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Reflections: A Student Response Journal



Killing Mr. Griffin
Lois Duncan



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Response Journal

To The Student

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

Chapter 1

1. Susan seems to suffer from low self-esteem. Write a letter giving her advice on how she can raise it.
2. Betsy Cline appears to be the most popular girl in the class, and Susan is not sure why. Think of a popular person in your class and describe what it is that makes that person popular.
3. Assume you are a transfer student in Mr. Griffin's class. Write a letter to a friend from your old school and describe Mr. Griffin. Consider how demanding he is and how you feel about his teaching methods.
4. Susan smiles at two girls in her class, but they don't notice her, so she keeps pretending to be smiling at something else. Did you ever find yourself in a situation like that? What did you do?
5. As everyone else chats before the beginning of class, Susan feels painfully alone. If you had a good friend who expressed a similar feeling, what would you advise him or her to do?
6. The first and last sentence of this chapter suggest that this will be a murder mystery. What line do you think this plot will follow?

Chapter 3

13. David is a strange sort of character. He is class president and handsome, but he doesn't hang out with Mark's group. Have you ever known anyone like him? How does his home life explain why he went along with Mark's plan?
14. David's mother states, "You're our hope for the future." What makes David his family's hope? If someone said that to you, how do you suppose you'd feel?
15. Imagine that Mark asked you to come in on the plan, and he said to you the same thing he said to David. Write the dialogue that might follow.

Chapter 4

16. In the cafeteria, when Susan has to decide where to sit, she often feels like a loner. If she were a friend who asked you how to handle the situation, what would you advise her?
17. Assume you are Susan, and you sit down to write in your diary. Write an entry describing the picnic invitation you received from David and how it made you feel.
18. Mrs. McConnell is excited about Susan's date with David. Assume you are Mrs. McConnell; in a dialogue, try to explain your excitement to Susan's father, who can't understand why all the fuss is being made.

Chapter 10

36. Mark's uncle, with whom Mark is living, describes Mark as "weird." His aunt says it is because Mark's mother, who has "cracked up," has said that she never wants to see Mark again. Did you have any thoughts about this conversation between Mark's uncle and aunt? Is Mark weird? What's the matter with his mother?

Chapter 11

37. Susan describes the situation as a nightmare from which she wishes she would wake up, and everything would be all right: one moment in her life she had to make a decision. Unfortunately, she made the wrong choice, and she will regret her decision the rest of her life. Can you think of any person in the news, a book, or in a movie who had made the wrong choice and ruined his or her life?
38. Susan describes Mr. Griffin's point of view on teaching; there may be some truth in what he says about student effort and overgrading. What is your reaction?
39. Mark wants it to appear that Mr. Griffin was having an affair. On the basis of what we know about Mr. Griffin, do you think this is a good or bad idea? Explain.

Chapter 18

48. While it is not as horrible as kidnapping, Mark calls Susan “one sorry chick.” How do you feel about derogatory terms that insult intellect, gender, color, or something people cannot change?

Chapter 19

49. Although Susan says she doesn’t want to discuss it, her mother says, “You have to. It’s only by facing things that you ever put them behind you.” On the basis of your experience with unpleasant experiences, would you agree or disagree with Mrs. McConnell?
50. Mrs. McConnell also says, “There must have been something lacking in our life together if you needed someone like Mark to fill in the gaps.” If you were Mrs. McConnell’s friend, and she said that to you about Susan, write a dialogue that might follow.
51. In what way does the definition of a psychopath that Mrs. McConnell reads to Susan explain the way Mark was able to get the others to follow him? Can you relate the psychopathic personality to anyone you’ve read or heard about from history, the news, or movies?
52. Some people think that the proposed punishment to be handed out isn’t entirely fair. What’s your opinion?