

September 2007

Dear _____,

This year you and I will write letters to each other about books, reading, writers, and writing. Our letters will help us learn together. The letters will help you learn more about reading.

When you write letters in your journal, do your best work and share your best thinking. I have given you a list of topics to keep in your binder (and we went over them in class), so you should always have something to write about.

Write a letter to me once a month, on regular white notebook paper, and in your best handwriting. The completed letter is due to me on the due date indicated on the journal due date list. Use proper letter format and include the title and author of your book. It is important that your letters are neat and easy to read so I can understand what you are thinking. Read through your letters to make sure that it says all you want to say before you place it in the basket.

When I read your journal and your letters, I will learn from you, and we will learn together about books. What fun we will have getting to know each other!

Eager to read your letters,
Mrs. Barlow

November 6, 2007

Dear Lukas,

Thanks for your great letter! I saw Among the Hidden at the book fair, and I was wondering if anyone was going to read it. I love realistic fiction with a twist – like something that *could* happen to our society! I love that you commented on what you thought the “big idea” was behind the book – trying to make the reader wonder what life is really like for Luke. It’s almost as if the author was saying, “What if *you* were Luke? How would you handle the situation?” While I haven’t read the book yet (I really want to, after reading your letter), I think that if I were Luke, I would do whatever I could to try and live some sort of “normal” life without getting caught. If he gets caught, are there consequences for his family too?

Keep me posted. I’m so glad that you are selecting books that you love!

Best Regards,

November 6, 2007

Dear Sam,

Thanks for your letter! I have read The Hobbit, though I have not read the Lord of the Rings trilogy (but I saw the movies). What I liked about the Hobbit was Bilbo’s constant struggle about what to do about the ring. I also liked that we get introduced to Gollum.

Sometimes, I found The Hobbit hard to follow, mostly because it is a made-up world, and I wasn’t sure if the vocabulary that J.R.R. Tolkien was using were real words, or words that he made up for his “world”. Do you find that to be true also?

Best Regards,

November 6, 2007

Dear Joey,

Thanks for your great letter! I know that Al Capone Does My Shirts was sometimes confusing for you, but I’m glad that you stuck with it and had perseverance. Have you ever been to Alcatraz Island? If not, you might want to do a little bit of internet research – it might help you get some good visualizations of places you read about in the story.

Was Moose ever afraid of the convicts there? There were some pretty scary guys that served time there, and it wasn’t a nice place for a kid to hang out – what did Moose think of the whole thing? We’ve been studying how Edward Tulane changes throughout the course of the book. How did Moose change during your book?

Best Regards,

Journal Letters Due Dates - November

Monday, November 5	Monday, November 12	Monday, November 19	Monday, November 26
Joey Sam Erica Lukas M. Danny	Marta Carli Chloe TJ Taylor Lauren	Alexandra Ryan Diana Olivia Alec Lukas Y.	Adam Kelly Anthony Matthew Adrienne

****Please make sure that you letters are thought out and detailed.
Remember, you are only doing it once a month so make them
great!!**

I am looking forward to hearing from you about your reading.

~Mrs. Barlow

Topics for Your Reading Journal

- What the book is about
- How you choose the book
- Your favorite books, authors, genres, etc.
- Comments about a character or characters
- How the book reminds you of another book
- How the book makes you feel
- How the author describes things
- Whether you like the book or not and why
- Why you think the author wrote the book
- How you feel about the author's writing
- Whether or not you would recommend the book to another reader
- Why you abandoned a book
- What you predict will happen
- Confusing parts or questions you have
- Answers to previous questions
- What you would change about the book
- Examples of stereotype or bias
- What you found interesting or surprising
- What you are wondering about
- Whether the book is easy, just right, or challenging and how you can tell
- About the genre
- What you think is the author's message
- What book you look forward to reading
- What you don't understand to questions you have
- How you feel about a character
- What you notice about the author's style/language
- What was funny to you
- What you like/dislike about the setting
- How the setting affects the characters
- About good word choices/special language
- What is "The Big Idea" (or what is the author *really* trying to tell us?)

(sample letter)

October 1, 2007

Dear Class,

The first thing I noticed about The Kid in the Red Jacket was that it was written by Barbara Park. I really enjoyed her Junie B. Jones books, because I thought she really got into the mind of a first grader. I also remembered her books as being really funny!

I really like the character of Howard. Even though he is a boy, in some ways reminds me of myself when I was in 5th grade. I was always mad at my parents. I also had younger brothers (though not as young as Gaylord). I would be so upset if my parents just announced that we were moving across the country. I know that often parents don't have control over those things, but maybe they should have broken it to Howard more gently or let him in on some decisions, like the new house.

While I never had to be the "new kid" while I was in grade school, when I went away to college, I definitely felt like one, because I went to a large college and did not live with any of my high school friends. I remember feeling like Howard did on the first day, where he just wanted to be invisible, but at the same time, he wanted someone to just say "hi" to him. I wonder how many of you have felt like that?

Molly Vera Thompson reminds me of some of my friends' little sisters when I was growing up. I think that when I was Howard's age, I would have felt much of the same way that he did (though maybe I would be a little nicer after I found out her family circumstances). But now that I'm an adult I understand that she must be desperate for a friend and feel extremely lonely after having to come live with her "nonny". I wonder if she ever hears from her mommy or daddy at all?

I love reading this book to you and I enjoy hearing you laugh out loud at the funny parts. I think that even if you've never been the "new kid" that you can relate to Howard and his troubles.

Love,
Mrs. Barlow