

**Archetypes:** Does a character, image, or plot fit a pattern – or archetype – that has been repeated in stories throughout history and across cultures? (For example, nearly every culture has stories about heroes, quests, redemption, and revenge.) How does an archetypal character, image, or plot line correspond to or differ from others like it?

**As you read, be sure to enjoy the book(s).**

**Remember that good readers:**

- Jot down words and phrases that are new to them
- Identify main problems, events, ideas, or themes in the book
- Think about the importance of the story's setting
- Pay attention to characters, their motives, and how they change
- Understand the devices of style (alliteration, metaphor, symbolism, etc.)
- Determine the author's purpose and point of view
- Examine the book's tone and mood
- Consider how the text is organized (chronologically, cause and effect, etc.)
- Think critically about the text – predict, infer, distinguish between facts/opinions
- Compare the book with other books they've read or movies they've seen