


**A “Collection” of Sample Writing Prompts for Using, Responding to, or
Analyzing Texts
Compiled or Developed by Karin Hess (2010-2011)**

Grades K-2 Examples

#1

 We read a book about _____.

This is what I learned.

#2

My Report about _____

By _____

These are my questions about _____.

I will read a book to find the answers. Then I will write about what I learned.

Things I learned about _____. (frog eggs)

Things I learned about _____. (tadpoles)

Things I learned about _____. (frogs)

This is the most interesting thing I learned or something that I want to know more about.

#3 (two examples for writing narrative texts)

Something I Did this Week/Today



There are many different and interesting activities that we do. Draw and write a story about an interesting activity that you did at school or with your friends this week.

A Pet that Got Into Trouble



Having a pet can be fun, but sometimes they can get into trouble! Draw and write a story about a real or imaginary pet that did something it was not supposed to do. Be sure to tell what problems that caused and how the problem turned out.

Grades 3-5 Examples

#4 (compare-contrast)

Frogs and Toads:
Are they the same or are they different?



Animals can be the same and different in many ways - including **frogs and toads!**

Read the Frog and Toad fact sheet and think about how frogs and toads are the same and how they are different. Now you will write and illustrate a report comparing the two animals. Tell what is the same about both animals and what is different about both animals. Be sure to use facts about both frogs and toads to explain whether frogs and toads are mostly the same or mostly different.

#5 (compare and then state opinion)

Investigating Sharks



Scientists like to study animals in their natural habitat. That means that a shark scientist has to study sharks in the oceans where they live. Shark scientists are scuba divers who go deep into the ocean to learn more about sharks.

Read and discuss "Facts about Sharks" by Susanna Batchelor. Think about how these two types of sharks are the same and also how they are different. Which shark would you study if you were a shark scientist and why?

1. Decide which shark you would want to study.
2. Find the best shark facts to support your reasons.
3. Explain your reasons. Be sure to use facts about hammerhead sharks and whale sharks to explain why you would study the shark you chose and not the other shark.

#6 (opinion on literary text/character study)

Response to Literary Texts - Character Study in Self-Selected Text



Every story character, even animal characters, have personality traits that we learn about by what they say, think, want, and do, and by how other characters interact with them during the story. Stories have themes that teach lessons using the characters and events in the story.

Select a text that you read earlier this year using a list provided by your teacher. Skim the story again and make some notes about the different characters in the story.

Then select the character you think:

- (a) **learned** the most during the story **OR**
- (b) **taught** others an important lesson.

Write a response that states your opinion (a or b as your focus). Support your focus by explaining how the character's traits, actions, and interactions with events and other characters during the story support your reasoning/opinion and focus. You can use a graphic organizer to help you plan your response.

#7 (opinion on informational text/author's craft)

Response to Informational Texts - How Author's Interest and Help Readers Understand the Topic



Authors choose their words carefully and use other features to help readers visualize, understand, and find the information interesting. You will be examining the ways an author presents information in this article about a whale named J.J. Read the article, "_____." Then write a response that tells several different ways - or techniques - the author uses to interest readers in the topic and help readers understand the information. Use specific examples from the text to explain how these techniques support your focus. You can use the graphic organizer to help you plan your response.

#8 (literary analysis)

Literary Essay



People (characters) make decisions that can affect someone else in dramatic or subtle ways. From the works read this semester, choose two. Choose a character from each story and describe how a decision made by one character (text #1) parallels the effect of a decision made by the character in the second work. Use specific examples from the texts to support your thesis.

Sample Prompts for Responding (Orally & in Writing) to Narrative Texts
Adapted from Hammond & Nessel (2011, p. 113)

Sample Frames for Prompts for Responding to Narrative Texts	
Interpretive	Why do you think _____ worried when _____? Use the evidence from the text to support your response.
Thematic	What is this (story/character/event) really trying to teach us? Use the evidence from the text to support your response.
Visual/ Imaginative	Which scene did you find especially vivid? Use the evidence from the text to describe what you imagined.
Author's Craft	What are some interesting words or techniques used by the author to _____ (e.g., describe characters, setting, comparisons; create suspense)? Use the evidence from the text to support your response.
Metacognitive	Did your opinion/awareness of _____ change from the beginning to the end of the story? How? Why? Use the evidence from the text to support your response.
Moral/Ethical	Was it right for _____ to _____? Why or why not? OR Who is the real hero/villain in this story? Why or why not? Use the evidence from the text to support your response.
Inter-textual (text to text)	Does this story remind you of another story? In what ways are they alike/different? Use the evidence from the text to support your response.
Analogical (text to self or text to world)	Can you describe /recall a similar situation in which the result/effect was different? Use the evidence from the text to support your response.
Elaborative	This character _____ described herself as _____. After reading the story, how else would describe her? Use the evidence from the text to support your response.

BASIC TYPES OF LITERARY CRITICISM

Downloaded 7/2011 from <http://richardsonenglish.wordpress.com/literary-criticism/basic-types-of-literary-criticism-a-2/>

Traditional Criticism

In traditional criticism, you examine how the author's life, his or her biographical information, is reflected in the work. You research all facets of his background and find traces of his or her experiences shown in the text. Question how the work shows pieces of the author's past, his/her interests, biases, culture, religion, etc.

Sociological Criticism

This type of criticism can include discussions of society, of social relationships, and of historical events which might affect society during the time period of the work. In Sociological criticism, you should examine all types of politics--for example Marxism, feminism, totalitarianism, primitivism--not just conservatism and liberalism. Concentrate on how society in the various political "isms" distinguish among members of various races, social classes, sexes, or cultures. The sociological critic looks for themes of oppression and liberation; such themes may concern an individual, a family, a small group, or an entire society.

Below is a list of a few questions--but certainly not all--that you might want to explore as sociological critics:

- Are characters from all social levels equally sketched?
- What values, attributes, qualities, attitudes are associated with these social levels?
- Who do you identify or sympathize with?
- Is there a class of virtuous people? What makes them "virtuous"?
- Are the main problems caused by individual or group actions and are the solutions the texts offers individual or collective?
- Which values bring about positive social change? What is valued most? Sacrifice? Assent? Resistance?
- What social class is the author affiliated with? How does his or her social class influence the representation of the characters? i.e. Is the author empowered or disenfranchised? Does the author express any desire to move into another social class or is he or she critical of the social "elite"? (must ask the previous questions to find out.)
- Who has the power to govern and what is that power based on?
- How does the text co-opt, appropriate, domesticate, or tame potentially threatening ideologies (sets of values, attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, etc.)
- Link the form and genre of the text with changes in economic relations. For example, some Marxist critics have linked the development of the novel with the creation of the working class, etc.
- Who is actually "civilized" in the book? Who are the most primitive?
- What different society groups are in the book? What is the relationship between each of them? How is it reflected? Why do they behave towards each other the way they do? How do the different groups affect the political "ism" in society?
- How does this work comment on war, hunger, sex, religion, education, ethics?
- What view of the family is given? Do the relationships of the family members change in the work?
- How different is the society of the novel from our society? How similar is it?

Mythological/Archetypal Criticism

Mythological criticism deals with instinctual, deep chords in human nature that is touched by certain types of events, character situations, conflicts, etc. Based on communal beliefs, mythology is affiliated with religion, anthropology, and cultural history. An archetype is a motif (theme) or image which is found in myths of peoples widely separated by time or place. Because of this, it has universal significance. Situations, conflicts, and characters can be archetypal. For Mythological/Archetypal Criticism you might want to ask yourselves--among other questions--the following:

- Are there any strong Communal Beliefs: 1. Belief in Supreme Being(s) creator, judge, prime mover, religion, fate 2. Belief in power of nature--Mother Nature, natural disasters, magical places (holy wells, sacred rocks, etc.)
- What images are used - 1. Water: birth, death, resurrection; life cycle; eternity 2. Colors: (red: blood; sacrifice; violence) (green: hope, fertility; death, decay) (black: the unknown; death; evil) (blue: virginal, Mary) 3. Numbers: (three: spiritual unity; male) (four: life cycle; four seasons; four elements; female) (seven: powerful because it unites three and four; perfect)
- 4. Garden: paradise; innocence; unspoiled beauty 5. Tree: immortality; inexhaustible life
- What Motifs are used: 1. Creation 2. Immortality 3. Wise Old Man (Woman) [savior, guru]:appears when hero is desperate
- 4. Woman: birth, protection; witch, whore, danger 5. Hero archetypes (the quest: hero undertakes journey and performs

impossible task to save his/her people) (Initiation: hero undergoes ordeals to achieve maturity. phases: separation, transformation, and return) (Sacrificial scapegoat: the hero must die to save his/her people) (Victim)
 •What archetypal situations, conflicts, and characters do you see?

Formalist Criticism

This type of criticism concerns itself with the parts of a text and how the parts fit together to make a whole. Because of this, it does not bring in any information outside of the text: biography of the author, historical or literary allusions, mythological patterns, or the psychoanalytical traits of the characters (except those traits specifically described in the text.) The formalist critic examines each part of the text: the # of Chapters, the # of parts, the characters, the settings, the tone, the point of view, the diction, the fictional world in which the characters live. After analyzing each part of the text, the critic then describes how they work together. When exploring a work using Formalist Criticism, you will look at the parts, and then you will discuss the craft of putting these parts together. In preparing your presentation, you might want to ask yourself--among many other questions the following:

- Do you see each part (or chapter) as "a novel in miniature"? Does each chapter (part) describe only one major event?
- How much time is devoted to each setting? Is the book evenly divided between the different settings, or is one setting given more space? Why would the author do this? •What **point of view** is used? Does this help or hinder the reader's understanding of the novel? Who do you think the author chose this point of view? Is the narrator reliable? •Imagine if the author chose another character to narrate the story; choose one character who might be a good narrator of the story. What would not get told? What would be told in greater detail? Would anything be changed? Would that character be a reliable narrator? Spend a few minutes rewriting a section of the text from another point of view. Discuss the implications and results.
- How are the characters developed? How do you learn about them--through direct description, the narration of events, or another character's comments? Or is it a combination of methods? Is this effective? Why?
- Does the fictional world mirror the actual world, or is it total fantasy? Could it happen? Why?
- Are there too many coincidences? Are there recognizable links between causes and effects, or is there just a series of unrelated incidents?
- Does the ending give you a sense of closure? What is the significance of the ending? •Is the title appropriate? Why or why not?
- How do all these parts fit together? What literary devices does the author use to unite the parts into a whole? What are the symbols and allusions, for example, that contribute to the total effect of the work?
- Examine how the work is built, constructed. Look at exposition, flashbacks, foreshadowing, syntax, diction. Ask yourself, "How is the work put together to develop meaning?"
- To be a skilled reader means that one knows the conventions of meaning which allow a person to make sense of it

Feminist Criticism

This type of criticism concerns itself with not only a female perspective but it also analyzes the role of men in literature as well. Among many other questions the following:

- What roles are most often assigned to women/men?
- What attributes or associations are tied to certain behaviors and certain types of women/men? (i.e. in fairy tales beauty is nearly always tied to being chosen, getting rich, getting married, and being happy. External appearance signals inner value.)
- How and why do female/male characters succeed or fail?
- What kind of reward do they receive?
- How are "femininity" and "masculinity" defined? What is a "woman"? What is a "man"?
- What are the qualities of a "good" or "bad" woman or man?
- Explore how the role of women in stories, poems, novels, etc. works to support or undermine the social and political system of the past and present readers. In other words, why this text at this time? Why that text at that time? You need to contextualize and historicize the text: How does this particular representation of women function? Does the text reinforce or challenge patriarchy? What does it tell us if it does both simultaneously?
- How does gender intersect with race, class, and other social categories?
- How does form and function intersect? (i.e. What the author says intersects with how she/he says it.)
- What does the history of the work's reception by the public and by the critics tell us about the operations of patriarchy?
- Women readers bring different perceptions/expectations to literary experience
- Challenge to the "canon"--the whole body of texts that make up the tradition
- Concerned with literary representations of the female...exclusion of the female voice from literature, criticism, theory
- Stereotypes of women
- Images of women in literature...exclusion of women from literary history in patriarchal societies...connection between social and literary mistreatment of women...
- Females obscured by "patriarchal" values...Search for the "female imagination," the "female plot"
- Challenging of the most basic assumptions