

91 Ways to Respond to Literature

91 Ways to Respond to a Book

1. **WRITE THE STORY IN THE BOOK FROM A DIFFERENT POINT OF VIEW.** Take an entire story (or part of it) and write a version as someone else would tell it.

2. **WRITE THE DIARY A MAIN CHARACTER MIGHT HAVE WRITTEN.** Imagine you are the person in your book. Write a diary for a few days or weeks as she or he would have done.

3. **WRITE A CHARACTER SKETCH OF SOMEONE IN THE BOOK.** This might be the central character or a minor supporting character in the story. Tell what he looked like, but also include favorite color, horoscope sign, sports liked, and even a bumper-sticker or a T-shirt.

4. **REARRANGE A PASSAGE AS A "FOUND" POEM.** Find a particularly effective description or bit of action that is really poetry written as prose. Rewrite it. Leave out words or skip a sentence or two, but arrange it to create a poem.

5. **WRITE A PARODY OF THE BOOK.** This kind of humorous imitation appeals to many students. Parody the entire book or one scene.

6. **WRITE A PROMOTION CAMPAIGN FOR A MOVIE ABOUT THE BOOK.** This could include newspaper ad layouts, radio and television commercials, and any special events.

7. **WRITE A LETTER TO THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK.** While authors may not have time to respond to each letter they receive, they do enjoy letters from their readers - especially those that discuss the books in the reader's own terms. Send letters in care of the book publishers if you cannot locate the author's address in Who's Who, Current Biography, or other reference sources.

8. **PUT TOGETHER A CAST FOR THE FILM VERSION OF A BOOK.** Imagine the director-producer wants a casting director to make recommendations. Decide who would be the actors and actresses. Include photos and descriptions of the stars and tell why each is "perfect" for the part. Write a report to convince the producer of the selections.

9. **WRITE A REPORT OF RELATED INFORMATION ABOUT ONE TOPIC OR PERSON IN THE BOOK.** For example, research information about the trial of Benedict Arnold, how the covered wagons traveled, fishing off a particular island, and so on.

91 Ways to Respond to a Book

10. **MAKE A NEW BOOK JACKET.** It should include an attractive picture or cover design, an original summary of the book, information on the author and illustrator, and information about other books by the author.

11. **CONVERT A BOOK TO A RADIO DRAMA.** Give a live or taped version about the story - or a scene from it - as a radio play. Include an announcer and sound effects.

12. DO A DRAMATIC READING (READER'S THEATER) OF A SCENE. Select the scene and ask friends to help read it dramatically.

13. CONVERT A BOOK INTO A PUPPET SHOW. Make simple puppets (stick puppets, finger puppets, paper bag puppets, and so on) or complex puppets (marionettes) and present the story or an exciting scene from it.

14. DO A "YOU ARE THERE" news program reporting on a particular scene, character, or event in the book.

15. WRITE AND STAGE A TELEVISION SERIES EPISODE. Think of a popular television series that a book or part of it would fit. Then convert it to that series and give the segment before the class.

16. PREPARE A TELEVISION COMMERCIAL ABOUT A BOOK. Imagine a book is the basis for a miniseries on television. Prepare and give the television commercials that would make people want to watch it.

17. USE BODY MASKS AND PRESENT A SCENE FROM YOUR BOOK. Make full-sized cardboard figures with cutouts for the face and hands. Use them to dramatize the scene.

18. DRAMATIZE A SCENE FROM A BOOK WITH OTHER STUDENTS TAKING PARTS. If desired, use props and costumes. If the students know the story, improvise the scripts.

19. PLAY CHARADES BASED ON VARIOUS BOOK MEMBERS OF THE CLASS HAVE READ. Review standard charade signals. Divide into teams. Then have the students draw titles of books or the names of characters in the books, concentrating on those that have been most popular.

20. MAKE A SOAP OR PARAFFIN CARVING ABOUT AN EVENT OR PERSON IN A BOOK. These are inexpensive materials and soft enough so there is little danger from the tools used for carving.

91 Ways to Respond to a Book

21. MOLD PLASTER RELIEF DESIGNS. Pour plaster into a form over various objects and then antique or shellac them to make interesting displays.

22. MAKE LIFE-SIZED PAPER-STUFFED ANIMALS, PEOPLE, OR OBJECTS FOUND IN A BOOK. Cut out two large sheets of wrapping paper in the shape desired. Staple the edges almost all the way around. Stuff with crumpled newspaper, finish stapling, and paint.

23. MAKE HAND LOOMS AND WEAVINGS THAT PORTRAY A DESIGN IN A BOOK. Almost anything - from paper plates to forked sticks - will make a loom when strung with yarn, rope, or cord. Check art and craft books for directions. Then use the creations as wall hangings or mobiles.

24. CREATE BATIK DESIGNS WITH WAX AND OLD SHEETS OF TIE-DYE

MATERIAL. When dry and ironed, use them for wall hangings, curtains, and costumes.

25.FASHION A MOBILE FROM ITEMS RELATED TO A STORY. The mobiles add color and movement to a room. Display them in the library, the cafeteria, the multipurpose room, or in the hallway.

26.MAKE A "ROLL-MOVIE" OF THE SCENES OR EVENTS OF A BOOK. Put a series of pictures in sequence on a long strip of paper. Attach ends to rollers and place in a cardboard box. Print simple dialogue to accompany the frames.

27.MAKE AN ANIMATION OF A SCENE ON AN ADDING MACHINE TAPE. To get animation, draw a sequence of pictures with each one showing a bit more movement than the preceding one. When this is rolled quickly, it gives the appearance of motion.

28.CREATE FILM STRIPS OF A STORY. Commercially produced materials is available with special color pens to make filmstrips.

29.PRINT A DESIGN FROM A STORY IN A BOOK USING A VARIETY OF MATERIALS. Here, too, the process may be simple or complicated. Use potatoes or other raw vegetables to carve and use. Or try plastic meat trays and silk-screen prints.

30.IMPERSONATE A CHARACTER AND TELL AN EPISODE IN A BOOK. Dress up as a character and retell the story.

31.DISCUSS THE BOOK INFORMALLY WITH ONE OR TWO OTHER STUDENTS. The reader should choose two people he or she thinks might enjoy the book. Find a quiet corner to talk about it.

91 Ways to Respond to a Book

32.INTERVIEW A CHARACTER FROM A BOOK. Prepare questions to give another student. The reader assumes the role of the character in the book and answers the questions as that character.

33.CONDUCT A SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION. Several students who have read a particular book should get together and discuss it.

34.FOCUS A DISCUSSION ABOUT A PARTICULAR PERSON. Compare biographies of characters in historical fiction.

35.COMPARE VERSIONS OF THE SAME STORY. Contrast different versions of one story or several stories with similar themes.

36.HAVE A PANEL OR ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSION ON THE SAME TOPIC. Use one of the bibliographies of books on a particular topic (death, loneliness, handicaps, heroes and heroines, and so on). Have the group present summaries of their books.

37.PITCH A SALES TALK FOR A BOOK. Give everyone in the class tokens, play money, or straw votes. After the sales talk, take bids to get the most for the book.

38. **INTERVIEW A BOOK'S AUTHOR.** The reader becomes the author and comes to visit the class who in turn interviews him or her.

39. **PORTRAY A BOOK CHARACTER.** Ask another reader of the same book to role play a different character. The two characters can meet to talk about themselves and what has happened to them. This is especially appropriate if they have something in common: similar adventures, similar jobs, and so on.

40. **MAKE A TALKING DISPLAY OF A BOOK.** Tape a dialogue or description about an event, scene, or character.

41. **DRAW A SCALE MODEL OF AN ITEM IN A STORY.** Making an object from the story to scale presents many challenges. For example, try a go-cart, a match-lock gun, or any other item.

42. **COOK A FOOD MENTIONED IN YOUR BOOK.** It is always fun to share something to eat. Please cook your recipe at home.

43. **BUILD A RELIEF MAP OF THE SETTING OF THE STORY.** Use clay, sand, or papier-mache. 91 Ways to Respond to a Book Page 5

44. **DESIGN AND MAKE YOUR OWN T-SHIRT OF AN ILLUSTRATION ABOUT A BOOK.** Create a design, using color-fast marking pens.

45. **CONSTRUCT A BUILDING FROM A STORY.** Work together with others to build an item from the story that they have read also.

46. **MAKE SOME COSTUME DOLLS FOR A DISPLAY OF CHARACTERS IN A BOOK.** Create costume dolls and display them.

47. **COMPLETE SCALE DRAWINGS OF ROOMS IN A BOOK.** Use graph paper with a set scale and design places portrayed in a book.

48. **LEARN TO PLAY A GAME MENTIONED IN A BOOK.** Teach it to the rest of the class. (This might be an old-fashioned game or one from another country.)

49. **ASK OTHERS IN THE CLASS TO DESIGN AND CREATE SQUARES FOR A QUILT.** Depict favorite scenes or characters. Then stitch/draw/paint the quilt together. The individual squares may be drawn with marking pens or done in stitchery. The quilt may be a wall hanging, a curtain for a private reading area in the room, or presented to the school as a class gift.

50. **CONVERT THE EVENTS OF A STORY INTO A BALLAD OR SONG.** Write the lyrics and music or adapt words to a melody by someone else.

51. **MAKE A LITERARY MAP OF THE AUTHOR'S WORKS AND LIFE.** Use references, biographical, and autobiographical materials (articles, books, interviews) to create an informative and colorful map.

52. **INVENT WORD GAMES FOR YOUR BOOK.** Create crossword puzzles, word games,

and acrostics incorporating unfamiliar vocabulary words, characters, and settings. Distribute to the class.

53.COMPARE LIFE STYLES. As a group project, have the students compare the way of life in the book to present day living in their community. This can be presented in panel format. For example, the methods of transportation, fashions, foods, customs, religious practices, types of government can be compared to their modern counterparts.

54.GROUP PERFORMANCE. Select a crucial scene from the novel and have the members of the group act it out. Have one member interrupt it posing as a reporter. Have him/her interview each character for an on-the-scene "minicam" report. 91 Ways to Respond to a Book
Page 6

55.THE WRITTEN WORD VERSUS THE VIDEO. Compare the book to the movie or television version of it. What aspects of the book have been altered for the visual performance and why? Do these alterations make the story "better"? Why or why not?

56.THE NOVEL OUTSIDE THE ENGLISH CLASS. Show how a historical novel could be used in a history class or how a science fiction novel could enliven a science course.

57.RETURN TO THE FUTURE. Pretend that you are one of the characters who has "come back" 25 years after the novel has ended. Describe your reactions.

58.WRITE OR ACT OUT A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION BETWEEN TWO OF THE CHARACTERS.

59.NOVEL COURT. Hold a "mock trial" to permit one of the characters to defend what he has done in some controversial scene in the book. Let members of the class deliberate as the jury and arrive at a verdict.

60.SILENT PLAYS. Have a group of students pantomime a scene from the book. Give special attention to movement and facial expressions to convey the meaning of the scene.

61.WRITE A SHORT PLAYLET BASED ON SOME CHARACTER OR EVENT IN THE STORY. Be sure to provide accurate and interesting stage directions.

62.PERSONAL TASTE. Select one character from the book. If he/she were living today, what kind of clothes, books, records, movies, etc. would he/she select? Why would he/she do so?

63.DESIGN THE FRONT PAGE OF A NEWSPAPER. Write a short news story describing the major event in your book. Include an attention grabbing headline and teasers for the rest of the paper.

64.WRITE A HUMAN INTEREST STORY ON ONE OF THE CHARACTERS IN THE STORY.

65.WRITE AN EDITORIAL ON SOME CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE RAISED BY THE BOOK.

66.DESIGN A COMIC STRIP RETELLING SOME EVENT IN THE STORY. This may be expanded to tell the whole story of the novel as a comic book. 91 Ways to Respond to a Book
Page 7

67.DESIGN A CHILDREN'S STORY RETELLING SOME EVENT IN THE STORY. This may be expanded to tell the whole story of the novel as a children's book.

68.DESIGN A TIME LINE FOR THE EVENTS IN THE STORY.

69.DESIGN A DETAILED MAP OR MAPS FOR THE SETTING(S) OF THE BOOK.

70.DESIGN A BULLETIN BOARD TO STIMULATE CLASS INTEREST IN THE BOOK.

71.WRITE A LEGEND, FABLE, OR MYTH BASED ON SOME EVENT IN THE STORY.

72.PEN SOME POETRY. Write a limerick or a short poem about one of the characters or some event in the novel.

73.WRITE A BALLAD AND/OR MUSIC TELLING THE STORY. This can be delivered/sung to the class.

74.CREATE AN EYE-CATCHING POSTER. Choose a scene from the book and cast it in a poster which would attract potential readers or buyers to the book.

75.FICTION OR REALITY. Choose a character who seems to have realistic experiences. Write about something similar that has happened to you.

76.FUNCTION AS AN EDITOR. Treat the book as a manuscript and rewrite the pages (or chapter) you consider "weak". What needs to be redone to make the book stronger?

77.TRADING PLACES. Write a short paper explaining why you would or would not like to change places with one of the characters in the novel.

78.DESIGN THE ILLUSTRATIONS FOR THE BOOK.

79.WRITE A PERSONAL LETTER TO ONE OF THE CHARACTERS YOU ADMIRE OR DESPISE.

80.CORRESPOND WITH ANOTHER CHARACTER. Pretend that you are one character in the book. Write a friendly letter to another character.

81.A CHARACTER IN SEARCH OF A JOB. As if you were a character in the book, compose a resume and cover letter for your character, who is applying for a job suitable for the character and the setting of the novel, Does your character have any references?

91 Ways to Respond to a Book

82.ONCE UPON A TIME. Write a fairy tale about some event or character in the book.

83.BE A MODERN ARTIST. Using various mediums, create a collage that comments on a

particular theme or issue in the book.

84. **CREATE A DOSSIER ON A CHARACTER.** Pretend that you are a foreign spy sent to report on your chosen character. Compile into a secret file general and specific information regarding your character. Don't forget the photo.

85. **DESIGN AND PRODUCE A POSTCARD OR A SERIES OF POSTCARDS.** On one side draw/paint/reproduce an appropriate photo and on the other side compose a message to me from one of the characters. There will be automatic A's for the best design, most intriguing message, most distant postmark, and most appropriate postmark (mail it to me from there!).

86. **PUBLISH A YEARBOOK.** Create a yearbook - alias annual, alias classbook, alias memory book - based on the people and events in your book. Refer to a real yearbook for ideas on layout and sections.

87. **BE A LITERARY AGENT.** Pretend you are a literary agent representing the author of your book. Write to Harry Decision, editor of young adult fiction at Bantam Books, explaining why you feel he should publish your author's book.

88. **COMPILE A SCRAPBOOK OR A MEMORY BOX.** Choose one of the major characters in your book, and, as that person, put together a scrapbook or memory box of special memories and mementoes. Be true to your character.

89. **DESIGN A TRAVEL BROCHURE.** Illustrate and advertise the "world" of your novel.

90. **THE FORTUNE COOKIE REVIEW.** Explain why their messages, given to each of the novel's characters, are amazingly appropriate.

91. **THE EDIBLE (CHOCOLATE?) REVIEW.** Sir Francis Bacon said, "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some to be chewed and digested."