Reading Responses Starter Pack

Marilyn Pryle

Make your class more student-centered TODAY!

Welcome and congratulations for taking this classroom–changing step!

Included in this Guide:

- Teacher Instructions
- Student Handout
- 15 Starter Categories
- 3 Student Examples

Teacher Instructions

Because RRs are student-driven, only a small bit of set-up is required!

1. Make copies of the handout and distribute.

2. Review the requirements for writing an RR.

3. If needed, show students an example or two.

4. Assign an RR for your next chunk of reading (a chapter, poem, article, etc.)

5. Enjoy their responses! You can do a whole-class discussion or small groups.

Benefits:

- Close Reading
- Metacognition
- Writing Fluency
- Quoting / Citing
- Improved Test Scores
- Student Voice & Choice

Want to know more?

Check out my book Reading with Presence or enroll in my online course!

Name _____

Reading Responses (RRs)

Directions: As you read, annotate or put a post-it next to any line, sentence or section that jumps out at you. Write a brief note to yourself 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 fully on paper. **YOU MUST**:

    1. Have an **original thought**.

    2. Make your entry **at least <u>five complete</u> sentences**.

    3. Give a quote and the **page number** or **line number** of the part you are responding to.

    4. Label which **category** of RR you are using (see below).

Categories of RRs:

1. **Give an Opinion**: Tell what you think / feel about a certain part, and <u>why</u>. 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 six 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, or something in your life experience. How are the two alike?

4. **Language Recognition**: You notice some engaging sensory details, a simile or metaphor, some onomatopoeia or alliteration, some parallelism, an interesting epithet, or something else. Maybe you notice a single word and wonder about why the author chose it. Whatever you notice, quote it, and explain how it adds to the text. Does it contribute to the mood or characterization? Does it relate to a theme? Could it have a deeper meaning and what might that be?

5. **Find Foreshadowing**: You read something that seems like a hint to what will come later. Explain why you think this and why it is important, and make a prediction.

6. **Theme Recognition**: You find a sentence or two that might point to the theme (the message or "So what?") of the piece. Explain it in your own words.

7. **Spot the Setting**: You notice a part that refers to the place or time of the story or poem. <u>Why is it important</u>? How does it relate to the plot, mood, characters, or theme?

8. **Character Description**: You notice a detail about a character (what they look like, think, say, or do). <u>Why is it important</u>? What does it reveal about that character?

9. **Mark the Motivation**: You realize a character's motive (what a character <u>wants</u>). Explain what this is and how it affects the story or other characters.

10. **Mind the Mood**: You feel the mood of the piece. What is it, and what is creating it (something in the setting? dialogue? plot? sensory details?) Remember that mood is the feeling in the text, not the author's attitude. Your quote should show evidence of the mood. Then: Why is the author doing this?

11. **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.

12. **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.

13. **Clever Conclusion**: You think the author's conclusion or clincher is really effective. Tell what technique the author used and why it works.

14. **Clarify a Cultural Value:** You notice that a certain event, detail, message, or character trait reveals a specific value of that culture. What is it? How do you know it's a value? Explain, and make sure your quote supports your idea.

15. **Tell the Tone:** You sense the author's attitude as you read. What is it? Why do you think this? What is causing it—the word choice, the meaning of the words, the genre itself? Explain.

Student Examples

Theme Recognition
"Elephant in the Dark," Nathaniel, Grade 10

"The Elephant in the Dark" describes the experience of various Hindus with an elephant. The elephant is in the dark, and only one person goes in at a time, touching one part of the elephant. Due to this, each person who experienced the elephant has a different description of what it is. The final stanza of the poem helps to fully explain the theme to the reader by saying "If each of us held a candle there, and if we went in together, we could see it." (line 21) This stanza ushers the theme of teamwork into the poem, saying that if they had a light and worked together to walk in and see the creature, they could have a concrete description of what an elephant is.

Red = Original Thought

Blue = Quote

Character Description
The Epic of Gilgamesh, Brynn, Grade 10

It is continually described that Enkidu was very animal-like. This did not only apply for his looks but also for his traits and actions. He had "hair [that] covered his body [it] grew thick on his head and hung down to his waist" which is like an animal (28). Also, Enkidu behaves like an animal too because he eats "grass like gazelles" and drinks "water from waterholes, kneeling beside antelope and deer" (28). By describing Enkidu like this, it shows how Aruru succeeded in creating the anti-Gilgamesh because Gilgamesh was a tyrant and Enkidu was wild and free. This is important because these qualities show that Enkidu is one third divine and two thirds human while Gilgamesh is the opposite which balances the two characters out.

Give An Opinion
The Eye of Minds, Noelle, Grade 7

I think it is really sad that Michael doesn't miss his parents. In the book it says, "Between school, the Virtnet, and Helga, he hardly had time to miss them" (location 307). This is depressing. It's like he doesn't even know his parents. Every kid should have the chance to love and bond with his or her parents. Michael is completely fine with not connecting with his. It's almost like he's taking them for granted, which is something no child should ever do because parents are the ones who provide for the children.
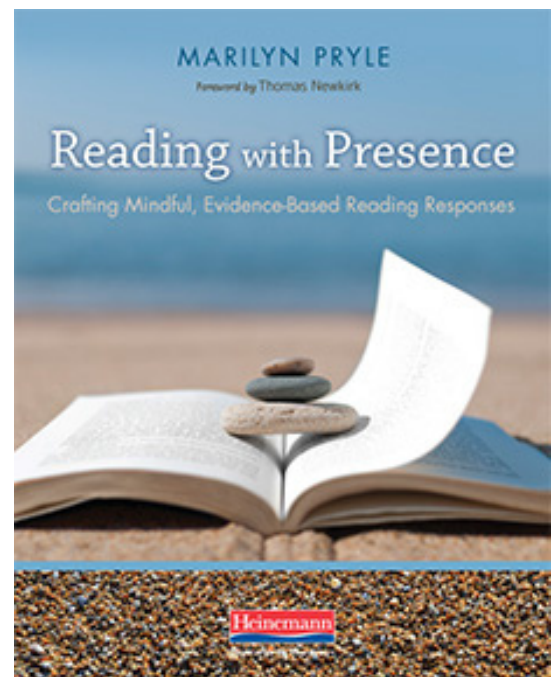
Why Reading Responses?

✓ Students practice using their own voices and thinking

✓ Not trying for "right answers"– just responsible reading

✓ Low-stakes writing / writing fluency

✓ Constant metacognitive practice

✓ More genuine, fruitful discussions

✓ Culture of trust / confidence / differentiation

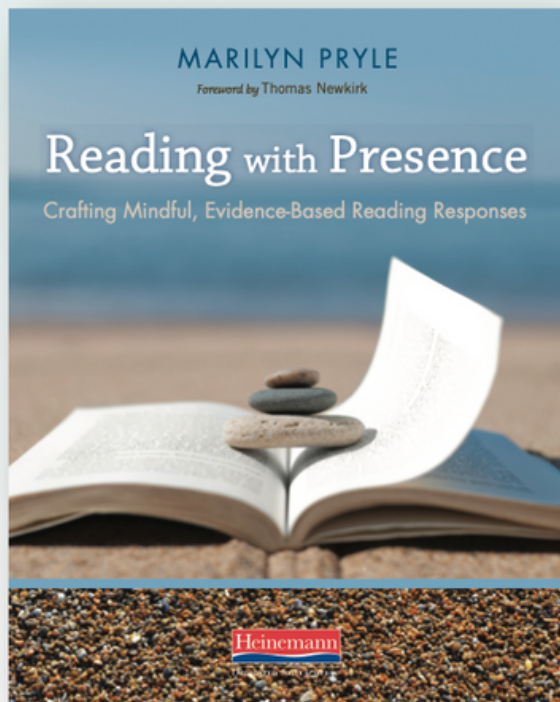✓ Opportunities for self-analysis and reflection

Want to know more?
Try my book *or* online course *about incorporating Reading Responses into your classroom routine!*

In the book and course, you can learn:

- Over **20** more categories
- How I grade RRs
- 5 things you can do once students have written RRs
- How to turn RRs into longer papers
- How to have students write a Reading Response Analysis paper
- How to write your own RR categories

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Foreword by Thomas Newkirk

Reading with Presence

Crafting Mindful, Evidence-Based Reading Responses

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Help students engage in texts and find their voices through reading responses

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Grades 6—12 • 2018
184pp est. • 978-0-325-08867-9

"I don't know."

Is there a more frustrating answer when we ask students what they think about the texts they're reading? More often than not, they *do* know; or at least, they have something to say but are afraid to say it.

Marilyn Pryle argues that we can help students find their voices and deeply understand texts when we invite them to write and share short reading responses. This kind of engagement with texts is what Marilyn calls "reading with presence."

Marilyn's suggested categories for reading responses allow for plenty of student choice, and the writing examples she shares throughout the book illustrate students' deep thinking about a rich variety of texts both old and new, in a range of genres, from both whole-class and independent reading. "

Marilyn Pryle (@MPryle) is an English teacher at Abington Heights High School in Clarks Summit, PA. She is the author of *50 Common Core Reading Response Activities* and *Writing Workshop in Middle School*. Learn more about Marilyn at marilynpryle.com.

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