



Exploring the Effect of Reader Response Plus on Twelfth Grade Students with Disabilities' Reading Comprehension and Attitudes Toward Reading

Noelle Granger, Alison Black, and Jane Miller

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine how reader response journals followed by classroom discussion (*Reader Response Plus*) contributed to students' reading comprehension and to their attitudes toward reading. The study was conducted in a rural school in upstate New York. The twelfth grade class that participated in the study consisted of six students in a special education classroom, four of whom were randomly selected as focus students. As they read the award-winning novel, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*, by Christopher Paul Curtis, students responded in reader response journals and participated in classroom discussions where these responses were shared. Classroom discussions allowed to consider the perspectives of others and gain new information. Instruments used to collect data include the *Qualitative Reading Inventory-3*, a journal rating rubric, a reading attitude questionnaire, an individual attitude checklist, and field notes

Findings indicate that *Reader Response Plus* contributed to improvements in reading comprehension and attitude. All four of the focus students increased either their independent, instructional, or frustration levels of reading comprehension based on the *QRI-3*. Each student also demonstrated an improvement in reading comprehension based on data collected from rubrics used to assess journal entries. Throughout the course of the study, the students also became more actively engaged with the text and began to participate more during discussion.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Alison Black is an Associate Professor in the Division of Education at the State University of New York at Oneonta. Her research interests include children's literature, social justice, and curriculum development for effective teacher education programs.

Jane Miller is a lecturer in the Division of Education at SUNY Oneonta. Prior to joining the university staff, she taught for twenty years in a K-12 rural school as a reading specialist and Reading Recovery teacher. Jane's focus in research has been in teacher education programs to develop effective instruction for at-risk literacy learners.

Noelle Sickler-Granger is a 7-12 special education teacher in a rural school district in Franklin, NY. After completing this study, she plans to continue to work with her colleagues on action research involving differentiated instruction.



In the majority of classrooms today, teachers are faced with greater academic diversity than ever before. Physical, psychological, socioeconomic, and educational factors may lead to problems in a student's ability to learn how to read. The range of reading abilities tends to become wider in each successive grade (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). This range of reading abilities makes it extremely difficult for teachers to provide adequate reading opportunities for all learners. Direct reading instruction does not provide sufficient engaged reading opportunities that will lead to reading growth for many students (Simmons, Fuchs, Fuchs, Mathes, & Hodge, 1995). When some students are being instructed directly by the teacher, they spend about seventy percent of their time passively watching and listening to the teacher and other students, with little or no opportunity to actually read (Shanker & Ekwall, 2003). To provide these students with the opportunity to become actively engaged in the reading process, teachers must restructure their delivery of instruction. One way to do this would be to incorporate *Reader Response Plus*, as is the case in this study, which consists of reader response journals followed by classroom discussion.

Journal writing has existed for centuries as a way to transmit thoughts and feelings to paper. It seemed to increase in popularity in the 1980s when dialogue journals became a popular way for students and teachers to communicate about books being read in the classroom (David, 1983). Reader response journals are one form of writing that allows students to express their thoughts, feelings, reactions, and questions regarding the literature that is being read (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). This type of journal permits students to construct personal meaning from literature by building on what they know, reflecting on what they have read, formulating opinions, and asking questions. However, the ability to interpret text in a reflective manner is often difficult for students with disabilities.

Students with disabilities in the area of reading comprehension must go beyond simply reading the text. Following the reading of text, they have to write about and discuss the information they have read in order to internalize what they have read. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 states that students who learn effective reading skills early on are more successful than those who do not (United States Department of Education, 2004). Students with disabilities, unfortunately, often have trouble with reading comprehension at an early age (Gunning, 2006). Because of this, they must engage in experiences that will help them respond to literature, increase their comprehension, and facilitate their enjoyment of reading.

The students who participated in this study have a history of reading and writing difficulties. These disabilities include, but are not limited to, reading comprehension and written expression. Reader response journals provided these students with guidance in learning how to respond to literature in a meaningful way. The students were given a list of prompts (see figure 1) that supported their focus as they explored their feelings and reactions to the novels they had read. They were also able to record any questions they had regarding the novels and new information that they had gained from reading them. The students then engaged in a classroom discussion, during which all students were encouraged to share their written responses.



The purpose of this article is to describe *Reader Response Plus*, a reading intervention program that combines reader response journals with classroom discussion. *Reader Response Plus* was designed to provide students with disabilities with increased opportunities for both written and spoken self-expression. Rosenblatt (1938) believed that readers bring different emotions, experiences, and knowledge to reading, and this transaction brings forth different associations with the words, images, and ideas in the text. Because of this variety of associations, all students express themselves differently. Reader response journals allow individuals to make connections to the text.

Vygotsky (1978) stated that children learn by reconstituting prior knowledge as they encounter new information, primarily through collaborative talk with others. He believed that students are capable of attaining a higher level of learning with help, known as the level of assisted performance while in the zone of proximal development. Vygotsky held that a child is capable of performing at a higher level when involved in any type of social interaction, including interacting with peers as equals. Classroom discussions allow students to learn new information and develop improved thinking strategies through the process of sharing thoughts, negotiating with each other, and acknowledging new ideas. As students learn from their peers, they are capable of shifting within their zone of proximal development to attain higher levels of achievement (Vygotsky, 1978). Reader response journals can be used as a basis for encouraging students to share their personal responses with others during classroom discussions. This sharing facilitates the expansion of responses to the literature and broadens their knowledge of the text.

Research Base for *Reader Response Plus*

Students who are at-risk in the area of reading comprehension fail to organize unfamiliar material and tend to ask themselves fewer questions while reading (Baker, Gersten, & Scanlon, 2002). Reader response journals provide a structured format for students to record their feelings, responses, and reactions to reading texts. This type of journal provides students with the opportunity to engage in informal, self-directed writing about literature that can be a tool for thinking and self-expression (Wollman-Bonilla & Werchadlo, 1999). This writing format enables all students to become actively engaged in the reading process in a non-threatening context. Because there is no right or wrong response and because all opinions are accepted, reader response journals encourage learners of all abilities to take risks. In this context, students are not afraid to venture ideas, ask questions, and construct their own personal meanings of what they have read (Wollman-Bonilla, 1991).

It has been suggested that response journals combined with classroom discussion enhances the interpretive comprehension of literature (Saunders & Goldenberg, 1999; Wong, Kuperis, Jamieson, Keller & Cull-Hewitt, 2002; Wollman-Bonilla & Werchadlo, 1995; Wollman-Bonilla & Werchadlo, 1999). When classroom discussion takes place after responding to literature in journals, the teacher creates a conversational context that invites students to interact with one another and further extend their reading comprehension. These interactions allow students to express and support their ideas by encouraging elaboration. Ultimately, discussion provides students with opportunities to



become actively engaged with text, which may lead to a deeper understanding of reading material. These discussions also allow students to gain new insights from their peers. An increase in reflective thinking has been found through the combined use of journals and classroom discussion (Song, 1997; Farest & Miller, 1994).

When students are better able to understand what is being read, they are also likely to develop more positive attitudes toward reading. Reader response journals have been shown to increase the reading comprehension of all learners (Saunders & Goldenberg, 1999; Wong et al., 2002). This increase in achievement should affect students' attitudes toward reading because students develop a greater degree of self-confidence when they experience success, ultimately leading them to feel better about the reading process.

Reader Response Plus – Four Case Studies

Participants

Students in the twelfth grade class that participated in this study met every day for forty minutes during the 2004-2005 school year. This English 12 class was a 15:1 minimum educational needs self-contained class with an all male population. The teacher-researcher chose a focus group of four students using the process of simple random sampling. This method of sampling was chosen because all of the learners in the target group have disabilities in the area of reading comprehension.

Ted, Adam, David, and Bob (pseudonyms used) had been in a self-contained English class since the eighth grade, and all have special needs in the areas of reading comprehension, reading decoding, and written expression. The reading levels of these students ranged from 3.8 to 9.7. Ted, Adam, and Bob participated in *Reading Recovery* in first grade and were discontinued due to lack of acceleration within the program format. David did not enter the school district until the eighth grade.

Instruments

The *Qualitative Reading Inventory – 3* (Leslie & Caldwell, 2001) is an informal reading inventory that measures reading comprehension through the answers to implicit and explicit comprehension questions that determine the level of the reader's understanding of text.

A journal-rating rubric (see figure 2) was used to assess reading comprehension as demonstrated through the reflections that students recorded in their reader response journals. An individual attitude checklist (see figure 3) was used to assess students' attitudes toward reading as evidenced during silent reading, journal writing, and classroom discussion.

Field notes were taken on a daily basis throughout the course of the study to record the teacher's observations, student dialogue, and teacher reflections during journal writing time and classroom discussions.

Materials

The reading material used throughout the course of this study was *The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963* (Curtis, 1995), both a Newbery Honor Book and a Coretta



Scott King Honor Book. The characters in this novel are involved in humorous predicaments, but at the same time face real life issues that children continue to face today. The novel explores historical events in a context that allows students to view the Civil Rights Movement through the eyes of this family's firsthand experience.

Instruction

Prior to the research study, the students had no experience with reader response journals. Therefore, the teacher provided the students with a list of possible prompts to respond to approximately a week before the study began (see figure 1). The teacher then modeled by thinking out loud while writing each of the types of responses so the students had knowledge of what would be expected of them. The journal- rating checklist (see figure 2) was also shared and employed with the students so that they were aware of what should be included in the reader response journals.

The week before the onset of the study, the teacher-researcher conducted the pre-test of the *QRI - 3* (Leslie & Caldwell, 2001) and the pre- *Reading Attitude Questionnaire*. The *QRI - 3* was used to indicate the independent, instructional, and frustration levels of the focus students involved in the study. The *Reading Attitude Questionnaire* was given to all students to assess their attitudes toward reading prior to the implementation of the study.

Throughout the six-week research period, students responded to the prompts after silently reading *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*. Daily they silently read a brief portion of the book (approximately five pages) assigned by the teacher. Each student chose a prompt and recorded his response in the journal. Before they could use a specific prompt again, students had to respond to all of the prompts. After they responded to the prompts in their journals, each student discussed his response with the class in a whole class discussion. Independent reading, reader response writing, and classroom discussions continued on a daily basis throughout the course of the study. The teacher completed the journal rating rubric twice a week and the individual attitude checklist (figure 3) once a week during the implementation of the study. The research study concluded with the students' completion of the post-test of the *QRI - 3* and the post- *Reading Attitude Questionnaire*.

Results

Results from the *Qualitative Reading Inventory - 3* and the journal rating rubric demonstrated that *Reader Response Plus* produced an overall increase in reading comprehension for the four focus students. Student scores on the journal rating rubric progressively improved from week one to week six of the study. In the beginning of the study, the journal entries lacked text based details. For example, Adam's journal entries lacked supporting details. Initially very skeptical of sharing with the class, his sharing of responses was very limited. Once Adam began to feel more comfortable, he began to participate more; Adam moved from 1 to 3 in his responses on "details from the book." On March 11, Adam wrote,



When the boys from the South got hit with the apple it would have made me anger. When the one boy ate half of the sandwich that would have told me that his mom was a bad cook. When the boy ate the apple with Kennys spit on it would have made me sick.

On May 12 his response read,

I think whats going to happen next is Kennys going to be swimming in the lake and the Wool Pooh is going to come out of the water and attack him. Then Kenny will scream and byron will hear him but wont think anything happening and Kennys going to drowind. Then there going to save him and live happily ever after like the three little pigs. My mom said not to make flame throghers but i did anyways and almost caught myself on fire.

Teacher prompting not only helped Adam develop his comprehension of the reading material, but also served to extend his elaboration of details.

At the beginning of the study, journal entries contained misconceptions and a lack of understanding of the reading. For example, in March, Bob's journal entry rating as a 2 in "understanding of reading" read, "Rufus see a squirrel in a tree on the other side of the road and said it was fat and dumb. Rufus likes shooting squirrels he said that they tasted good." However in May, his response was rated a 3 and clearly showed his understanding of text,

The part in the story that surprised me was when Kenny, Byron, and Joey were standing at the signs and Byron and Joey went to the public swing and Kenny went to Colliers landing. I though that Byron would be the one to go to Colliers landing not Kenny. I wonder how much trouble Kenny is going to get in. Kenny my get to stay in Alabama with grandma sands and Byron. If Kenny doesn't drowned. This reminds me of when me and my brothers went swimming when we worn't aloud and one of my brothers started to drowned.

Bob's increased involvement during discussion paralleled his growing comprehension of the text and was evident in his written responses.

Initially, Ted made no personal connections to the day's reading. For example, his response in March, rated as a 1 in "personal connections" read,

When the Bus Driver sead "Y'all just sit next to Poindexter, he dose not Bother no one". I think it Decribs Kenny beca Every one thinks he is smarter than others. I think it makes Kenny feel



more relaxed now because he is not going to be pickd on now because the kids are new.

Through modeling and scaffolding, Ted’s May response was rated a 3 and read,

The part that surprised me was when Kenny seen grandma sands he thought she was going to be mean but turnd out to be nice and vary old. but somthing is going to happe when the family leaves By (Byron) there i just know it. By is going to get in truble. Maby Kenny will stay to. When I was little I went to my gradmas and she was really scary and I startd crying.

David’s use of personal connections on a daily basis served as a model for Ted. Ted eventually learned how to make a connection between the events in the book and his prior experiences after others consistently performed this skill during classroom discussions.

Results from the *QRI -3* also demonstrated increases in reading comprehension. All four focus students improved their independent levels by moving up at least one grade level. All of the focus students improved their instructional levels as evidenced by the results of the *QRI - 3*. Two focus students increased their frustration level from pre- to post-test administration.

| Adam | <u>Pre</u> | <u>Mid</u> | <u>Post</u> |
|---------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|
| <u>Level</u> | | | |
| 2 | Ind – 100% | Ind – 100% | Ind – 100% |
| 3 | Frust– 38% | Instr – 88% | Ind – 100% |
| 4 | | Instr – 75% | N/A |
| 5 | | Instr – 88% | N/A |
| 6 | | Instr – 75% | Instr - 88% |
| Upper Middle School | | Frust –30% | Frust –50% |

Adam’s results on the *QRI - 3* suggest a marked increase in reading comprehension levels. His independent level of second grade stayed the same for pre- and mid-test administration. However, at post-test administration, Adam’s independent level increased to third grade. Mid- and post-test results indicate the establishment of an instructional level for Adam that ranged from levels third-sixth grade. Adam’s frustration level for the mid- and post-test administration went from third grade to upper middle school.



| David | <u>Pre</u> | <u>Mid</u> | <u>Post</u> |
|---------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| <u>Level</u> | | | |
| 2 | Ind – 100% | Ind – 100% | Ind – 100% |
| 3 | Instr – 75% | Ind – 100% | Ind – 100% |
| 4 | Instr – 75% | Instr – 88% | N/A |
| 5 | Instr – 75% | Instr – 88% | N/A |
| 6 | Instr – 75% | Instr – 88% | Instr – 88% |
| Upper Middle School | Frustr – 40% | Frustr -60% | Instr – 80% |

The data from the pre-post administration of the *QRI-3* suggests that David's independent and instructional reading comprehension levels increased as a result of the implementation of the study. Results from the pre-test of the *QRI-3* indicated an independent level of second grade, an instructional level ranging from third-sixth grade, and a frustration level of upper middle school. David's instructional level went from sixth grade to upper middle school at post-test administration.

| Bob | <u>Pre</u> | <u>Mid</u> | <u>Post</u> |
|---------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| <u>Level</u> | | | |
| 4 | Ind – 100% | Ind – 100% | Ind – 100% |
| 5 | Instr – 75% | Ind – 100% | Ind – 100% |
| 6 | Instr – 88% | Instr – 88% | Ind – 100% |
| Upper Middle School | Frustr – 30% | Instr – 70% | N/A |
| High School | | Frustr – 40% | Instr – 80% |

Bob also made improvement in reading comprehension levels as evidenced by the *QRI-3*. His pre-test independent level was fourth grade, his instructional levels ranged from fifth to sixth grade, and his frustration level was upper middle school. Post-test results demonstrate an increase of independent level at sixth grade and an increase in instructional level from upper middle school to high school.

| Ted | <u>Pre</u> | <u>Mid</u> | <u>Post</u> |
|---------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| <u>Level</u> | | | |
| 2 | Ind – 100% | Ind – 100% | Ind – 100% |
| 3 | Instr – 88% | Ind – 100% | Ind – 100% |
| 4 | Instr – 75% | Instr – 88% | Ind – 100% |
| 5 | Instr – 75% | Instr – 88% | Instr - 88% |
| 6 | Instr – 88% | Instr – 88% | Instr - 88% |
| Upper Middle School | Frustr – 50% | Instr – 75% | Instr – 75% |



The data from the pre-post administration of the *QRI – 3* suggests that Ted’s independent and instructional reading comprehension levels increased as a result of the implementation of the study. Results from the pre-post of the *QRI – 3* indicated an independent level of second grade, an instructional level ranging from third to sixth grade, and a frustration level of upper middle school. Results from the post-test of the *QRI – 3* indicated an independent level of fourth grade, an instructional level ranging from fifth to sixth grade, and a frustration level approaching upper middle school.

On the individual attitude checklist, scores for all students increased as the study progressed. Students gradually became more focused when completing tasks, paid more attention to others during discussion, and became more willing to generate and answer questions during discussion.

Field notes consistently supported the improvement of attitudes toward reading for all students throughout the course of the study. For example, when describing his feelings regarding an event in the book, one of the focus students concluded with, “That part was so funny!” and another stated during a classroom discussion, “This book is really starting to get interesting now.”

Discussion/Conclusion

Reading comprehension.

The teacher attributes an increase of details in the journals largely to classroom discussions. As discussions took place, teacher prompts essentially served to encourage students to elaborate on details. When students shared literal details from the book during discussions, the teacher asked higher-level questions to encourage them to reach greater comprehension. For example, “What do you mean by that?” and “How is this supported in the book?” were prompts used to encourage elaboration and higher level thinking skills. As the teacher asked higher-level questions, students demonstrated greater comprehension. As students were continuously asked to elaborate with details from the book during class discussion, they gradually began to include more details in their journal entries. Similarly, teacher prompts forced the students to provide an example to support their personal connections during discussion; and eventually, students were incorporating these examples in their journals, demonstrating the value of scaffolding in developing higher levels of comprehension.

The teacher attributes the increases in personal connections made by all students to David’s modeling throughout the course of the study. He began to personally connect to text in every journal entry, regardless of the prompt. After hearing his personal stories, the other students began to follow by example. David’s sharing in discussion demonstrated the integral role of discussion as a component of Reader Response Plus. The discussions allowed students to improve their recall of details, learn through the modeling of others, and reach higher levels of text interpretation.

The findings of this study were consistent with other studies using journals combined with classroom discussion (Wollman-Bonilla & Werchadlo, 1995, Wong et al., 2002). Wollman-Bonilla and Werchadlo (1995) believe that the use of discussion regarding students’ personal reactions not only provides an opportunity for students to



express their ideas, but also allows the teacher to recognize each student's thoughts. This is extremely important for students with reading and writing disabilities, because it provides them the opportunity to elaborate on information through teacher questioning.

Adam demonstrated an increase in performance levels on the *QRI* -3. Adam went from reaching his frustration level of third grade to that of upper middle school. The teacher believes that his growth in reading comprehension may be attributed to classroom discussions. Prior to this study, Adam rarely spoke in class, had a difficult time understanding concepts relating to reading, and lacked details in his writing. As he began to feel more comfortable with sharing during class discussions, teacher questioning during discussions began to help him develop an understanding of the text. As this continued on a daily basis, Adam began to recall details and gradually applied higher level thinking skills. The combination of all of these factors (impact of classroom discussion, increase in comfort level, recall of details, use of higher level thinking) allowed him to improve his journal entries because he was able to use the knowledge he had gained from reading the text.

Bob's reading performance level increased from upper middle school to a high school instructional level. The teacher attributes his increase in levels of comprehension to his change in behavior as the study progressed. At first, Bob demonstrated a lack of interest in class activities (i.e. throwing his journal down) in order to gain the attention of others. As the study progressed, he came to enjoy the events and characters in the book and eventually sought attention through more positive means, such as personal connections and hand gestures to help other students. Bob's transactions with the text facilitated his comprehension of text and helped to develop higher level thinking skills. The teacher believes that Bob's increased engagement in the book and desire for attention through positive means allowed his reading comprehension levels to improve.

Attitudes toward reading.

Although Adam and Bob's scores decreased slightly on the reading attitude questionnaire, all of the focus students stayed in the same range from pre- to post-test administration. The majority of statements on the questionnaire focused on general attitudes toward reading. Examples of these statements include, "I like to buy books and have a place to keep them at home," "I would like to belong to a book club," "I like to read books before I go to bed," and "I usually read several books over summer vacation." These statements describe activities that occur outside of school. The participants in this study have struggled with learning disabilities in the area of reading and have been educated in a separate location for English language arts throughout their middle and high school years. These factors may have contributed to students not viewing reading as a priority in their life outside of school. However, the results of the reading attitude questionnaire do suggest that the students came to have a better attitude toward the *Reader Response Plus* activities of writing to learn, reading facilitating learning, and classroom discussion. Avila, Pahuski, and Perez (1999) believe that poor self-perception may affect the learning process in relation to reading and writing. In this current study, Adam was an example of this. As this student's comfort and confidence in self



increased, he was willing to answer and reflect on questions, which gradually influenced his reading comprehension levels.

On the individual attitude checklist, scores for all participants suggest an improvement in attitudes toward reading as the study progressed. Johnston and Winograd (1995) found that students who have a negative attitude toward reading often give up or remain passive in reading and writing activities. All of the participants in the study demonstrated a smaller degree of engagement early in the study in relation to the other behaviors included on the individual attitude checklist. However, the students gradually began to demonstrate a greater degree of active participation during journal writing and classroom discussion. For example, at the onset of the study, David did not display enthusiasm toward the book when he was answering questions during classroom discussions. By the second week, David began to answer questions even when he was not called on, suggesting that his attitude toward reading was improving. Field notes throughout the study captured this gradual improvement in enthusiasm and engagement for all of the participants involved in the study.

Recommendations

Prior to the onset of the study, the teacher took various steps to ensure that the participants understood the various components of *Reader Response Plus* and were aware of how they were going to be assessed. Teacher modeling of the responses to literature was an important aspect in providing students with examples of quality responses. For many of the students, the list of prompts asked them to respond to literature in unfamiliar ways such as describing how they are most like a character. The list of prompts also provided students with a structured choice in responding to the literature. The students could choose a prompt, as long as that prompt had not been previously used. This teacher also reviewed the journal rating rubric and the individual attitude checklist with all of the participants prior to implementation of the study to help establish expectations.

Selecting prompts is an important component in the effectiveness of *Reader Response Plus*. Prompts must be chosen that create opportunities for students to share both literal and inferential knowledge. Asking questions during classroom discussions is another central component in the effectiveness of *Reader Response Plus*. The teacher recommends asking students to expand on their answers on a continuous basis. The students are able to reach deeper levels of thinking when they are constantly asked to elaborate on their responses to text and answers to questions through discussion. Some examples of questions to use include, but are not limited to, “What do you mean by that?” “How is that supported in the book?” and “Why do you think the character reacted this way?”

The teacher also recommends creating a way for all students to share on a daily basis by pulling student names out of an index card box. If this had not been done, students may not have made the gains they did because many of them did not share prior to the study.

In conclusion, the teacher strongly believes that the effectiveness of *Reader Response Plus* is also due to the use of quality literature, such as *The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963*. The characters in the book are involved in humorous predicaments,



but at the same time face compelling issues. From the beginning of this study, the students showed true enjoyment when reading and discussing this book. Their enjoyment was evident in classroom discussions and allowed them to create a comfortable and safe atmosphere for sharing, an atmosphere that was instrumental in helping to develop their reading comprehension and positive attitudes towards literature.

Reader Response Plus is a reading intervention program that is dependent upon quality literature and teacher prompts. It allows all students to be successful due to classroom discussion, teacher and peer scaffolding, and a safe environment where all opinions and ideas are valued.

*Figure 1*

Response Journal Prompts

Read today's assigned selection and write a response. Begin each response with the book title and the date of your journal entry. As you use each of the prompts below, please place an X by the prompt so that you will not repeat that prompt.

- ❖ Ask questions about things that confused you in the story.
- ❖ Describe your feelings about certain events (make sure that the reader knows the event you are writing about)
- ❖ Describe your feelings about characters.
- ❖ Copy down a quote from a character and tell why you think it is meaningful
- ❖ Make a prediction about what you think will happen next and explain why you feel this way
- ❖ Tell how you would react to an event if you were one of the characters in the story
- ❖ Describe a part of the story that surprised you and explain why
- ❖ Write a letter to the author or a character
- ❖ Draw a picture that illustrates something that happened in the reading. Write three sentences to describe the picture.
- ❖ The part about _____ reminds me of _____
- ❖ I am most like the character _____ because _____



Figure 2

Journal Rating Rubric

3 – High 2 – Average 1 – Low

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| Content/Ideas _____ | Responds to the Prompt _____ | Demonstrates Understanding of Reading _____ |
| Uses Details From the Book _____ | Uses Higher Order Thinking Skills _____ | Makes a Personal Connection _____ |

Ideas or Insights -

Skills to Work On –

Basis for determining appropriate rating:

Content/Ideas – Student stays on topic and responds effectively by using ideas that emerge from the content of the reading

Responds to the Prompt – Student responds in a complete manner to the chosen prompt.

Demonstrates Understanding of Reading – Student demonstrates that they have gained new knowledge from the text.

Uses Details From the Book – Student supports answer with relevant details from the book.

Uses Higher Order Thinking Skills – Journal entry is more than retelling facts. Students own thoughts and interpretations are evidenced.

Makes a Personal Connection – Student discusses personal feelings or reactions to the text.



Figure 3

Individual Attitude Checklist

4 – consistently 3 – frequently 2 – occasionally 1 – not at all

| | | | | | | |
|--|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Date | | | | | | |
| On-task when writing | | | | | | |
| Well prepared to complete task | | | | | | |
| Takes time and completes task | | | | | | |
| Enthusiastic when writing | | | | | | |
| Willing to share journal entries with others | | | | | | |
| Pays attention to discussion | | | | | | |
| Positively contributes to discussion | | | | | | |
| Displays interest and curiosity in the discussion | | | | | | |
| Demonstrates enthusiasm toward reading material | | | | | | |
| Shows a willingness to generate and answer questions | | | | | | |
| Total Points | | | | | | |
| Total Points Possible | 40 | 40 | 40 | 40 | 40 | 40 |



References

- Avila, J., Pahuski, L., & Perez, L. (1999). Developing language arts skills through the reading and writing connection. Illinois: Saint Xavier University. Master's Action Research Project. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED433549)
- Baker, S., Gersten, R., & Scanlon, D. (2002). Procedural facilitators and cognitive strategies: Tools for unraveling the mysteries of comprehension and the writing process, and for providing meaningful access to the general curriculum. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 17*(1), 65-77.
- Curtis, C. P. (1995). *The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963*. New York, New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc.
- David, F. (1983). Why you call me emigrant?: Dialogue journal writing with migrant youth. *Childhood Education, 60* (1), 110-111, 114-116.
- Farest, C.A. & Miller, C.J. (1994). Having written conversations: Dialogues about literature (Journal Code RIEFEB1996). Arizona: Arizona State University West. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED386740)
- Fountas, I. C. & Pinnell, G. (2001). *Guiding readers and writers grades 3-6: Teaching comprehension, genre, and content literacy*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Gunning, T. (2006). *Assessing and correcting reading and writing difficulties* (3rd edition). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Johnston, P. H., & Winograd, P. (1985). Passive failure in reading. *Journal of Reading Behavior, 17*, 279-301.
- Leslie, L. & Caldwell, J. (2001). *Qualitative Reading Inventory -3*. New York, NY: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.
- Rosenblatt, L. (1938). *Literature as Exploration*. New York: Appleton-Century.
- Saunders, W. & Goldenberg, C. (1999). Effects of instructional conversations and literature logs on limited- and fluent- English-proficient students' story comprehension and thematic understanding. *The Elementary School Journal, 99*(4), 279-301.
- Shanker, J. L. & Ekwall, E. E. (2003). *Locating and correcting reading difficulties* (8th edition). Columbus, OH: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Simmons, D., Fuchs, L., Fuchs, D., Mathes, P., & Hodge, J.P. (1995). Effects of explicit teaching and peer tutoring on the reading achievement of learning-disabled and low-performing students in regular classrooms. *The Elementary School Journal, 95*(5), 387-405.
- Song, M. (1997). The effect of dialogue journaling on writing quality, reading comprehension, and writing apprehension of EFL college students. Korea: Ewha Woman's University. Master's Action Research Project (Eric Document Reproduction Service No. ED410766)
- United States Department of Education (2004). *No child left behind : A toolkit for teachers*. Washington, D.C.: Education Publications Center.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in Society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wollman-Bonilla, J. (1991). *Response Journals*. New York, NY: Scholastic Professional Books.



- Wollman-Bonilla, J.E. & Werchadlo, B. (1995). Literature response journals in a first-grade classroom. *Language Arts*, 72(8), 562-569.
- Wollman-Bonilla, J.E. & Werchadlo, B. (1999). Teacher and peer roles in scaffolding first graders' responses to literature. *The Reading Teacher*, 52(6), 598-607.
- Wong, B.L., Kuperis, S., Jamieson, D., Keller, L., & Cull-Hewitt, R. (2002). Effects of guided journal writing on students' story understanding. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 95(3), 179-191.