

The Art of the RR: How to Get Adolescents to Write Clear, Meaningful, Cited Reading Responses

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Reading Response (RR) Entries

Directions: As you read, note any line, sentence or section that jumps out at you. Write a brief note to yourself on a post-it so you can remember what you were thinking. (If nothing “jumps out” at you by the time you have finished reading, go back and **FIND** something to respond to.)

When you are finished reading, write out the RR entry fully on paper. **YOU MUST:**

1. Formulate an original thought about the piece of text you are responding to.
2. Give the **page number, paragraph** or **line number** of the part you are responding to.
3. Mention which **type** of RR entry you are using (see below).
4. Make your entry **at least five complete sentences**.

Types of RR entries:

1. **Give an Opinion:** Tell what you think / feel about a certain part, and why. You could react to an aspect of character, plot, theme, language, tone, style—anything in the text. But you must be specific.
2. **Ask a Question:** Write a specific question. This can be a basic question about something you don't understand in the text, or a larger question (about life, literature or anything) that the text made you consider. Remember, you must still write five sentences—you can do this by explaining what you understand so far before asking the question, or by trying to answer your question after you ask it.
3. **Make a Connection:** A certain point in the text reminds you of another story, poem, movie, song, show, or something in “real life.” How are the two alike?
4. **Character Description:** You notice a detail about a character (what he/she looks like, thinks, says or does). Why is it important? What does it reveal about that character?
5. **Spot the Setting:** You notice a part that refers to the place or time of the story or poem. Why is it important? How does it relate to the theme, characters, or plot?

6. **Significant Passage:** You realize a specific part in the text is important. Why do you think it's important? What does it mean? What does it tell you about the entire book, story or poem?
7. **Language Recognition:** You notice some sensory details, a simile, some onomatopoeia, an interesting epithet, etc. What is it, and does it add to the piece? How? Could it relate to, or be symbolic of, something deeper, like a theme? How?
8. **Find Foreshadowing:** You read something that seems like a hint to what will come later. Explain why you think this, and make a prediction.
9. **Theme Recognition:** You find a sentence or two that might be the theme (the "So what?") of the piece. Explain it in your own words, and tell why you think it's thematic.
10. **Mark the Motivation:** You realize a character's motive(s) (what a character wants). Explain what this/these are and how it affects the story or other characters.
11. **Detect the Conflict:** You realize one of the conflicts or problems in the story. Don't be too obvious. Explain fully, and relate this conflict to a theme.
12. **Find the Climax:** You read a part that you realize is the biggest event (or most important moment) in the story. Explain why it is so important. What theme does it point to?
13. **Cite the Claim:** You find the sentence that is the author's main argument (the thesis or claim). Explain why you think it is the focus of the piece. How does it relate to the rest of the text?
14. **Interesting Intro:** You think the author's introduction is interesting, clever, or engaging. Tell what technique the author used and why you think it is effective.
15. **Clever Conclusion:** You think the author's conclusion or clincher is really effective. Tell what technique the author used and why it works. How does it reinforce the claim or theme of the piece?

Walter George Bruhl Jr., DuPont Co. retiree

Mar 11, 2014

Walter George Bruhl Jr. of Newark and Dewey Beach is a dead person; he is no more; he is bereft of life; he is deceased; he has rung down the curtain and gone to join the choir invisible; he has expired and gone to meet his maker.

He drifted off this mortal coil Sunday, March 9, 2014, in Punta Gorda, Fla. His spirit was released from his worn-out shell of a body and is now exploring the universe.

He was surrounded by his loving wife of 57 years, Helene Sellers Bruhl, who will now be able to purchase the mink coat which he had always refused her because he believed only minks should wear mink. He is also survived by his son Walter III and wife Melissa; daughters Carly and Paige, and son Martin and wife Debra; son Sam and daughter Kalla. Walt loved and enjoyed his grandkids.

Walt was preceded in death by his tonsils and adenoids in 1935; a spinal disc in 1974; a large piece of his thyroid gland in 1988; and his prostate on March 27, 2000.

He was born in Philadelphia, Pa., April 20, 1933 at 10:38 p.m., and weighed in at a healthy seven pounds, four ounces, and was 22 inches long, to Blanche Buckman Bruhl and Walter George Bruhl.

He drifted through the Philadelphia Public School System from 1937 through 1951, graduating, to his mother's great relief, from John Bartram High School in June 1951.

Walter was a Marine Corps veteran of the Korean War, having served from October 1951 to September 1954, with overseas duty in Japan from June 1953 till August 1954. He attained the rank of sergeant. He chose this path because of Hollywood propaganda, to which he succumbed as a child during World War II, and his cousin Ella, who joined the corps in 1943.

He served an electronics apprenticeship at the Philadelphia Naval Yard from 1956-61; operated Atlantic Automotive Service Stations in Wilmington during 1961-62; and was employed by the late great DuPont Co. from 1962-93. (Very few people who knew him would say he worked for DuPont, and he always claimed he had only been hired to fill a position.)

He started at the Chestnut Run Site as a flunky in the weave area of the Textile Fibers Department, and then was promoted to research assistant, where he stayed from 1963-72. In 1972 he accepted a position as an equipment service representative with the Photo Products Department at the old DuPont Airport site (now Barley Mill Plaza).

In 1973 he was promoted to manufacturing engineering technologist and was employed in that capacity until, after 31 years with The Co., he was given a fine anniversary dinner and a token gift and then "downsized" in December 1993. He was rehired as a contract employee in June 1994, doing the same job that he had been "downsized" from, and stayed until July 1995.

He started his own contract business and worked at Litho Tech Ltd. from 1996-99.

There will be no viewing since his wife refuses to honor his request to have him standing in the corner of the room with a glass of Jack Daniels in his hand so he would appear natural to visitors.

Cremation will take place at the family's convenience, and his ashes will be kept in an urn until they get tired of having it around. What's a Grecian Urn? Oh, about 200 drachmas a week.

Everyone who remembers him is asked to celebrate Walt's life in their own way; raising a glass of their favorite drink in his memory would be quite appropriate.

Instead of flowers, Walt would hope that you will do an unexpected and unsolicited act of kindness for some poor unfortunate soul in his name.

A memorial luncheon in Walt's honor will be held Saturday, March 15, at 1 p.m., at Deerfield, Newark, Delaware.

Name _____

Semester 2 RRs: Level Up!

You must still write 4 sentences and reference a page/line number. You must also label your RR.

- 1. Crossover:** Tie together two aspects of a text. For example, explain how the setting affects the mood, how the conflict relates to the theme, or even how a certain simile reflects the work's overall theme. You can explain how a certain character trait led to a conflict, how a symbol reveals a theme, how the setting is important for the plot. Basically, **identify and link together any two literary elements**. Label your two elements at the top of your RR. You still must tie it two a line/paragraph.
- 2. Archetype Alert:** Identify an archetype in the text and tell what it means, why it's an archetype, and what other stories it is in. Then: why would the author choose to use it here?
- 3. Connect Form and Content:** What about the form or structure (speech, poem, soliloquy, prose, etc.) influences the content (the actual meaning of the words)?
- 4. Marxist Criticism:** Marxists look at social class. Look at a spot in the text, and write about any of these questions:
 - What social classes do the characters represent?
 - Which class does the work claim to represent?
 - How do characters from different classes interact or conflict?
 - What values does it reinforce? What values does it subvert?
 - Whom does it benefit if the work or effort is accepted/successful/believed, etc.?
 - What is the social class of the author?
- 5. Feminist Criticism:** Feminists focus on the portrayal of women in a text. Think about:
 - How is the relationship between men and women portrayed?
 - What are the power relationships between men and women?
 - How are male and female roles defined?
 - What does the work reveal about the operations (economically, politically, socially, or psychologically) of patriarchy?
 - What does the work imply about the possibilities of sisterhood as a mode of resisting patriarchy?
 - What does the history of the work's reception by the public and by the critics tell us about the operation of patriarchy?

6. **New Historicism Criticism:** The New Historicists believe a text is inextricably intertwined with the time and culture of its author. Ask yourself:

How does the text demonstrate the culture of the author?

What language/characters/events reflect the current events of the author's day?

Does this text support or criticize the leading political figures or movements of the day?
How?

How does the work consider traditionally marginalized populations?

7. **Psychoanalytic Criticism:** Most psychoanalysis stems from Sigmund Freud. Think about:

Is any character repressing a painful event from the past?

Is any character repressing secret drives or desires?

Is the Oedipus complex at work here? (son loves mother, hates father)

Or Electra complex? (daughter loves father)

Any other family dynamics apparent?

Any other complexes: Cinderella, Icarus, Superiority or Inferiority?

Any other psychological factors at work (fear or fascination with death, for example)?

8. **Cultural Connection:** Link a concept we learned in class to a specific spot in the text.
For example, look for *arête*, *xenia*, or *kleos* in the Greek texts we read.

9. **W W ? S:** (What Would _____ Say) Fill in with the name of an author, historical figure, scientist, scholar, or teacher. (No modern-day celebrities.) How would that person respond to a certain spot in the text? Why? Be sure to explain the person's philosophy / focus and how it relates to the text.

10. **Crazy RR Challenge:** Go to the website <http://literary-devices.com/>. Look at the "Quick List" of literary devices on the left. The good news: You know many of these! The better news: There are more to learn! **Pick one you don't know**, read the definition and example, and see if you can find it in the reading. You might have to click on a few before you find something applicable. Some great terms to start with: anastrophe, chiasmus, and synecdoche.

Note: All "criticism" RRs are adapted from www.owl.english.purdue.edu/owl.
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The Story of An Hour Kate Chopin (1894)

Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.

It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of "killed." He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message.

She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her.

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.

There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the west facing her window.

She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair, quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.

There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air.

Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will--as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been. When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under the breath: "free, free, free!" The vacant stare and the look of terror that

had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body.

She did not stop to ask if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial. She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.

There would be no one to live for during those coming years; she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination.

And yet she had loved him--sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in the face of this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!

"Free! Body and soul free!" she kept whispering.

Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the keyhole, imploring for admission. "Louise, open the door! I beg; open the door--you will make yourself ill. What are you doing, Louise? For heaven's sake open the door."

"Go away. I am not making myself ill." No; she was drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window.

Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long.

She arose at length and opened the door to her sister's importunities. There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory. She clasped her sister's waist, and together they descended the stairs. Richards stood waiting for them at the bottom.

Some one was opening the front door with a latchkey. It was Brently Mallard who entered, a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his grip-sack and umbrella. He had been far from the scene of the accident, and did not even know there had been one. He stood amazed at Josephine's piercing cry; at Richards' quick motion to screen him from the view of his wife.

When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease--of the joy that kills.

Name _____

Assignment: Reading Response (RR) Analysis Paper

You will write a 2-part paper analyzing yourself as a reader, using all of the Reading Responses (RRs) you've written so far this year. The first part will be your analysis of yourself and your responses, and the second part will include your **top 5 RRs** from the semester, and **WHY** you feel these are your best.

Part 1: Self-Analysis: Look again at the original RR guidelines you received in the beginning of the year. (They are on Moodle if you've lost them.) Consider these questions when analyzing yourself as a reader and responder:

- Which kinds of RRs do I gravitate to? Which kinds of RRs do I like most?
- Which do I like least?
- Do I always write the same kind of RR? Do I have a variety?
- Am I mostly summarizing, or is there evidence of my own thoughts in the RRs?
- If I often write one kind of RR, what does that reveal about me?
- Is there a certain kind of RR that I've never tried? Why might this be so?
- Am I trying my best when I write RRs? How could I be putting more thought and effort into them?
- As I move in to the next semester, what new things could I be thinking about or looking for as I read?

Part 2: Your 5 best RRs: Look through your notebook and choose **five** of your best RRs.

- Retype them, complete with titles and page numbers
- Underneath EACH explain **why you think that particular RR is strong**. Be specific and thoughtful!
- Number the RRs and format the page so I can clearly see each RR and your commentary.

"Elephant in the Dark"

by Rumi, 1250 (trans. Coleman Barks)

Some Hindus have an elephant to show.
No one here has ever seen an elephant.
They bring it at night to a dark room.

One by one, we go in the dark and come out
saying how we experience the animal.

One of us happens to touch the trunk.
"A water-pipe kind of creature."

Another, the ear. "A very strong, always moving
back and forth, fan-animal."

Another, the leg. "I find it still,
like a column on a temple."

Another touches the curved back.
"A leathery throne."

Another, the cleverest, feels the tusk.
"A rounded sword made of porcelain."
He's proud of his description.

Each of us touches one place
and understands the whole in that way.

The palm and the fingers feeling in the dark are
how the senses explore the reality of the elephant.

If each of us held a candle there,
and if we went in together,
we could see it.