**How to Keep an Evidence-Based Reading Response Journal**

**What is an evidence-based journal?**

An evidence-based reading response journal is a record of your thinking about direct evidence in a text. It’s called an evidence-based response because each entry has two parts: first, you copy down an excerpt/quote/dialogue that highlights the topic your teacher has given. Second, you write your brief thoughts about that excerpt. To do this, you simply need to draw a line in the middle of your note book paper. The passage from your text goes in the left column and your response is written in the right hand column. (See example.) You will use the evidence gathered in your journal to write evidenced-based assessments throughout first quarter (and beyond). The topics will be given by your teacher at the beginning of each assessment period.

**What is the purpose of keeping an evidence-based journal?**

Evidence-based journals make you practice doing the things that good readers do while they read: they visualize what they read, they make connections to things they already know, they ask questions, they decide what’s important, and they “read between the lines” to make inferences about why an author chose to write in a certain way. Reading isn’t just the words on the page: it’s what goes on in your mind while you read those words. An evidence-based journal helps you explore this.

**How do I know if my answers are right?**

There is no such thing as a right or wrong answer as long as you are copying down evidence that matches the topic and are responding to or analyzing the text and not just summarizing the story. The point of an evidence-based journal is to develop your own thinking as a reader, not to figure out what your teacher wants you to think about or to just retell a story.

**Can I work with a friend?**

No, evidence-based journals must reflect your own thoughts. You may get to write to a partner later in the year.

**How do I keep an evidence-based journal?**

First, copy down passages that focus on the topic given by your teacher. These topics may be vague (like setting or theme) or may be something more specific. Then, in the second column of your journal, write down your thoughts about the passage (any response is legitimate, as long as you can explain your choice and how it fits the topic). Your thoughts do not need to be written in paragraph form, but you do want to be sure to write some type of connection or short analysis that will help you remember why this excerpt fits the topic and is important. Please avoid just summarizing the quote or what is going on in the story—this will not help you much when you have to use the evidence for an assessment that will be assigned with your vocabulary tests. You will have anywhere from one to two weeks to complete each journal before each assessment. Journals are always due the day before the assessment—they will be passed back to you right before the assessment.

**How many entries am I required to do before the next assessment?**

You should find and respond to at least eight excerpts for each topic given. Try to do an entry at least every 5 to 10 pages (or more) of text. You will receive a formative grade for doing the journal. Your summative score will be the assessment. Your ability to do well on the assessment relies upon your ability to thoughtfully complete your journal requirements. You will not be able to use your book on the assessments. Ever.

# Your journal should look like this (except with eight excerpts instead of three).

**Hatchet by Gary Paulsen Topic: Setting**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Excerpt from novel (with page number)** | Response |
| “[Brian] was sitting in a bushplane roaring seven thousand feet above the northern wilderness with a pilot who had suffered a massive heart attack and who was either dead or in something close to a coma. He was alone. In the roaring plane with no pilot he was alone. Alone” (12).“He would have to find a clearing as he went down. The problem with that was he hadn’t seen one clearing since they’d started flying over the forest. Some swamps, but they had trees scattered through them. No roads, no trails, no clearings. Just the lakes, and it came to him that he would have to use a lake for landing” (23).“He raised himself and crawled out of the water, grunting with the pain of movement. His legs were on fire, and his forehead felt as if somebody had been pounding on it with a hammer, but he could move. He pulled his legs out of the lake and crawled on his hands and knees until he was away from the wet-soft shore and near a small stand of brush of some kind” (34). | Starting the description of setting with how high the plane is flying makes Brian’s feeling of loneliness at the end of the passage much more intense.In the middle of trying to solve the immediate conflict of landing the plane safely, describing the land below the plane may foreshadow a remote and harsh setting.The manner in which Brian interacts with his environment shows his resilience and hints at the possible hardships he will face.The description of the setting shows how nature can be the source of conflict and struggle for a main character.  |