

# Response Theory

## Philosophies and Concepts

### Response to Literature

Reading response is a single draft piece of writing which reflects the students' critical thinking about a text. In the response, they move beyond their initial understanding toward a more thoughtful and perceptive interpretation.

The search for meaning drives the response. As students attempt to draw meaning from the text, they should feel confident in their freedom to interpret and explore ideas, to show evidence of independent thinking, to think "outside the box."

Students often find in their reading and discussions that there are many different entry points to a response and that there is no one "correct" response. Their own particular background, experiences, emotions and knowledge are reflected in their development and explanation of ideas.

Responses have no specific form, no specific structure. They can be messy and incomplete; students often feel after they have finished writing that they still have more to say.

Some students feel more secure and more confident with some structure to their response. Such organizational structure, when used, should not appear to stifle their voice and ideas but should support students as opposed to leading them.

### Some keys to a good response

- Strong student voice
- Authenticity in writing to meaning
- Less structure
- Well-developed ideas
- Confidence
- Keep digging
- Continuity
- Write to Meaning
- Not worried about what the author intended

[“Enhancing Engagement in Reading: Reader Response Journals in Secondary English Classrooms” by Janet McIntosh](#)