

## Mentor Texts, Reading Response Journals, and Quick Writes

Reading research suggests that the development of writing supports the development of reading and vice versa, which means that the integration of reading and writing benefits children's comprehension development (Duke et al., 2017). Three of the most common ways to integrate reading and writing instruction are discussed below.

### Mentor Texts

Mentor texts are high-quality texts from which children will emulate writing strategies and skills to hold onto forever—texts that exemplify the key characteristics of the genres in which they are composed.

Integration of reading and writing can occur when the texts used as mentor texts for writing are also the texts children are reading. For example, some poems that children read in a poetry unit can also be the mentor texts they use as models for writing their own poems, or the best short biographies children read in a unit on the Civil Rights movement can be the models for the short biographies they will each write of a Civil Rights leader.

### Reading Response Journals

Reading response journals are notebooks in which children respond to and react to their reading in a wide variety of ways, including asking and answering questions about passages of texts, recording wonderings, noting interesting or confusing language, and listing vocabulary to learn or savor. Reading response journals integrate reading and writing by asking children to use their writing to understand and make sense of their reading. Reading response journals can be used in the following ways:

- Create prompts for children to write short, expository pieces about what they have read after they have completed the reading.
- Have children record thinking as they read in the journal, jotting down questions, thoughts, queries, and unknown vocabulary to discuss later with partners or collaborative small groups, such as literature circles.
- Use the journal for multigenre responses (e.g., writing a letter to a character, writing new endings to a story, turning a scene into a script)

and graphic reformulations (timelines of events, t-charts and venn diagrams of comparisons, webs, and maps, etc.) (Kesler, 2018).

The goal of reading response journals is to help children to think more deeply about their reading and become more engaged with it, which will support their comprehension. Articulate to children these purposes of jotting and writing in their journals—understanding the value will help them to intentionally engage in the task.

### Quick Writes about Reading

Quick writes are an opportunity to write for 2 to 10 minutes in response to a question or prompt related to a book, article, or short text. This writing can take place before the text is read to activate and assess background knowledge, during the reading of a text to inspire interest and motivation, and to check for understanding, or at the end of a reading to consolidate understanding. Quick writes are usually open ended—and are meant to get children thinking, responding, and reacting to the text in ways that are meaningful to them.

Sometimes quick writes can be shared with partners and possibly used as warm ups or conclusions for a whole class discussion, with children sharing quick writes with partners before speaking to the whole group. Readings that work best for quick writes often tend to be immediately compelling in some way, and may have the following characteristics (Rief, 2018):

- Language-rich
- Striking imagery
- Evocative of emotions
- Thought-provoking
- Relevant to children's lives

### Works Cited

Duke, Nell K., et al. "Essential Elements of Fostering and Teaching Reading Comprehension." What Research Has to Say about Reading Instruction, Fourth Edition, edited by S. Jay Samuels and Alan A. Farstrup, International Reading Association, 2011, pp. 286–314.

Kesler, Ted. The Reader Response Notebook: Teaching toward Agency, Autonomy, and Accountability. NCTE, 2018.

Rief, Linda. The Quickwrite Handbook: Mentor Texts to Jumpstart Your Students' Thinking and Writing. Heinemann, 2018.