



7th grade literature program journal ideas



SUMMARIZING THE STORY / PLOT ONLY: *[Shows no critical thinking.]* *Last night, Michelle and Amy got into a fight at school. She punched her best friend Amy, and then Amy scratched Michelle. Michelle's mom was very angry, so she made Michelle go to her room.

PREDICT what will happen next and support your thinking. *[Shows critical thinking.]*

*[plot above]. .. I think Michelle is going to do something crazy to get revenge on her mother. I think this because in the last chapter Michelle broke her mother's favorite dish just because her mom wouldn't let her go to the movies with Amy.

COMPARE TWO BOOKS. Discuss and give your opinion about: character, setting, conflict, and/or author's style (*not* plot comparison). *[Shows critical thinking, expresses your judgment.]*

* [plot above] ... The author's style in this book reminds me of Taylor's way of writing in Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry. Both authors make their characters sound real in the dialogue. Both authors have their characters use slang, and both also make their characters' accents authentic. I like it when authors write like this. It helps me believe these characters are real.

COMPARE THIS BOOK WITH YOUR LIFE. Use either character analysis, setting, or conflict (*not* plot). *[Shows critical thinking, expresses judgment.]*

*[plot above] ... I understand how Michelle could have gotten into a fight with her best friend Amy. Sometimes my best friend and I fight if we have been spending too much time together. I think it is because even though we are best friends, we are still different people. We still have to have our own opinions, and sometimes this can be very hard.

WONDERING QUESTIONS. Ask *and answer* (with reference to text to support thinking) questions that begin with something like: I'm wondering why ... I'm not sure ... Why do you suppose ... ? (Do not ask plot prediction questions!) *[Shows critical thinking.]*

* [plot above]... I'm wondering why Michelle hurt her friend? Maybe she became too emotional or she has not learned more effective ways to express her frustrations

DISCUSS THEME AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO YOU AND THE WORLD. *[Shows critical thinking, expresses judgment, portrays your values.]*

* [plot above] ... I understand that best friends can have disagreements. I've had them with my best friend, too. It's just too bad that the girls didn't discuss their problems first. That's what I do with my best friend. It's very important for people to learn how to resolve their differences without fighting. If kids would do this, I believe there would be less gang violence. Kids need to forget about fighting and learn how to talk with each other. This goes for adults, too!

DISCUSS AUTHOR'S MESSAGE AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO YOU AND THE WORLD. *[Shows critical thinking, expresses judgment, portrays your values.]*

* [plot above] ... After I read about Michelle and Amy's fight, I read that they didn't speak to each other for days. They each felt alone and depressed. Finally, Amy called Michelle to apologize. They talked for a while. They laughed, cried, and promised never to be so cruel to each other again.

I think the author's message is that best friends can have disagreements, but true friends will overcome their problems. I've had arguments with my best friend, too, but we always work it out the way Michelle and Amy did. I'm glad. What is life without friends?

CONFLICT. Identify the *type* of conflict presented in the book, referencing the text to prove your choice. Judge the actions taken by character(s) to address this conflict. *[Shows critical thinking / expresses judgment.]*

Examples of common conflict TYPES presented in literature are person vs. self, person vs. person, person vs. group, person vs. nature, person vs. unknown, person vs. supernatural, society vs. society, etc.

CULTURE - ATTITUDES, BELIEFS, BEHAVIORS, CUSTOMS OF A GROUP OF PEOPLE *[Shows critical thinking, expresses judgment, portrays your values.]*

1. Begin with a brief plot summary that focuses on one or more aspects of the culture portrayed in the novel. Note that this might be subset of American culture (e.g., urban vs. rural society).
2. COMPARE the book's culture to yours
3. MAKE A JUDGMENT about the culture and EXPLAIN your judgment.

BIG QUESTION. Consider a question that goes beyond your book.

*Begin with a brief plot summary that sets up the theme or author's message that you will be considering. DISCUSS AND PROVE that theme or author's message. Then ASK a "big question" that could apply to other books with the same theme/message. ANSWER the question using the text for support. *[Shows critical thinking, expresses judgment, portrays your values.]*

Examples of big questions might be: Is war ever justified? Can love be harmful? A big question would NOT include a character/plot detail (e.g. Why would Sarah consider running away from home?)

CRITICAL STANCE. Once students have developed the higher level thinking skills to be a critical reader, they may choose from the following options to express their "critical stance." Support/excerpts from the text are required to "prove" the point made. *[Shows critical thinking, expresses judgment, portrays your values.]*

* Analyze and judge the text structure. Were any parts of the novel confusing? Be specific, and explain why you think this way and what the author could have done to correct the problem. What was your favorite part of the novel and why? What else do you want to know from the author, and why?

OR

* Judge the author's style. Provide an example of the author's use of: language; metaphors; similes; colloquial phrases; symbolism; foreshadowing; or irony. Judge the quality of the author's choices, and the impact it had on you as a reader.

OR

* Judge the value of the novel. Explain the *author's message*. Provide support and tell if this book was **VALUABLE** in helping you to understand the world around you. Be specific using an example from your life.

CHARACTERIZATION. *Begin with a brief plot summary that focuses on the development of character, and EXPLAIN THE MEANS by which the author reveals the character's personality. Explain how the author's choices IMPACTED YOUR UNDERSTANDING of the character and the quality of the text. Use text for support. *[Shows critical thinking, expresses judgment, portrays your values.]*

Author's means

- Character's action
- Character's thoughts or speaking
- Character's physical description
- Others' opinion of character
- Direct statement about character

